



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE EU DAY

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES

DELIVERED BY

MINISTER

HON. SENZENI ZOKWANA (MP)

PRETORIA

9 MAY 2016

Your Excellency, Ambassador Marcus Cornaro, Ambassador of the EU to South Africa,

Mr Carmelo Cocuzza, Head of the European Investment Bank in South Africa,

The Dean and the Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Members of the Euro Chamber of Commerce,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address this gathering on such an auspicious occasion, celebrating the 66th Anniversary of Europe Day. I am particularly pleased in sharing this moment with the EU, since it is held under the theme *SA-EU Partnership: Skills and Markets for Sustainable Jobs*, which is in conformity with South Africa's National Priorities and the National Development Plan (2030).

As we celebrate this day, we should remember and reflect on the vision of one of the founding fathers of this important milestone in the history of the European Union, Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, who came up with the idea of uniting Europe, rebounding from the devastation of World War 2.

His leadership demonstrated first and foremost, that planting the seed of unity, solidarity and peace would later become the vision that the European Union would use to occupy its rightful place in global affairs and would provide the basis for peace, stability and prosperity. The unique EU integration model remains an inspiration to many regions of the world, including the African continent.

The SA-EU relationship is underpinned by the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA), signed in 1999 and which forms the legal basis of the Partnership. The TDCA was an important stepping stone for the establishment of the SA-EU Strategic Partnership, which is only one of ten in the world and the adoption of the Joint Action Plan (JAP) in May 2007.

After 22 years, South Africa has come a long way in creating a better life for our people, however, the country continues to face the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. In this regard the positive contribution by the EU was recognised by President Jacob Zuma when he indicated in his 2016, State of the Nation address that: “On North-South cooperation, we continued our engagements with the European Union (EU) as a bloc, which is our largest trading partner and foreign investor. Over 2 000 EU companies operate within South Africa, creating over 350 000 jobs”.

The high-level dialogues between South Africa and the EU support the Strategic Partnership objective of Enhanced Dialogue and cooperation in Regional, African and Global matters. The Strategic Partnership also covers over twenty sectoral policy dialogues, covering diverse areas of cooperation.

Our Strategic Partnership with the EU is in its 9th year, and the achievements at both an operational as well as a political level have been remarkable. We accomplished a number of significant successes as envisaged in our Joint Action Plan, to the mutual benefit of our people. Through the various structured mechanisms, South Africa and the EU have been able to engage in a manner that has ensured concrete deliverables.

In February 2016, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane hosted her European Union counterpart the High Representative and Vice President of the Commission Ms Federica Mogherini for the Ministerial Political Dialogue (MPD). The successful outcome of the dialogue high-lighted the close relationship that exists between South Africa and the EU.

South Africa has also been a beneficiary of development assistance from the EU through the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), which focusses on employment creation, education, training, and innovation and building a capable and developmental state. In addition, South Africa benefits from the TDCA-Dialogue Facility which contributes to South African government departments benefitting from EU technical expertise through the disbursement of funding the approval of which is based on clearly outlined criteria.

Furthermore, the European Investment Bank has also been playing an important role in supporting South Africa's national priorities. Since 1995, the Bank has provided a total of over EUR 2.8 billion (over 46 billion Rand) of loans to South African public and private borrowers. In 2015, EUR 200 million (3.3 billion Rand) was provided in the form of medium to long term credit lines for South African Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and companies through financial institutions.

On Infrastructure development it is important to note the Infrastructure Programme for South Africa (IIPSA). The IIPSA programme is EUR 100 million (approximately R1,8 billion) developed jointly by the SA Government and the European Union. The programme supports domestic as well as regional infrastructure projects, thus contributing to strengthening regional integration and economic growth.

On trade South Africa is pleased to note that the negotiations for the SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) has been finalised and the signing of the agreement is imminent, which will then pave the way for ratification. Importantly, the agreement will further enhance South Africa's market access into the EU and vice versa.

I wish to emphasize that South Africa is committed to the region and the continent; in the realization of the AU's Agenda 2063. In this regard the SADC-EU Cooperation and Africa-EU Partnership are important initiatives in supporting the long-term vision for the region and the continent.

As the relationship progresses, the important goal is for South Africa to look increasingly towards the EU to contribute meaningfully to the transfer of knowledge, high-end skills, technology and innovation.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and people of South Africa to congratulate the EU on this special occasion.

I Thank You.