

**REMARKS BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSUL-GENERAL. MS  
TSELANE MOKUENA, AT AN EVENT IN HONOUROF AFRICA  
DAY, TUESDAY, 26 MAY 2009**

Ladies and gentlemen of the press,  
Guten abend!

First of all, let me express my gratitude to all of you for being here this evening.

**Brief history of the Africa day: Establishment of the OAU**

Africa Day, Ladies and Gentlemen, is one of the most important days for Africans in the continent and in Diaspora. It is a day when we celebrate, with friends of Africa, Africa's achievements whilst acknowledging the challenges that the Continent is facing. On Africa Day, we also pay tribute to heroes such as Abdel Gamal Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Patrice Lamumba, Eduardo Mondlane, Ahmed Ben Bela. Julius Nyerere, Samora Machel and Modibo Keita, Chief Albert Luthuli, OR Tambo and others.

Ladies and Gentlemen, almost five decades ago, African leaders gathered together to form what was called the Organisation of the African Union (OAU). One of the objectives of the OAU was to liberate my country, South Africa, from shackles of Apartheid. This objective was achieved in 1994 when South Africa got its freedom. Since 1994, South Africa's engagements with the Continent have been informed by its vision of an African continent which is prosperous, peaceful and democratic.

Paying tribute to this important organisation, Former President Mandela said the following and I quote:

“The titanic effort that has brought liberation to South Africa, and ensured the total liberation of Africa constitutes an act of redemption for the black people of the world. It is a gift of emancipation also to those who, because they were white, imposed on themselves the heavy burden of assuming the mantle of rulers of all humanity. It says to all who will listen and understand that, by ending the apartheid barbarity that was the offspring of European colonisation, Africa has, once more, contributed to the advance of human civilisation and further expanded the frontiers of liberty everywhere.” Mandela continued to state that “the OAU shall remove from its agenda the consideration of the question of Apartheid South Africa..... and where South Africa appears on the agenda again, let it be because we want to discuss what its contribution shall be to the making of the new African Renaissance.”

### **Establishment of the AU**

South Africa, under the leadership of our former President Mbeki, played a huge role in the establishment of AU and its socio-economic programme, NEPAD in 2002. As you know, the former President was also very passionate about the promotion of African Renaissance. Furthermore, ladies and gentlemen, South Africa has played a huge role in post-conflict reconstruction and development in such countries as the DRC, Cote d’Ivoire, Southern Sudan and Burundi, to mention but a few.

### **RECs**

Ladies and Gentlemen, one of the goals of the African Union (AU) as embodied in the Constitutive Act of the AU is to harmonize policies between existing and future Regional Economic Communities as vehicles of economic integration for the whole Continent. The issue of the RECs has been debated a lot among African Governments in Summits and other important meetings. In a statement he made as the Chairperson of SADC during the launch of the SADC Free Trade Area in August last year, the former president gave two reasons why regional integration was important for Africa. According to him, regional economic integration offers Africa an opportunity to pool limited resources that it has to build “an economic base to address the challenges of economic growth and development. Secondly, regional economic integration can create the basis for regional markets and industries to overcome the limits of small national markets, to achieve economies of scale, and enhance competitiveness as platform to participate more effectively in the world economy.” I am sure Dr Le Pere can tell you more about this matter.

## **SA ROLE IN SADC**

I must also briefly highlight that the SADC region, under our Chairmanship, has made strides in ensuring that the economic integration is realized in the African Continent. SADC was part of the Uganda Tripartite Summit which was held in October 2008. The Summit included Governments from the Common Market of East and Southern African Countries (COMESA) and East African Community (EAC). The Summit discussed, among other things, the deepening of integration between the three Regional Blocs. During the Summit, the former President of South Africa, Mr Kgalema Motlanthe—who attended as the Chairperson of SADC-- described the SADC achievements when he said:

“SADC has pursued developmental integration that combines market integration with measures to build the production capacity in our economies underpinned by regional infrastructure development including cross-border spatial development initiatives, through Regional Indicative Strategic Development (RISDP);

With respect to market integration, in August 2008, SADC reached an important milestone by achieving a Free Trade Area;

In the area of infrastructure, SADC has developed and implemented numerous projects covering such areas as transport, communications technology, energy and tourism.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, please forgive me but I cannot let this opportunity pass me by. I feel I should pass on a general invitation to all to take part in what South Africa hopes will be the greatest party Africa has ever seen: The FIFA World Cup 2010. This, ladies and gentlemen, will be an African first and we hope to stage an event that will make the world see Africa as it truly is: alive, modern, and filled with opportunities.

**I thank you.**