

Final Remarks by Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe during the 7th South Africa–Germany Bi-National Commission, Berlin

08 May 2012

Your Excellency, my delegation and I wish to thank you most sincerely for the warm welcome extended to us since our arrival to your beautiful country and historic city yesterday.

Your Excellency, Dr Guido Westerwelle, Foreign Minister of Federal Republic of Germany;
Ministers and Deputy Ministers;
Ambassadors and Senior Government Officials;
Ladies and gentlemen:

Your Excellency, my delegation and I wish to thank you most sincerely for the warm welcome extended to us since our arrival to your beautiful country and historic city yesterday.

I am happy to preside jointly with you over the seventh session of the Bi-national Commission, another milestone in our strategic co-operation since it was launched during the State Visit of former President Mandela in 1996.

South Africa and Germany have become partners in the international community, and have shared a joint vision of how to create a world which is worthy of its inhabitants and future generations.

We took note of the German Government's Africa Strategy with interest and welcome your Government's renewed commitment to Africa, on the basis of a partnership of equals.

Both our countries share the goals of enhancing peace and security; good governance; rule of law; democracy and human rights; economic development; and indeed, dealing with the challenges posed by climate change, as well as finding new sources of energy.

Let me also point out that our deliberations are taking place at a critical juncture. Since the last meeting of the BNC in Pretoria two years ago, the world has been in a state of flux.

These changes require constant monitoring and detailed analysis so as to find practical solutions to the resultant socio-economic challenges before us.

The economic crisis in Europe and the other parts of the world has had a ripple effect around the globe and as such we felt it strongly in South Africa. Despite our careful stewardship of the South African economy, our exports declined massively in the period 2008 to 2009.

However, we are pleased that our trade with Germany is approximating levels previously reached before the crisis of 2008.

In addition, South Africa values even more Germany's strong financial support, especially with regard to its efforts to strengthen peace and stability on the African continent.

Accordingly, we look forward to enhancing the success of our cooperation and to extend even further our joint support of development cooperation projects on the African continent.

The strategic partnership between South Africa and Germany is showing concrete and specific outcomes.

For example, the South African-German Year of Science was launched on 16 April 2012 in Cape Town by our Ministers of Science and Technology and of Education and Research.

The initiative aims to further foster local skills development and innovation, while providing a platform for further joint ventures in science. We look forward to identifying new projects of cooperation in this field.

I am also pleased to note that the decision taken at the BNC of 2010 in Pretoria that the political dialogue on foreign policy and global issues between our countries should further be strengthened was implemented and that a meeting was held yesterday between our respective departments.

There are also other opportunities in many sectors, particularly infrastructure development, renewable energy, automotives, mining, chemicals, agro-processing and cultural industries.

In this regard, Your Excellency, I wish to bring to your attention the South African Government's nationwide infrastructure development drive, overseen by the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission, (PICC), which was established in September 2011, bringing together ministers, provincial premiers and mayors of big cities, under the leadership of President Jacob Zuma.

We are targeting a range of areas, including roads, rail, ports, water infrastructure, and telecommunications. To this end we wish to invite the Government of Germany and German cooperates to participate in this important initiative.

Your Excellency, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me pause here to allow the committees to report on the outcomes of their engagements over the last few days.

Lastly, let me convey our sincere gratitude to you, for your kind words of condolence on the loss of one of our own ministers. He actually left a cabinet meeting on Thursday last week, to travel to Ethiopia, where he was to attend a meeting of the African Peer Review Mechanism.

I thank you.