



National Day Speech by H.E. Ambassador Nkosi,

3 May 2012 Belgium, Brussels

Your Excellency, Chief of Protocol,

Excellencies, Ambassadors,

Honourable Members of the European Parliament and the Belgian Parliament,

Distinguished Representatives of the Belgian Government,

Esteemed Officials of the European Union and other International Organisations,

Distinguished Representatives of the Private Sector,

South Africans in the Diaspora,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me on behalf of the government and the people of South Africa to welcome you this evening and at the same time express my profound gratitude to you for honouring us with your presence on this occasion of the celebration of the 18th anniversary of the free, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa, which

came of age 6 days ago. We shall remain forever indebted to the international community for its role in contributing to the freedom and democracy that we enjoy today, and for its continued engagement in nurturing the democratic project unfolding in our country.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, the South African government has played a crucial role in promoting social cohesion, nation-building, and pursuing programmes to restore the dignity of its people. A lot has been achieved in creating a better life for all South Africans, but much more still needs to be done.

In 1994, only 62% of households had access to running water, fast forward to 2012, the figure has risen to 94,5%. Forty-three regional bulk projects will be completed by 2014, benefiting 3.2 million people.

In 1994, only 50% of households had access to decent sanitation, this figure has now risen to 82%.

In 2011, 75,8% of households had access to electricity, a huge improvement from 51% in 1994.

Our government has delivered over three million subsidized housing units since 1994 and provides one billion rand guarantee fund to help lower income earners.

Most importantly, primary health care in South Africa is now accessible to all South Africans regardless of race, background and nationality.

On the land issue we have transferred 6.7 million hectares of land since 1994 through an orderly process of restitution and redistribution. We must still do much more in this regard in order to meet the 2014 target of 30 percent.

In education, we have improved our school enrolments drastically since 2003 and have put 8.8 million learners on the nutrition programme.

We have allocated R8.2 billion for school infrastructure.

Having gone far in consolidating democracy and achieving a non-racial, non-sexist society, our fourth democratic administration has made it a priority to move to the second phase, that of achieving a more prosperous South Africa, hence the theme for this year's commemoration is "*Working Together to Build Unity and Prosperity for All*".

The fourth democratic administration has made it its primary focus to invest in the achievement of prosperity.

In this regard, we are leading the struggle to reduce unemployment, inequality and poverty by promoting inclusive economic growth.

In 1994, we knew that our toughest task was to transform the economy in order to push back the frontiers of poverty and underdevelopment.

The challenge has always been, and will surely be to ensure that more of our people benefit from economic growth whilst maintaining and indeed building on the strength of our economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, despite the setbacks caused by the global economic downturn in 2008, the past 18 months have seen a substantial recovery of the South

African economy. In 2011 alone, employment grew by a thousand jobs a day; investment climbed by 4%; and the GDP grew by just over 3%.

The challenge now is to accelerate our gains – to ensure above all that growth supports increased inclusion, employment and equity. We are committed to the expansion of public employment programmes as a measure to support unemployed people in the short run, especially the youth.

In particular, we are working to expand the Community Work Programme over the coming two years. This programme is critical as it provides the basis for collective action and mobilisation by communities, which determine where the employed people should work.

We are working with all South Africans to build unity and prosperity, as outlined by President Zuma in the State of the Nation Address in 2012, and also in 2011 when he declared that year as the year of job creation and inclusive growth.

In this regard, the South African government has developed a long-term 20-year vision which seeks to place the country on the path of sustainable growth, development and prosperity.

To help us achieve inclusive growth and development, we have identified infrastructure development encompassing agriculture, mining and beneficiation, manufacturing, the green economy and tourism, as the main drivers of the economy towards achieving growth, jobs and defeating inequality, poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, during the 2012 State of the Nation Address, President Zuma singled

out investment in infrastructural development in all the economic sectors as a key vehicle for improving competitiveness, people's quality of life and providing access to basic services, and jobs.

SA's infrastructure drive is about providing housing, sanitation, public transport, electricity and running water for millions of South Africans. It is about connecting rural communities to economic opportunities through building dams and irrigation systems, connecting farms and villages to the energy grid and building schools and clinics.

Capital investment in infrastructure development in all the sectors of the economy will provide a considerable opportunity for construction, job creation, increased skills transfer, and in the long term it will also allow the South African economy to increase in productivity and become more competitive.

The expansion and modernization of South Africa's infrastructure is linked to the broader continental infrastructure development drive within the framework of the recently launched Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). PIDA seeks to develop the transport, energy, water and ICT infrastructure in order to improve interconnectivity thereby unlocking the potential for intra-African trade.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Later this month South Africa will host the African Diaspora Summit. It will draw amongst others on the outcomes of the African Diaspora Ministerial Conference held in Jamaica in 2005 as well as the Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora held in Dakar and in Rio in 2004 and 2006, respectively. The Summit will

go a long way in contributing towards the enhancement of South-South solidarity through sustainable partnerships.

The United Nations COP 17 held in South Africa in December last year secured a second commitment of the Kyoto Protocol and unanimously adopted the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. This resets the multilateral system and stabilises the future on the basis of the Durban Platform. The forthcoming Rio+20 Summit should carry forward this agenda.

South Africa's interaction at the international level and her engagement with Belgium and other developed partners, and the relationship that she nurtures with other developing countries is part of the process designed to help South Africa to achieve inclusive growth, sustainable development, prosperity, and to facilitate development on the continent of Africa.

In this regard South Africa will reinvigorate and intensify its partnership with Belgium by:

- Maximising the complementarities and synergies between the economic sectors wherein Belgium is competitive against the economic agenda set out by President Zuma in his State of the Nation Address.
- Optimising the rate of absorption of ODA both within the Bilateral and Trilateral Development Co-operation context.
- Consolidating South Africa-Belgium Political Relations, the highlight of which will be the envisaged visit to South Africa by Minister Mr. Didier Reynders.

On the Multilateral front, the European Union (EU) will remain South Africa's strategic partner in our quest for a better life for all. The year 2012 also marks 13 years since the signing of the SA-EU Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement (TDCA), which serves as the basis for the SA-EU Strategic Partnership. The TDCA has come full steam with the tariff phase down reaching completion on the 1st of January 2012. Under the Strategic Partnership, our leaders meet annually at Summit level to discuss strategic bilateral issues as well as issues of regional and international concern.

This year's Summit scheduled for September 2012 will, as is practice be preceded by the meeting of the Joint Cooperation Council (JCC) in July, which oversees the dialogue and sectoral cooperation. The year 2012 also marks 15 years of the successful Science and Technology dialogue, which has been providing an extensive supporting programme during SA-EU Summits. The fifth session of the SA-EU Summit will be an occasion to further deepen and consolidate the strategic partnership between South Africa and the EU. The Summit will take place at a time when negotiations on outstanding issues in the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) are at a critical stage. South Africa hopes that when finalized the EPA negotiations will be fair and balanced, and reflect developmental outcomes that reinforce regional economic integration in Southern African Development Community.

With the date of expiry of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement looming on the horizon, the ACP has reached a critical point in its existence. We applaud the hard work and dedication by the Secretary General and his staff, as well as by my fellow ACP Ambassadors, to engage vigorously at all levels to reinvent the ACP as a

meaningful interlocutor with the EU. We remain convinced that the ACP Ministerial and Summit meetings in June and December, respectively this year, will chart a clear way forward for the ACP.

Excellencies,

We await with expectation the decision of the General Members Meeting of the Square Kilometre Array Organisation on the site of the SKA telescope. The African bid includes, South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia. This will be the largest radio telescope in the world with a collecting area of approximately one square kilometre. It will help to answer fundamental questions in astronomy, physics and cosmology. Should the SKA be located in Africa, it will be a significant boost for strengthening our Continent's Science and Technology Capacities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this juncture, please join me in toasting to sustained, mutually rewarding and beneficial relations of cooperation and development between South Africa and Belgium, South Africa and Luxembourg, and South Africa and the European Union, and the ACP family.

Thank you and enjoy the evening.