

Address by His Excellency, President of the Republic of South Africa, Dr. Jacob Zuma on Aspects of South African Foreign Policy at the University of Pretoria

13 October 2011

Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Honourable Chancellor, Professor Wiseman Nkuhlu; Vice-Chancellor, Cheryl de la Rey; Members of the Academic Staff; Members of the Diplomatic corps; Representatives of student Bodies; Students and staff, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to give this address at this august institution of learning which traces its roots back to 1908.

In fact, it is four years older than the ANC whose centenary we will celebrate in January 2012.

We thank the Department of Political Sciences and the Centre for Mediation in Africa for inviting us to this institution to discuss aspects of the country's foreign policy.

We appreciate your interest in the peaceful mediation of disputes in particular, which is the driving force behind our peacemaking efforts especially in the African continent.

Compatriots and friends,

The basis of our foreign policy was crafted by ordinary people of the Republic of South Africa, and is embodied in the Freedom Charter of 1955.

The Freedom Charter proclaims that there shall be peace and friendship, and outlines the following aspects of foreign policy;

“South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations;

“South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation - not war;

“Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all;

“The right of all peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close co-operation”.

In addition, former ANC President Mr Oliver Reginald Tambo further enunciated our foreign policy thrust at the First Congress of the Angolan ruling party, the MPLA in Luanda in 1977.

He said; “We seek to live in peace with our neighbours and the peoples of the world in conditions of equality, mutual respect and equal advantage”.

It is important to state from the onset, that our foreign policy is an extension of our domestic policy and our value system.

As South Africans we believe in a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law. We believe in a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.

To implement this vision, the country’s Foreign Policy is based on four central pillars.

We accord priority to SADC and Africa as a whole. We work with countries of the developing South to address shared challenges of underdevelopment. We promote global equity and social justice.

We work with countries of the developed North to develop a true and effective partnership for a better world. And finally, we play our part to strengthen and transform the multilateral system, to reflect the diversity of our nations, and ensure its centrality in global governance.

While working on the four pillars, our primary focus remains the African continent.

We have solid fraternal relations with many African countries in SADC and beyond, which date back to the days of the liberation struggle, when South Africans were offered shelter and solidarity to dismantle colonial oppression and apartheid.

We are turning those historical relations, forged in the trenches of struggle, into beneficial economic, social and political partnerships during this era of freedom.

At a multilateral level, we participate actively in SADC and African Union programmes and activities, promoting African renewal, unity as well as social and economic development.

Our country has the experience of having emerged from a ravaging conflict to become a peaceful stable democracy. We are always ready to share that experience and work for peace in the continent and the world.

In SADC, we currently chair the troika of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. Matters on the agenda include the situations in Zimbabwe and Madagascar.

Further north we have participated in African Union peace efforts in Libya, Sudan and Cote D’Ivoire to name a few. We also have a footprint in the Great Lakes region,

participating in peace efforts in Burundi, DRC and other countries.

For the African peace efforts to be effective, the AU and sub-regional bodies need the support of the United Nations and the international community as a whole.

We have addressed the UN on the need to maintain a positive and cooperative working relationship between the UN and the AU on peacemaking and peacekeeping and generally on matters that affect Africa.

This partnership was under strain recently. As the AU we felt our work was being undermined especially in the case of Libya.

The AU was not given space to implement its roadmap and to ensure an African solution to the Libyan question.

The people of Libya must determine their own future, in a Libyan-led political solution, supported by the African Union and the United Nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of our major accomplishments which enable us to participate more in peacemaking, is the re-election of South Africa to a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for the 2011-12 term. We believe we are playing a constructive role, pursuing the interests of our country and the continent.

Our pressing priority currently is the reform of international institutions, including the United Nations Security Council. Africa and Latin America are not represented as permanent members on the Council. This is a serious anomaly which reflects negatively on the UN system.

As South Africa, we believe we can play a critical role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, advancing the interests of the continent. The time has come for Africa to be represented at that level in this world body.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me share with you briefly, our position on some of the conflicts or disputes in the continent and other regions.

With regard to Sudan and South Sudan, South Africa will continue with capacity and institutional building efforts within the context of the African Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development process.

We will further support the efforts of the African Union to resolve the remaining issues of post-independence between the two countries.

We support a comprehensive approach that addresses both the economic and political dimensions of Somalia including the need to resolve the security and humanitarian situation in that country.

We appreciate the efforts of South African relief agencies especially Gift of the Givers, which has reached out to the people of Somalia. They fly the South African flag of love and care in challenging conditions, creating a positive feeling about our country amongst many people in distress around the world, from Somalia to Japan.

We re-affirm our continued support to the Congolese government to build durable and responsive state institutions that can deliver services and inspire confidence to the ordinary people of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

With regard to Zimbabwe, we will continue to call on the parties to spare no effort in creating a conducive environment for credible, peaceful elections in accordance with the Global Political Agreement.

On Madagascar, we see no alternative to the SADC mediation effort and the Roadmap, recently signed by the Parties. The emphasis should now be on the implementation of the Roadmap.

I have appointed the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Marius Fransman as my special envoy to Madagascar, so that we can focus more intensively on this peace process.

We also continue to support the ongoing struggle for self-determination by the people of the Western Sahara.

We urge the international community to support their quest for freedom, human rights and dignity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have always appreciated the importance of the Middle East region for global peace and stability.

The region will never know sustainable peace without a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian question and we believe that the international community must become more vocal and visible in working towards a real peaceful solution.

We cannot speak of an Arab Spring unless Palestine is liberated from occupation.

We reiterate that South Africa unequivocally supports Palestine's inalienable right to full membership of the United Nations. We do not believe that this will undermine a negotiated settlement.

We reiterate our support for a two state solution based on the 1967 borders, according to international agreements and relevant United Nations resolutions.

A peace agreement should guarantee the security of both States, address the right of the return of Palestine refugees as well as the status of Jerusalem.

We reiterate our call for an immediate end to the violence in Syria, including the use of force against unarmed civilians.

We call on the Syrian government to fulfil its obligations under International Human Rights and Humanitarian law. The only solution to the crisis is through an inclusive Syrian-led political process, to address the legitimate aims and aspirations of the population.

Ladies and gentlemen;

We are proud of the role played by our South African National Defence Force in the country's peacekeeping efforts. They are an important player in our foreign policy a force of peace.

A total of two thousand three hundred and four South African National Defence Force soldiers are at present deployed externally.

They serve diligently in the DRC, Central African Republic and Darfur in the Sudan.

Honoured guests,

Our foreign policy also entails effective economic diplomacy. We work to attract investments and tourism, remove barriers to trade, support the development of larger markets in Africa and expand the markets for South African products.

This is linked to our domestic imperative of eradicating inequality, unemployment and poverty.

The results thus far are encouraging. South Africa's global exports have diversified over the last few years and have increased from 477 billion rand in 2007 to 584 billion rand in 2010.

There are significant increases in our exports to Asia from 134 billion rand in 2007 to 196 billion rand in 2010 and to Africa from 64 billion rand to 87 billion rand.

We are also witnessing growth in tourism. From January to April 2011, South Africa had 2, 7 million foreign tourist arrivals, an increase of 7,5% on the 2, 5 million recorded over the same period in 2010.

To build on the economic gains and boost intra-African trade, we have identified regional integration as a powerful tool.

In June, we hosted the second Tripartite Summit for the integration of SADC, East African Community, (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, (COMESA).

This integration will create a market of 26 countries with a combined population of nearly 600 million people and a total GDP of approximately 624 billion US dollars.

As you would be aware, the new Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa's socio-economic blueprint, turns ten years old this year.

Work continues to mobilise African and international support for NEPAD, especially domestic resource mobilisation, and to support its structures and processes.

South Africa chairs the NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Championship Initiative, focusing on the road and rail projects in the North-South corridor.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We firmly believe that the challenges facing humanity cannot be solved unilaterally.

We are therefore proponents of South-South cooperation, North –South partnerships and the strengthening of the multilateral system.

We participate in various multilateral fora, including SADC, the AU, Non-Aligned Movement, G77 plus China, the Commonwealth, BRICS, India-Brazil-South Africa forum (IBSA) and the United Nations.

Next week, on the 18th of October, we will host the Fifth IBSA Summit.

The three countries will work towards finalising a trilateral Preferential Trade Agreement that will further stimulate trilateral trade.

South Africa uses its membership of BRICS as a strategic opportunity to advance the interests of Africa in global issues such as the reform of global governance, the work of the G20, International trade, development, energy and climate change.

In the G20 context, we will continue to advance the Development Agenda of Africa and the South through the G20 Development Working Group.

In Europe, the European Union is an important strategic partner for our country and Africa. South Africa will continue to engage Europe in the context of the South Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and the AU-EU Strategic Partnership.

Given the current economic situation, we encourage the European leaders to implement structural adjustment plans to deal with the debt crises. This issue poses a great risk to the World economy, particularly for developing countries.

The United States continues to be an important trading and development partner of South Africa and Africa and continues to influence global events.

We will thus continue to engage the US at various levels in order to continue to grow the partnership between South Africa and the USA.

We will continue to expand our bilateral relations with Latin America, Canada and the Caribbean, and continue to strengthen cooperation within the context of groupings of the South.

In addition, we will continue to develop relations with Cuba and to lobby for the lifting of the economic embargo.

South Africa is also strengthening partnerships with Indonesia, Vietnam, Mexico and Turkey.

Asia has become South Africa's largest trading region. It is an increasingly important source of investment, particularly China, India and Japan.

We signed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China in August 2010, to expand export opportunities for South Africa's value-added products, support for mineral beneficiation and the development of the green economy.

A key element in the relations between South Africa and the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the "One China Policy" that was adopted in 1998 immediately after the de-recognition of Taiwan in 1997 and the recognition of the PRC.

The "One China Policy" is aimed at addressing the question of the territorial sovereignty of China as the sole and legitimate representative of all the people of that country, with which we have strong historical, political, economic and social relations.

The One China position was formalised through a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the establishment of Diplomatic Relations" signed on 30 December 1997.

In the Joint Communiqué dated 30 December 1997, the Governments of South Africa and the China agreed that:

"The Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the People's Republic of China agree to develop the friendly relations and co-operation between the two countries on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence".

South Africa's adoption and implementation of the "One China Policy" is consistent with international law, which recognises the PRC as the sole and legitimate representative of all the people of China.

Having outlined our relations with various regions and countries, let me state categorically that our foreign policy is independent and decisions are informed by the national interest.

We look at what is of benefit to the South African people, and what will advance our domestic priorities at that given time.

We are not dictated to by other countries, individuals or lobby group interests within our own country.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Last year we had our biggest international event ever, with the successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World.

We want to build on that success with the hosting of the COP 17/CMP7 UN Climate Change conference towards the end of November.

The outcome of the Durban Conference must be balanced, fair and credible, and preserve and strengthen the multilateral rules- based response to climate change.

We look forward to welcome the world in Durban for this event of global significance.

Honourable Chancellor, Vice-chancellor, honoured guests,

We look forward to working with the University of Pretoria and indeed many other key stakeholders to build a better Africa and a better world.

We want to build the Africa that was described in April 1906 by one of the leading thinkers produced by our struggle for freedom, Pixley ka Isaka Seme.

He said in his seminal and timeless essay on the regeneration of Africa;

“The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved, her desert plains red with harvest, her Abyssinia and her Zululand the seats of science and religion, reflecting the glory of the rising sun from the spires of their churches and universities.

“Her Congo and her Gambia whitened with commerce, her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business, and all her sons employed in advancing the victories of peace, greater and more abiding than the spoils of war”.

I thank you.