



President Thabo Mbeki address to the First Extraordinary Summit of the AU in Addis Ababa 3 – 4 February 2003

SOUTH AFRICA'S REGIONAL AND MULTILATERAL INTERESTS

AFRICA

The South African Government firmly believes that the future of South Africa is inextricably linked to the future of the African continent and that of our neighbours in Southern Africa. National visions of building a united, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society are also relevant to our vision for the continent. Coupled with this is the understanding that socio-economic development cannot take place with-

out political peace and stability, and inversely, that political peace and stability are a prerequisite for socio-economic development. Within this framework, our efforts are directed at creating an environment in which all states on the continent will achieve their full potential.

Our engagement with Africa rests on two pillars:

- Strengthening her institutions conti-

nentially and regionally viz the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and support the implementation of Africa's socio-economic development programme (NEPAD).

- Strengthening of bilateral relations. This bilateral work will receive more focused attention in the period ahead.

Africa Multilateral

The Department's goals for the continent are therefore the resolution of conflict and the building of a framework by means of which socio-economic development can take place. The entry points for achieving these goals are provided by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The SADC, as a Regional Economic Community, is one of the recognised building blocks of the African Union. The Department has been fully involved in the re-structuring of the SADC, which has been initiated in order for the SADC to deliver tangible achievements within the region, as well as to play its role on the continent. Within the region the SADC remains the primary vehicle for South African policy and action to achieve regional development within all development sectors. In addition, the SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security is concerned with regional defence and security matters, including issues such as drug trafficking, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

Of particular note is the development of the SADC's 15-year Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan

(RISDP), which is aimed at operationalising the restructured SADC. The RISDP has been developed in line with NEPAD, which will ensure that the SADC's development agenda works in tandem with the African Union.

At the continental level the Department has been pre-occupied with the development of the structures of the African Union, namely the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Executive Council of Ministers, the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Commission, the Pan-African Parliament, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the Peace and Security Council, the African Court of Justice, etc. The African Union has a socio-economic role in development as well as a political mandate.

The political mandate will be fulfilled through the work of the African Union Peace and Security Council, which will be the standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. The Peace and Security Council will also provide a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate a timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa.

The African Union has adopted NEPAD as its programme of action for socio-economic development and the

structures of the African Union, amongst others, will be engaged in the implementation of NEPAD-directed programmes.

NEPAD is a continental instrument to advance people-centred develop-

ment, based on democratic values and principles. It commits African governments to good governance and to detailed programmes of action within specific time scales. It ensures an integrated approach to development needs on the continent, and at the same time works to redefine the relationship of the continent with the international community, particularly the developed world and multilateral institutions.

The work of the Department on the African continent will continue to promote South Africa's regional and multilateral interests regarding the realisation of the African

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Within the region the SADC remains the primary vehicle for South African policy and action to achieve regional development within all development sectors.

Renaissance though the objectives of the African Union and NEPAD, in the following areas:

Within Southern Africa we will seek to enhance the SADC so that it

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can provide a framework within which each member state will have the opportunity to reach its full potential in terms of peace, security, stability and economic and social development, as well as civil society participation and gender equity.

For the rest of the continent we will seek to assist in creating an architecture for the African Union by

means of which member states will reach their individual as well as collective potential in terms of peace, security, stability and economic and social development, as well as civil society participation and gender equity.

We will pursue the implementation of NEPAD in the context of the AU and SADC, as well as oversee the

national implementation of NEPAD and the harmonisation of the national, regional and continental programmes of action with NEPAD.

The development of the regional and continental mechanisms, namely the SADC and the AU, will provide us with instruments by means of which concrete NEPAD programmes can be identified, developed and implemented. These mechanisms will also enable us to endow individual member states with the capacity to benefit from NEPAD in a constructive and consolidated manner.

Note should also be taken of the efforts of the Department to ensure that civil society receives prominence in our interaction with continental and regional mechanisms. This is done in the belief that a strong civil society, including the private sector, is an essential element in ensuring good governance and can contribute towards enriching continental deliberations on all issues.

Southern Africa

In view of the fact that events in any Southern African country have a direct impact on South Africa, Southern Africa remains a priority in our foreign relations and our overall aim would be to ensure that these

states enjoy stability and prosperity.

While the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the South African Customs Union (SACU) represent the major thrust of South Africa's relations with Southern African countries, direct bilateral initiatives - through such instruments as Joint Commissions - have been launched where certain issues or events warranted priority attention.

Following the end of the war in Angola, the reconstruction of its infrastructure has become a priority, and South Africa's contribution to these efforts should be channeled through bilateral agreements, involvement by South African parastatals and businesses, and encouragement of investments into Angola. Angola will also hold its national elections in 2005 and support for this process is critical.

In Zimbabwe it is important to promote the reconciliation process and encourage continuous dialogue between political parties and other role-players in that country, not only through the SADC and AU, but also bilaterally.

With Lesotho the major thrust in our bilateral relations should be to ensure that Lesotho is removed from the list of "Least Developed Countries". Through the Joint Bilateral Commission for Co-operation, the main goal is thus



South African President Thabo Mbeki and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo consolidating bilateral agreements during a State Visit to South Africa by the Nigerian President

to assist Lesotho to rise to "Developing Country" status.

Central and West Africa

As far as conflict prevention, management and resolution are concerned, the peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains a priority for the South African Government. Given the large amount of effort and resources invested by South Africa in the DRC peace process so far, it is imperative for South Africa to help strengthen and build the Transitional Government in that country, which was established

following the successful completion of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. It is also important for South Africa to assist the DRC with its process of post-conflict reconstruction and development. These processes are important to ensure that the DRC can conduct democratic elections in 2005, as determined by the All-Inclusive and Global Agreement on the Transition in the DRC. The South African Government is aware that a peaceful and stable DRC is critical for the development of sustainable and durable peace and prosperity for the region and for the African continent as a whole.

At the bilateral level, the West African sub-region is the region most beset by recurrent conflict. The resolution of conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia remains of crucial importance in restoring stability to West Africa. In addition, South Africa, together with its partners, Nigeria and Libya, are undertaking trilateral efforts to assist Sierra Leone on its post-conflict path of development. South Africa's relationship with Nigeria, both at the bilateral and multilateral level, remains the focal point of its interaction with the sub-region, which centres around the operations of the Bi-National Commission.

East Africa

The efforts aimed at negotiating a successful and all-inclusive peace process in the Great Lakes region, and in Burundi, in particular, were intensified by the involvement of the South African government. With the personal involvement of the President and the Deputy President, the Armed Political Parties and Movements concluded a Comprehensive

Power Sharing Agreement, paving the way for sustainable transitional arrangements and a focus on the democratic elections that lie ahead. Given the complexity of the conflict, it is important for South Africa as the facilitator and lead country to remain associated with the peace process and to create an environment conducive to democratic elections taking place towards the end of the year. The deployment of the African Union Mission in Burundi has contributed to stabilisation in the country.

Bilateral relations with countries



Above: Sudanese Vice President Machar received by Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr NC Dlamini Zuma during a State Visit to South Africa

in the Great Lakes region have been characterised by significant efforts at establishing a structured framework for co-operation. South Africa's co-operation with Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya is centred on the establishment of the Joint Commission of Co-operation, and in Tanzania on the Presidential Economic Commission, which is intended to consolidate relations. To consolidate the peace process in Burundi, the South African Government should facilitate their post-conflict reconstruction and development programmes.

Developments in the Horn of

Africa are dominated by the prospect of a comprehensive peace agreement being signed between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. It is believed that peace in the Sudan would have a positive influence on stability in the region. The international community should utilise the opportunities created by such an agreement to the benefit of

the people of the region and to facilitate development towards the peaceful resolution of conflict in the north. In this context, a solution in the Darfur region is of particular concern.

The Eritrea-Ethiopia dispute is a cause of concern, but it is in both countries' interests that the dispute be resolved amicably through the intervention of the UN and the AU. Similarly, the signatories of the Somali peace process should be encouraged to maintain the momentum towards the implementation of the peace agreement.

North Africa

South Africa, through the establishment of Joint Bilateral Commissions enjoys constructive relations with the countries of North Africa. These relationships are further consolidated through South Africa's interaction and co-operation at a multilateral level.

The recent move to the normalisation of relations between the West and Libya following the lifting of United Nations sanctions against Libya, and the latter's abandonment of its programme of weapons of mass destruction, have brought a degree of stability to the region. It has also begun to create opportunities for furthering economic relation.

The conflict between the Morocco and the Western Sahara however, has suffered another setback as a result of Morocco's rejection of the latest Baker Plan. This impasse will further delay the revival of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

The failure to resolve the conflict in the Western Sahara and the inability by North African states to revive AMU, may have a negative impact on regional stability, economic integration and the consolidation of the African Agenda. This presents fresh challenges to South Africa and the African Union as a whole to explore ways to resolve this protracted conflict and the revival of AMU.

ASIA AND AUSTRALASIA

Since 1994 South Africa's interaction with Asia has increased significantly: South Africa presently has 16 residential Missions in 13 countries or territories in Asia and Australasia. Eighteen countries from this region currently maintain 30 diplomatic Missions in South Africa.

Over the past two decades Asia has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing economic blocs. Rapid growth in China, India and other South-East Asian states has made Asia one of the most dynamic regions in the world. Despite Japan's economic woes, it is still the second largest economy in the world. This economic dynamism in Asia has generated tremendous business opportunities for South Africa. Japan and Taiwan feature prominently as markets for South African industrial products, such as vehicles, and as affluence increases in China and India, exports of value-added goods to these countries are likely to grow.

While Japan, Malaysia and Taiwan already rank among the foremost sources of foreign investment, the significance of China and India as a future source of investment in South Africa is expected to increase. South Africa's international companies are finding attractive investment opportuni-

ties in China, Indonesia, Australia and Thailand in diverse fields such as mining, minerals processing, electronic media and the petrochemical industry.

Nevertheless, the potential Asia offers as a market for South African goods and a source of direct investment remains largely untapped. Exploiting these opportunities is one of South Africa's most important strategic objectives in the region.

The assertiveness of this region in global politics is increasingly visible, as demonstrated by the high-profile role played by key Asian countries in global affairs: China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Japan is an influential member of the G8, while India and Japan harbour ambitions to be permanent members of a reformed UN Security Council. South Africa and key Asian countries agree on important multilateral issues, such as the reform of the WTO and UN, international disarmament, small arms proliferation and environmental issues. Continued co-operation with Asian countries on these multilateral issues is crucial to the multilateral foreign policies South Africa is promoting.

Despite its generally perceived identity as a unified bloc, Asia comprises a rich diversity of cultures and peoples. Greater Asia today also incorporates former Soviet Union

Asian states that are reasserting their Asian roots against their previously enforced Eastern European identity. These countries offer new economic opportunities for South Africa, inter alia in the oil and mining industries. In December 2003 South Africa opened an Embassy in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Several important Muslim countries, e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Brunei, Afghanistan and Indonesia, are Asian and have significant influence in the Muslim world. All of the aforementioned countries are members of the 52-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Malaysia, which assumed the Chair of NAM during February 2003, also became the Chair of the OIC in October 2003. South Africa's partnership with Malaysia in the pursuit of common goals in the international arena is of critical importance, as confirmed during the State Visit by President Mbeki to Malaysia last year. President Mbeki has also committed himself to visit the Asean Region during 2004.

Key Asian countries are also committed to contributing to the implementation of NEPAD. Several existing Africa-Asia co-operation forums, such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and the China-Africa Co-operation Forum,



Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad and Senior Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Tetsuro Yano of Japan during the Sixth meeting of the Japanese South Africa Partnership Forum.

are being synchronised with NEPAD in order to serve as implementing institutions. The India-Africa Fund is to be investigated as to the possibility of its being included in this group. During the third TICAD conference held in Tokyo in September 2003, President Mbeki and other African heads of state and government were reassured of the Japanese government's commitment to the goals of NEPAD.

A comprehensive plan of action

designed to promote Chinese involvement in Africa was agreed upon during the December 2003 China-Africa Co-operation Forum's Ministerial Meeting in Addis Ababa. Deputy President Jacob Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and other senior African participants in these important deliberations received unqualified support for the continent's development goals from Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

NEPAD has been well received in South East Asia, as is illustrated by the reception President Mbeki received at the XIIIth Asean Summit in Cambodia. As a result of South Africa's participation in the Summit, a decision was taken to launch the Asia-Africa Sub-Regional Organisations Conference (AASROC I) in Bandung in April 2003. The AASROC process is co-hosted by South Africa and Indonesia. AASROC II will be held in South Africa during August 2004, and it is envisaged that the process will culminate in the establishment of an Asia-Africa Forum for co-operation between regional economic communities in Asia and Africa during a Summit Meeting in Bandung in 2005 to commemorate the Afro-Asia Conference of 1955.

Countries of the North (especially the US and EU member states) recognise Asia as a strategically important region and their increasingly high-profile involvement with the key countries of Asia on both economic and political fronts bears testimony to this. The location of military bases in Japan and South Korea, and a significant military presence in Uzbekistan, illustrate the strategic importance the US attaches to the region.

Several key countries of Asia are leading role-players of the South. They share common membership with South

Africa in international organisations such as the NAM, G-77 and the Commonwealth. South Africa also plays a leading role in the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC).

South-South dialogue has been boosted significantly by the establishment in June 2003 of the India/Brazil/South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA). Emphasis is to be placed on developing IBSA into a powerful global forum to drive South-South co-operation, the agenda of the South, and to champion the needs of the developing world. The first trilateral

Ministerial Meeting of IBSA was held on 4 and 5 March 2004 in New Delhi, India. South Africa will host the second during the first quarter of 2005.

Asia comprises both developing and developed countries. In this regard it makes sense for South Africa to strengthen ties with this strategically important region, "to strengthen our relations with countries of the South, and improve our multi-faceted relations with the developed world," as stated by President Mbeki in his State of the Nation Address during 2003.

ASIA'S ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE TO SOUTH AFRICA AND NEPAD:

- More than 27% of South African foreign trade, some R70 billion per annum, is conducted with countries in Asia.
- Asia could be a strategic partner in the areas of human resources development, agriculture, infrastructure construction, ICT, health and private sector development for South Africa and Africa in the implementation of NEPAD.
- Tourism from Asia is an important source of income for South Africa and there is a need to further explore opportunities in new and existing markets.
- Investment from the region has grown significantly since 1994 and continues to expand.
- The present ODA to South Africa from Japan, the third largest contributor, is significant.
- Co-operation between Asia and South Africa in international forums such as the WTO, UNCTAD, IMF and the World Bank is crucial in promoting the interests of the countries of the South.

MIDDLE EAST

The primary strategic significance of the region emerges from its role as the repository of and conduit for the world's largest oil reserves as well as other sources of energy such as natural gas. In addition to this, there is the impact it has on international stability as a result of the Arab/Israeli conflict. More recently, the region has been associated with the emergence of so-called "Islamic extremism" and has been identified by countries such as the USA with the emergence of terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda. Most recently, the issues of Iraqi compliance with UNSC resolutions on disarmament and the US-led war against Iraq have dominated the international agenda. US Pressure on Iran and Syria with regard to weapons of mass destruction is another recent issue.

The need to achieve a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East remains an international issue. The region has been commonly perceived as a source of political volatility in the global landscape. A primary source of this volatility has been the ongoing issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the historical conflict between Israel and the Arab world. At a broader level, the region's status as the repository of the

world's largest oil reserves has had a crucial significance both for its place in international politics and its domestic politics. As noted above, more recently, Western-based apprehensions about "Islamic extremism" and terrorist networks have also generated concerns about the stability of the region.

The Middle East Conflict is undoubtedly one issue that has given this region its global profile in the last fifty years. But even beyond the Middle East Conflict, South Africa, like many other major countries, would have to remain engaged with this region.

A number of factors account for the importance and strategic geopolitical significance of this region.

The Middle East is the gateway between Europe and Asia, and between East and West. It abuts on two major seas of enormous importance - the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. It is a neighbour to major emerging powers - India, China, Russia and Turkey. It is also the historical centre of the Christian, Islamic and Jewish faiths. It is a place where Western and Eastern civilisations interface and intermingle. But perhaps the most significant factor involved remains the fact that the region possesses the world's largest reserves of oil and gas.

For South Africa, the region is

important in the following respects:

- It represents an enormous market for South Africa's industrial, commercial and agricultural products. It is a promising source of potential inflow of tourists, investment and technical cooperation.
- The region provides 80% of South Africa's oil imports. There are possibilities for military industrial

Below: Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr Kamal Kharrazi in discussion during the 7th Joint Bilateral Commission.



cooperation with key markets in the region.

- The region has a profound cultural and religious resonance with millions of South Africans who adhere to the three major monotheistic religions of the world.
- The cultural, religious, historical and strategic affinity between this region and the northern part of Africa itself makes it important in the context of African renewal.
- The region represents an important constituency for the agenda of the

South. With about 300 million inhabitants, the region remains a major player in the forums of developing countries.

- However, until a comprehensive, just and permanent solution to the Middle East Conflict is found, the Middle East region will not be able to realise its full potential and will remain a key source of instability for world peace and security.

South African engagement in the Middle East conflict

The current government inherited strong bilateral relations with Israel that have been constructively transformed and built upon. The South African Government is also held in high regard by the Palestinian people and their leadership for its achievements in the struggle against apartheid and in nation building. Our country contains sizeable Jewish and Muslim minorities, both of which ensure that South African civil society is concerned with the issues that dominate the region.

South African experience of transition and transformation

The fact that both the Israelis and the Palestinians expressed their appreciation of the way in which South

Africa has handled this almost intractable issue at WCAR is in itself an indication of the possibility that South Africa may play a meaningful role in bringing the two sides of the conflict back to the negotiating table. South Africa has remained consistent in its approach and, due to our own experience of negotiating a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, has credibility with those Israelis and Palestinians who are genuinely committed to forging their own peace agreement.

International context

It is impossible for any state that undertakes bilateral relations, in particular with countries in the region or African Arab countries, and that operates within multilateral forums to remain either isolated from or indifferent to the Middle East conflict. It would be possible, however, to attempt to maintain a low profile and simply play a reactive role. South Africa, given the factors elaborated above and in its capacity as a Troika member of NAM, will continue to play a pro-active role.

What guides South African engagement in seeking an equitable solution to the conflict?

- There is no military solution to the conflict.

- A political solution can be found through negotiation, in good faith, between the two sides and adherence by both parties to the agreements made.
- There can be no security for Israel or for the Palestinians, or any lasting peace in the region, whilst the Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination remains unfulfilled.
- To this end there is a need to establish a sovereign Palestinian State, with its capital in Jerusalem, alongside the State of Israel, both existing within secure borders.

What underpins these guidelines?

UNSC resolutions 242, and 338; 2002 resolutions 1397, 1402, 1403, 1405 and 1435; and UNGA resolutions ES-10/10 and ES-10/11. The Land for Peace principle and the applicability of the 4th Geneva Convention to the Palestinian Occupied Territories (of which South Africa is a High Contracting Party), as well as UNGA resolution 194 of 1947 in relation to the return of Palestinian refugees, serve as internationally recognised benchmarks in this regard.

What action is South Africa taking in engaging with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Presidential Peace Initiative

In consultation with key role-players involved in the Middle East Peace Process, President Mbeki hosted a Presidential Retreat at Spier wine estate in Cape Town from 9th to 11th January 2002. The Retreat was attended by senior participants from Palestine, led by Minister Saeb Erekat and Minister Zaid Abu Ziad, and from Israel by former Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and Speaker of the Knesset Avraham Burg. Several current and former South African Cabinet Ministers were also present. This initiative takes forward the NAM mandate and will be followed up after South Africa hands over the NAM Chair to Jordan.

The principal aims of the Retreat were:

- To support the ongoing initiatives towards the creation of a favourable environment to restart peace negotiations;
- to share the South African experience in negotiation, peacemaking and transition to democracy; and
- to strengthen the peace camps in Palestine and Israel as well as the general dynamic towards peace in the region.

This unique event produced a



Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad and a Palestinian delegation at a press conference

'Spier Three Party Communiqué' that demonstrates the spirit of commitment to dialogue and partnership for peace between the three parties present. The Retreat provided an opportunity for those on both sides of the conflict who wish to return to the peace process to re-engage in direct communication for the first time in over a year. Both the Israeli and the Palestinian del-

egations expressed great appreciation and interest in the experiences of negotiation shared by the South African delegation. Subsequently, pro-peace elements in the region have been inspired by the Retreat to take up public positions that challenge the logic of confrontation. The participants also praised the informal, non-prescriptive and constructive atmosphere created by the President and the South African hosts.

South Africa is largely dependent on the Middle East as a supplier of oil, which has resulted, in the case of Iran

and Saudi Arabia, in a negative balance of trade accounts. Some Gulf states have recognised the importance of diversification (notably the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar), although most oil-producing countries remain primarily dependent on a single-commodity economy. The degree to which most governments have been able to subsidise their indigenous populations via oil revenues has meant that prevailing political dispensations have remained largely unchallenged, but that there is significant underdevelopment of human resources. Most of these countries are significantly dependent on expatriate labour (including South Africans).

Since 1994 South Africa's interaction with the Middle East has increased greatly. South Africa currently maintains 12 Missions in the region, and 14 countries from the Middle East have diplomatic missions in Pretoria. South Africa maintains cordial relations with all countries of the region. In general, there has been support in principle for both the AU and NEPAD, although this must be leveraged in terms of concrete commitments. Formal co-operation between the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and the SADC is being pursued. South Africa has also applied for Observer status in the Organisation of Islamic Conference

(OIC). Recently, the League of Arab States has indicated that it intended opening an office in Pretoria.

Politically, South Africa's contributions to the Middle East Peace Process and towards resolving the crisis over Iraq have increased its profile in the region and have earned it enhanced respect. This must be complemented with an enhanced and revitalised economic strategy and initiative. The potential for trade and investment remains significant and has yet to be pursued to the fullest extent.

South Africa needs to establish a time line within which it will re-engage an emerging Iraqi government. The process of return to sovereignty in Iraq will continue to receive South African support through multilateral channels. South Africa aims to open a micro-mission in Iraq as soon as the return to sovereignty becomes a viable process and as soon as the security situation on the ground in Iraq allows.

South Africa has expanded its relations in the Levant by the appointment of an Honorary Consul in Lebanon and the opening of an embassy in Syria. The expansion of economic relations with these countries and their role in the Middle East peace process will be focal points in the building of relations in the future.