

## **South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire sign significant Cooperation Agreements**

South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire, on Thursday, 2 December 2021, concluded a historic engagement, which saw the signing of 10 memoranda of understanding and agreements in various areas of cooperation.

In a room full of media in Abidjan, the South African and Ivorian delegations took centre stage for the signing ceremony.

The agreements cover areas such as defence, agriculture, a bilateral air services agreement, a cooperation agreement in the field of youth matters and an agreement on economic and technical cooperation in the fields of energy, geology, mines and metallurgy, among others.

Making remarks during a media briefing on the occasion of his State Visit, President Cyril Ramaphosa said that he and his Ivorian counterpart, President Alassane Ouattara, had agreed to work together on multilateral and global issues of mutual concern, including the reform of the United Nations Security Council.

He said the visit was historic because it was the first State Visit between the two countries since the establishment of diplomatic relations many years ago.

“This has been for us a most productive and rewarding State Visit and engagement, giving real meaning and purpose to this historic first State Visit,” the President said.

The State Visit aimed to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries with a view to create a strategic partnership that would be enduring and mutually beneficial.

“We have just witnessed the signing of 10 memoranda of understanding and agreements in various areas of cooperation. We have undertaken to deepen trade and investment between our two countries.

“Based on the priorities and comparative advantages of both our countries, we have agreed on the need to increase investment in value addition in agriculture and agro-processing, and in the development of the mining sector,” the President said.

He said that they would prioritise investment in public-private infrastructure projects as outlined in the Ivorian National Development Plan 2021 – 2025.

“We are looking to expand trade in petroleum products, fresh produce, retail and agricultural products, and to explore opportunities for medical and educational tourism,” he said.

President Ramaphosa noted that the portfolio of South African investment in Côte d'Ivoire was growing rapidly and a number of South African companies, including major banks and telecommunications companies, were operating in the country.

“Several of our state-owned enterprises are negotiating investment-promotion activities in sectors such as oil and gas, mining and geoscience,” he said.

By increasing economic cooperation, the President said the two nations were looking to address the common challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, with a particular focus on the empowerment of women, youth and people with disabilities.

“In this regard, I am particularly pleased with the signing of an agreement on cooperation in the field of youth, and a cooperation agreement in the fields of women’s empowerment and gender equality,” he said.

The President extended his gratitude to President Ouattara for the demonstration of solidarity in agreeing that the State Visit should go ahead, amid the discovery of Omicron variant, which resulted in travel bans imposed on the country.

“The imposition of travel bans on South Africa and a number of countries in the southern African region are regrettable, unfair and unscientific.

“Given that it was our own African scientists who first detected the Omicron variant, it is also a slap in the face of African excellence and expertise,” he said.

“The bans will cause untold damage to the travel and tourism industries in particular that sustain businesses and livelihoods in South Africa and the southern African region.”

The President used the opportunity again to call on the countries who had imposed these travel restrictions to urgently reconsider their decision.

President Ramaphosa and the Ivorian Prime Minister also addressed a business forum, which brought together businesspeople to promote trade and investment between the two countries.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUL4Js\\_S3wI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUL4Js_S3wI)