

**FREEDOM DAY SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR VL SINDANE ON FRIDAY, 26  
APRIL 2013. SOUTH AFRICA OFFICIAL RESIDENCE**

Honourable Minister of Industry Mr Jean Claude BROU;  
The Chairman of the Dialogue, Truth, and Reconciliation Commission,  
Mr Charles Konan BANNY and his Wife;  
Your Excellencies;  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and the people of South Africa, I am pleased to welcome you all to the Official Residence of the Embassy of South Africa.

On this special occasion, we commemorate the Freedom Day of South Africa, a very significant day in our national calendar. The theme of this year's celebrations Head of Mission is "Mobilising Society Towards Consolidating Democracy and Freedom".

South Africa has made major progress in improving the lives of its entire people since 1994. Achievements must be communicated and celebrated. The Census 2011 results provide evidence for the progress that has been made in creating a better life for all citizens. This demonstrates the visible improvements in our society as a result of people working together for change.

South Africa has taken many strides away from its past of exclusion and discrimination on the basis of sex, colour and creed. The country has been steadily moving forward in a direction that reasserts our humanity. In this march towards humanity, a new culture of human rights and a respect for the dignity of the human spirit have become characteristics of South Africa.

As we celebrate this day, we are called upon to re-affirm who we are as a nation, and what we stand for. We are also called upon to live up to the aspirations of the liberation struggle where all the people of South Africa live in peace and harmony, and to play a part individually and collectively, not only in the development of our country, but also of the Continent. This we can only achieve if we build our economy, to meet the challenges and basic needs and create a better life for all.

The 2013 celebrations for Freedom Day take on special significance as the nation prepares for our 20 years of freedom commemoration and celebrations.

We dedicate time to reflect on the strides we have made in achieving the vision of a better life for all. Undoubtedly much has changed since 1994 and there has been progress in every sphere of society, but we are aware that more must still be done.

In 1994 the economy we inherited from the apartheid government was basically bankrupt, the dawn of our democracy brought about a change in fortunes for our economy.

The Census 2011 results indicate that income levels have increased, education levels are up and many millions of people now have access to water, electricity, sanitation and housing.

We have seen:

- Increased number of households that had access to piped water from 80.3 per cent in 1996 to 91.2 per cent in 2011.
- Increased persistently the proportion of households that have flush toilets connected to the sewage system to 57,0 per cent in Census 2011 from 50 per cent and 55 per cent in both Census 2001 and 2007 respectively.
- Increased number of households that used electricity for lighting from 58.2 per cent in 1996 to 84.7 per cent in 2011, and households that used electricity for cooking increased from 47.5 per cent to 73.9 per cent over the same period.

This is all the more remarkable since many of these services have been achieved from a very low base in 1994.

We have risen from the ashes of apartheid and stand proud on the world stage, our voice and presence is keenly felt at institutions such as the United Nations and the African Union.

We have not allowed our divided past to shape our future. Together we have built a new society on the values of a united, non-racial non-sexist and democratic South Africa.

Honourable guests,

Excellence is observed on a repeated basis, for example, interventions made by the Department of Health to improve the quality of life are yielding results and the overall life expectancy of South Africans has improved significantly.

The Minister of Health, Honourable Elias Motsoaledi had this to say recently:

“The tide is turning in the fight against HIV and AIDS. By March 2012, more than 20,2 million people had undergone testing since the HIV Counselling and Testing campaign started in April 2010.

We have recently launched a revolutionary one a day tablet for people living with HIV and the prize of the tablet makes HIV treatment in SA the cheapest in the world”.

However, building on the solid foundations we have laid, South Africa's principal challenge is to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality.

Our freedom celebrations provide an opportunity to assess what collective action is needed to take the country forward in order to build a prosperous society and improve the quality of life for all, especially the poor and the working class.

Through our long term roadmap of the National Development Plan (NDP) we are striving to build a society as articulated in the Constitution and the Freedom Charter.

Nineteen years into democracy, South Africa remains a highly unequal society where too many people live in poverty and too few work.

Our freedom and democracy was attained at a great cost to countless individuals. Our generation must never lose sight of the sacrifices of those who came before - and we must jealously guard our freedom and democracy.

Our duty is to build a new legacy based on the principles of equality and human rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The relations between South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire were established in 1993, with the establishment of a South African Embassy in Abidjan, followed by the reciprocal establishment of the Embassy of Côte d'Ivoire in Pretoria (SA) in the same year.

Over the years, the two countries have seen a smooth development in their relations, albeit with challenges that were integral to the politico-socio developments in the two countries. The visit to Côte d'Ivoire by both Presidents Mandela and outgoing de Klerk, where they met President Houphouët-Boigny in the early nineteen nineties, was a historical event that will endure, in the relations between the two countries.

Subsequently, both President Mbeki and President Zuma have been to this country, but that was under difficult times. It is our desire, to see President Zuma return to Côte d'Ivoire to strengthen further the relations between the two sister African countries; and raise even higher the level of friendly relations between the two peoples.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Côte d'Ivoire, like South Africa, and the rest of our continent has a big task to improve the social conditions of its citizens. This will not happen without paying attention to certain fundamentals. One of them is to see a people striving in a

unified effort. A unified effort entails a common destiny that everyone has to submit to. Without this common purpose, it will take time to realise the fruits of the hard work that our leaders put up. Recently, our leaders assembled in Durban, South Africa; where ways and means to accelerate the creation of the requisite conditions, in order to advance the development of our continent were threshed. Many such meetings can take place but if the people do not consciously and deliberately step on to the plate, to lend their shoulder, very minimal progress will result.

Which is why the words of President Alassane Ouattara are insightful when he said: “(Accordingly, it is for every citizen to tap within himself and put forward, the virtues of courage, self-sacrifice and public spirit in his everyday behaviour and at the workplace)”. “ A ce titre, il s’agit pour chaque citoyen de puiser en lui et de mettre en avant, le sens et la force des vertus du courage, de l’abnégation et du civisme dans sa conduite et dans son travail. ‘

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like once more to thank you most sincerely, for honouring this occasion. I also wish to acknowledge everyone who partnered with us in the many different ways in which you have, in this regard I wish to single out MTN, SAA, Diplomatic Brand (GRK), Samtrex and Total Cargo management. Without their support, some of the events that we hosted as the Embassy during this past week, would not have been possible.

I now wish to invite you Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me as I propose a toast to the health of President Ouattara and President Zuma and to prosperity for the peoples of Côte d’Ivoire and South Africa...

Cheeeers