

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA IN MORONI, COMOROS, HE. MBULELO BUNGANE, 27  
April 2018**

Your Excellencies, Vice Presidents, Mr Moustadroine Abdou and Mr Abdallah Said Sarouma,

Your Excellencies, Former Vice Presidents, Dr Mohadji, and Mr Mohamed Soilihi,

Your Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, responsible for Comorians abroad, Mr Souef Mohamed El-amine,

Your Excellency Governor of the Island of Ngazidja, Dr Hassani Hamadi

Your Excellencies other Members of the Cabinet, and former Ministers,

Your Excellency the President of the Supreme Court and other members of the Judiciary

Your Excellencies the Mayor of Moroni and other Mayors,

Your Excellency the Grand Kadhi and other religious leaders,

Your Excellencies the Grand Notables of Ngazidja,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Representatives of International Organizations accredited to the Union of Comoros,

Senior Members of Government, Distinguished Guests, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Evening

Bariza Masihu

Bonsoir

Assalam Anleikoum

I extend our greetings to you all. It is indeed an honour and great privilege to again speak to you on the occasion of our National Freedom Day. My wife and I are very pleased that our daughter Nokukhanya was able to join us this year.

We celebrate our Freedom under the theme: "The year of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela: towards full realisation of our freedom through radical socio-economic transformation". Like on previous occasions, this is a proud day for us. The first democratic elections on 27 April 1994 gave birth

to a constitutional democracy and new nation founded on the values of human dignity, non-racialism, non-sexism, the rule of law and universal adult suffrage. For the majority of South Africans who had never voted before, their dignity was restored.

Over the last 24 years our democracy has continued to restore the dignity of millions of South Africans and changed their lives for the better. They now have access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, housing, free education, and health care services. Without access to these services, our freedom would have been empty and hollow.

However more still needs to be done. It is for this reason that this year, the SA government has resolved to make radical socio-economic transformation a key priority so that in the words of President Mandela, political freedom should go side by side “with freedom from hunger, want and suffering”.

This year we celebrate our National Freedom Day with a renewed sense of hope and commitment to fulfil the dreams and aspirations that we had in 1994. Following the mishaps and disappointments of the past few years during which we drifted from the path that our founding fathers had charted for us, President Cyril Ramaphosa has ushered in a new dawn focused on the renewal of the South African society, and the unity of all South Africans. Part of this renewal includes rooting out corruption in government and state owned companies. Our country must, once more take its place among the nations of the world as a champion of peace, a defender of freedom and democracy, and an enemy of poverty and human degradation, as promised by President Mandela.

Fittingly, this new hope coincides with the Centenary Celebrations of the birth of former President Nelson Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu, the wife of Walter Sisulu, a former Rivonia Trialist and a freedom fighter in her own right. If they were still alive, they would have turned 100 years on 18 July and 21 October respectively. Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu left an indelible mark in our country having laid the foundation for a united, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society. Through their selfless dedication in the struggle for freedom, they helped secure the right for all South Africans to be a part of our democracy. Their legacy lives on in our commitment to ensure a just and fair society for all and where our greatest concern must be the needs of those in society who have the least, the poor and the unemployed. These are the people whose interests and needs must come first.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

The Embassy is committed to deepening the relationship between the Governments and peoples of South Africa and the Comoros. For us, what is key to our relationship is peace, stability and socio-economic development of our two countries. We are proud of the achievements that we have recorded in the last year in our bilateral relations with the Comoros although more still need to be done. We have taken concrete steps to improve our bilateral relations on trade and investments. We are resolving some of the barriers that have hindered our trade relations including the issue of aviation links. SA Airlink will soon start a direct service between Moroni and Johannesburg. We are equally confident that maritime links will also be improved. South Africa is committed to invest in the economy of the Comoros. The Embassy is in continuous engagements with the Comorian private sector and relevant institutions in South Africa as well as the private sector to make these investments possible. We are very excited about the positive energy and entrepreneurial spirit displayed by Comorian business people. We are engaging other partners in the Comoros to explore cooperation with them in supporting the Comorian private sector. We believe that although there are still challenges in the investment and business environments, such challenges are not insurmountable. With commitment from all stakeholders and partners, these challenges can be overcome.

We are also pleased with the progress that the Comoros has made in joining SADC and we are especially pleased that Minister Souef was able to represent the country in the last SADC Council of Ministers meeting that was held on 26-27 March in Johannesburg. As the continent and sub region, we are committed to the integration of our economies so that we can better serve the interests of our peoples for jobs and general socio-economic development. As African countries, we need to restructure our economies and how they relate to the global economic community. Colonial arrangements whereby as a continent, we are primarily producers of commodities and importers of finished or value added goods, have not benefitted Africa as much as they benefitted other regions. As the current Chairperson of SADC, South Africa is championing partnerships with the private sector to develop industry and regional value chains in priority sectors such as agro-processing, mineral beneficiation, energy, and pharmaceuticals. The Comoros need to find its place and niche in these value chains to develop and grow its economy.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

The South African Embassy was amongst the first to support the call by the August 11 Movement for the holding of a national conference to assess progress and developments in the

Comoros since independence. Despite the current differences amongst political parties, we remain hopeful and convinced that Comorians will eventually find one another. For us as South Africa and the entire African continent, there is no alternative to dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes. We are committed to democracy, enjoyment of human rights by all, and good governance. As Africans, we have been through violence and wars, and have experienced undemocratic and repressive systems of government. But we have turned our backs on that painful past. We are marching forward to the Africa we want as envisioned in Agenda 2063: an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

To conclude, I would like to quote from a 1906 thesis by Pixley ka Seme, former President of the African National Congress: “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”.

Thank you very much.

Merci beaucoup.

Maraba Mendji

Viva South Africa

Viva the Union of the Comoros

God Bless Africa.