

## Joint Communiqué of the 9th Session of the South Africa – Sweden Bi-national Commission, Stockholm, 19 – 20 October 2015

At the invitation of Her Excellency, Ms Åsa Romson, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, His Excellency the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, visited Sweden on the occasion of the 9th session of the Bi-national Commission (BNC) between South Africa and Sweden from 19 – 20 October 2015 in Stockholm. The two Principals were accompanied by delegations of Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials.

On the margins of the BNC, the Co-Chairs also held bilateral discussions on issues of mutual interest at the bilateral and multilateral levels. At a bilateral level, discussions focused on trade and investment, skills development and training as well as job creation among others. At a multilateral level, discussions included co-operation in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, reform of Global Governance institutions, UN and AU peace-building efforts and social cohesion. The meeting reaffirmed the historic ties of friendship and solidarity between South Africa and Sweden, which date back to the struggle for peace, democracy and justice in South Africa. The unequivocal support that the Swedish people gave to the people of South Africa laid a firm foundation for future co-operation between the two countries

The BNC reviewed and welcomed progress made since the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the BNC which took place in 2013 in Pretoria. The BNC also agreed to establish a new Committee on Environment, Water and Energy to cover new areas of co-operation of particular significance for sustainable development.

At the conclusion of the two days of consultations, the Co-Chairs received and welcomed progress reports from the four Committees of the BNC, namely: Political Affairs, Economic Affairs, Science and Technology Affairs, and Environment, Water and Energy Affairs.

The Political Affairs Committee discussed the bilateral relationship as well as selected Foreign Policy concerns of mutual interest. The Committee discussed a number of regional and global issues of mutual interest, including DRC, Burundi, the Horn of Africa, Liberia, Ukraine, Syria and Palestine. The importance of upholding the principles of international law, based on the centrality of the UN Charter and including the principle of territorial integrity was underlined in the discussions. It agreed on the desirability to improve cooperation between the UN and the AU particularly within the peace keeping and peace building fields as reflected in UN Review reports. Sweden and South Africa will work jointly to strengthen inclusive and sustainable peace building by promoting, amongst others, cooperation between women mediation networks as well as training of female mediators

The BNC took note of the success of the Swedish-sponsored full scholarship programme and welcomed the announcement of the extension of the programme until 2021. The programme provides opportunity for study at a post graduate level for South African students at Swedish tertiary institutions in a wide range of fields.

Further efforts will be made to deepen and develop economic relations, not least in the area of trade and investments. Strategic areas include, among others, energy, ICT, mining and transport infrastructure. Focus will be given to ensuring a conducive and predictable investment climate.

It was also agreed to strengthen collaboration in broadband policy framework development and rollout priority areas, including in ICT capacity building, SMME incubation and inclusion thereof in the value chains, as well as data security and e-learning strategies.

The Committee on Science and Technology noted the significant progress on scientific relations between the two countries with appreciation. It highlighted an agreement between the South African National Research Foundation and the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education which has already resulted in a research call with 103 applications received. An adjudication process of these research applications is currently underway.

Sweden and South Africa are committed to contribute towards a positive conclusion of COP21 in Paris in December 2015 and intend to intensify cooperation on sustainable development. The Committee on Environment, Water and Energy also agreed to continue collaboration on a broad range of issues including chemicals and waste, water resource management, and on the information platforms Water and Climate Change Information for Africa (WACCA) and Drought Early Warning Detection (DEWD). The Committee also expressed willingness to develop cooperation on energy.

At the closing ceremony of the BNC, a Memorandum of Understanding on Water Resources Management, and a Letter of Intent on Environmental Protection and Climate Change were signed, and the joint intent to finalise a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of Energy was expressed. These instruments will enable a broadened cooperation on areas contributing to sustainable development, including in the Blue Economy, and underscore the importance of job creation as a priority for both South Africa and Sweden.

In addition, a Business Forum of South African and Swedish business leaders met during the BNC, to explore the possibilities of future collaboration with particular focus on ICT, mining and energy. The two sides agreed to further pursue trade and investment relations, within the overall thrust of plans to grow a more inclusive economy.

A seminar on the importance of local partnerships was also held during the BNC. There are currently thirteen active partnerships between South African and Swedish local authorities, further deepening people-to-people contact between the two countries. A seminar on the New Climate Economy facilitated discussion on the economic potential of climate change and energy policies.

At the conclusion of the BNC, His Excellency Deputy President Ramaphosa expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Swedish government for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to him and the South African delegation.

In conclusion, the Co-Chairs agreed that the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the South Africa – Sweden BNC would convene in South Africa during the second half of 2017, on a date to be mutually determined through diplomatic channels.

**Stockholm, 20 October 2015.**