

Media remarks by Dr Noa Noel Lehoko on the occasion of his presentation of credentials to President Jose Mario Vaz – 5 December 2014

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen of the media

Let me thank on behalf of the South African people, the immense role played by Guinea-Bissau in our struggle to defeat the horrible system of Apartheid, which was declared by the UN as a crime against humanity.

This year marks 20 years since the fall of Apartheid and therefore the 20th Anniversary of South Africa's Freedom. We will remain grateful towards African countries such as Guinea-Bissau and the international community's support in the struggle for our liberation. We are aware that Guinea-Bissau made enormous sacrifices for the liberation of South Africa and Africa in general. To that, we say thank you.

Africa is the centrepiece of our country's foreign policy. This policy is rooted in the principles of a united, peaceful and prosperous Africa.

After he was released in prison in 1990, former President Nelson Mandela explained the foreign policy that South Africa was going to pursue once his party, the ANC assumed power. He said:

(I quote)

“South Africa cannot escape its African destiny. If we do not devote our energies to this continent, we too could fall victim to the forces that have brought ruin to its various parts. Like the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity needs to be attuned to the changes at work throughout the world. A democratic South Africa will bring to an end an important chapter in Africa's efforts to achieve unity and closer cooperation, but it will not close the book”.

The relations between Guinea-Bissau and South Africa are historical and time tested, dating back to the struggles against colonialism and apartheid by peoples of the two countries, led by the heroic acts of Amilcar Cabral and Nelson Mandela and many of their compatriots. I believe our presence here in this beautiful country therefore communicates a powerful message, that not only do we share liberation heroes, but that we have to follow the example set by these titans and act together to secure the all round emancipation of our peoples and

Africans in general. Our presence here is also aimed at recognising and paying tribute to our time-tested relations, and also to fully focus on our new terrain of struggle against poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation.

In this regard, i will strive, during my tenure of office, to take forward the good work that has already been started by my predecessor, former Ambassador LLA Mnguni, to work with Guinea-Bissau to achieve the objectives i have just outlined above.

I am also honoured that I present my credentials today, on 5 December 2014 when we are commemorating the first anniversary of former President Nelson Mandela's passing. The day is marked under the theme: "*Together we move SA forward.*" The South African Government has decided to use the first anniversary of Nelson Mandela's passing to make a call to all South Africans, and the world, to keep his memory alive by living his values and continuing with efforts aimed at ensuring that all humanity lives in a society where peace, tolerance, the rule of law, justice and human rights are upheld.

- The South African government has called on all South Africans and our international friends to observe five minutes of silence on 5 December as we remember Nelson Mandela.
- People can honour his memory by sharing their favourite Nelson Mandela story and wearing a Mandela t-shirt on the day.
- People can also donate books or toys to a child in need and share the former President's passion for helping children.
- People can Post their photos, videos, stories, favourite quotes and pictures wearing a Mandela t-shirt on social media.

I thank you