



Draft for Speech by Ambassador Lulama Smuts Ngonyama

Freedom Day

Intercontinental Hotel - 16 June 2015

DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
COOPERATION; YOUR EXCELLENCY IGNACIO YBAÑEZ RUBIO
THE PAPAL'S NUNCIO AND DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS
IN SPAIN, MONS RENZO FRATINI

LT GEN JUAN ANTONIO CARRASCO, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE
SPANISH DEFENCE FORCE AND OTHER MILITARY OFFICE
BEARERS

DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR SUB SAHARAN AFRICA AT
THE SPANISH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS; MR. JOSÉ
MANUEL ALBARES

YOUR EXCELLENCIES

FELLOW SOUTH AFRICANS

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

FRIENDS

Aunque estoy en el proceso de aprender español, permíteme seguir en inglés. (Although I am in the process of learning Spanish, allow me to continue in English)

I am delighted that you have joined us on this special day.

Freedom Day, our National Day, commemorates the first non-racial democratic elections held on 27 April 1994.

Today also marks an important day in the South African calendar, namely Youth Day, in which we pay tribute to the valuable contribution that our youth made towards our liberation. 21 years later, South Africa continues to draw its strength from its consolidated democracy.

Today, we also commemorate South Africa's Armed Forces Day. The South African National Defence Force was created in 1994 following South Africa's first post-apartheid national elections. This is the result of a full integration process which includes the former liberation forces together with the former apartheid South African Defence Force. This is also the result of the peace and reconciliation process.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Since the advent of the democratic government in 1994, it has been exciting to watch the dynamic pace of expansion in Spanish-South African bilateral relations.

These two countries are close international partners as evidenced by the important positions they commonly hold, especially on human rights matters. Both countries continue to play a positive and constructive role within the international arena.

FRIENDS,

South Africa is a country that offers a wealth of opportunities. It has positioned itself as a **manufacturing center of excellence** with **diversified industrial sectors**, an **open economy** and a **sound business case for investment and profit**. Our **infrastructure is in good shape** and **continues to expand in all sectors**. Our ratings by *Standard & Poors*, *Moody's* and *Fitch* are on average between **A and B**.

South Africa has delivered on its economic potential, with an average annual growth rate of 3.06 % and 5 million jobs from 1994 until 2014. South Africa is also within Southern Africa, a market of more than 200 million consumers.

In this year's State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma identified several focus priority areas which include **energy, agro-processing, infrastructure and the ocean economy among others**. The South African Government has additionally identified special economic zones to accelerate economic growth and

development. These zones will be supported by a package of incentives.

Spain is already a major investment partner in South Africa with an estimated 150 Spanish companies present in South Africa. 40% of our renewable energy programme is being delivered by Spanish companies.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Cooperative partnerships between the two countries are also flourishing in cultural and academic relations. Currently, examples include the *Lion King* and *Porgy and Bess* by the Cape Town Opera, currently performing in Spain. We believe that, as our universities also work together, we will be able to find creative solutions to all the challenges that face us in our increasingly interdependent global village.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to invite you to visit my beautiful country. To experience our striking landscapes, sense our breathtaking natural attractions, explore thousands of kilometers of pristine coastline and enter our wild territories where the Big 5 animals freely roam. Join us in tasting our variety of top wines with our signature Pinotage wines amongst them. South African Airways, the number one African carrier, is present and will do a short presentation. Come and fall in love with a rainbow nation bursting at the seams in rich and diverse culture.

In conclusion, I would like to specifically thank ECHALAR FISHING for contributing towards making this event a success.

On behalf of the South African Government, allow me to also express the upmost appreciation to the Spanish Government, Spanish companies and institutions that continue to market South Africa as a tourism destination of choice.

Once more, thank you to all for joining us in this special day.

Feliz Día de la Libertad a todos. Muchas gracias.

Lulama Smuts Ngonyama

South African Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain and Andorra