

## **Toast remarks on the occasion of the special visit to the Republic of Mauritius**

11 March 2008

The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, Navinchandra Ramgoolam and Madam Veena Brizmohun,  
Honourable Speaker of Parliament, Rajkeswur Purryag,  
Chief Justice, Sik Yuen,  
Honourable, Deputy Prime Ministers,  
Honourable, Leader of the Opposition, Paul Berenger,  
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

My wife, my entire delegation and I are honoured and very delighted to pay a special visit to your beautiful country and would like to express our gratitude for the warm hospitality extended to us by the Government and the people of the Republic of Mauritius.

On behalf of our delegation, I would like to convey the warmest greetings of the Government and people of South Africa to you, Prime Minister, and to the Government and the people of Mauritius.

I would like to congratulate you, Prime Minister, as well as all the people of Mauritius, on this special occasion of the 40th anniversary of your independence.

Your country has every reason to celebrate this occasion because of the important achievements you have registered since independence. These are achievements that have made the Republic of Mauritius such a shining example of democracy, rule of law, stability and development.

We are therefore very honoured that the Prime Minister and the government of Mauritius have given us the opportunity to join the people of this country on this happy occasion as honoured guests.

As South Africans, we believe that these celebrations also belong to us. Indeed, your 40th anniversary is an event that should rightly be celebrated by all Africans because in reality your great achievements as a country demonstrate that it is possible to respond successfully to the challenges of democracy, peace, stability and development. Your four decades of independence tell an inspiring story of how you have become a pathfinder in the struggle to defeat poverty and underdevelopment.

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, the work that Mauritius has done in the last forty years on the important matters of peace, stability, democracy and development, affirms our belief that our countries, individually and collectively, will realise the dream of an African Renaissance.

Among others, we commend the important work you continue to do in investing in human capital because human resource development and education are central to the advancement of developing countries such as Mauritius and South Africa.

Prime Minister, it is indeed a most joyous event for us since it is nearly a decade ago that my predecessor, President Nelson Mandela, last visited your beautiful island with the focus on the strengthening of our bilateral relations.

Indeed, since our freedom in 1994, we have strengthened these bilateral relations, especially in trade and investments, culture, sport and recreation.

Accordingly, I am happy that there is progress towards the finalisation of the General Cooperation Agreement, as well as agreements in such important areas as in education, scientific and technical co-operation, shipping and maritime, environment and tourism as well as social development.

Prime Minister, we support you and your government in your efforts to set up a Truth and Justice Commission as envisaged in your Government Programme for 2005-2010.

I trust that the Commission will reach its intended objective of further promoting social justice, reconciliation and national unity.

I want also to reaffirm South Africa's desire further to strengthen the already close relations between our countries. Since independence in 1968, the Republic of Mauritius has had many challenges. Yet, at every turn the resilience of the people of Mauritius has ensured that the country moves forward.

As Africans, we are very proud of the role that the Republic of Mauritius, as an active member of the African Union and SADC, is playing in advancing democracy on the continent and region and promoting the upliftment of the continent through its support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and especially the APRM process.

We are strengthened by your constructive approach to the Free Trade Area (FTA) in both SADC and COMESA and your appeal that both these bodies should synergise their efforts. We do hope that all of us, as Africans, we will find common ground on these matters so as to achieve regional integration and development as a matter of urgency.

Indeed, we support the work you are doing with regard to the facilitation of the regional economic integration agenda, especially the implementation of the SADC Trade Protocol as well as your support for a regional Industrial Development Forum to deliberate on industrial matters.

Again, I would like to congratulate you, Prime Minister, as well as all the people of Mauritius, for the expert manner in which you hosted, on 8 December 2005, the Round Table Donors' Conference on the Comoros to raise funds for the Government of the Union of Comoros.

This is a clear indication of your country's commitment to and political role in the Indian Ocean region, especially in the realisation of political stability and reconstruction and development of the Comoros.

South Africa is looking forward to participate in the International Consultative Conference and Summit on Poverty and Development in April this year, which your country will host. I have no doubt that the government and the people of Mauritius will, as always, afford us their warm hospitality.

Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, we admire the manner in which you successfully market your country internationally and as a result, ensure that the Republic of Mauritius remains one of the world's leading tourist destinations.

With the FIFA World Cup coming to Africa for the first time in 2010, South Africa will surely draw from Mauritius some of the expertise in this regard and together collaborate so that Africa can present to the world, the finest ever soccer world cup.

Once more, we are very happy to be among friends who have stood by us as we prosecuted a difficult struggle against apartheid and are today true African compatriots in the new struggle for African unity and against poverty and underdevelopment.

We salute the many people of this country who adopted our struggle as their own, especially that great leader of this country, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who collaborated with our liberation movement and was regarded by our own leaders as one of us.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Please rise and join me in a toast to the good health and prosperity of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam and Madam Veena Brizmohun, and to the friendship between the peoples of Mauritius and South Africa.

To friendship!

Thank you.