

# Europe Day Speech

## Pretoria

### 5 May 2010

Honourable Minister Ebrahim,  
Fellow Ambassadors, dear Dean  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen ...

1. Welcome to you all today at our Europe Day Reception, an event that allows us to highlight and emphasize our partnership with South Africa.
2. Minister Ebrahim, 2010 in South Africa has become synonymous with the FIFA World Cup™ and so let me take this opportunity at the outset, on behalf of European Union President Van Rompuy, Commission President Barroso, and the European Union's High Representative, Baroness Ashton, to wish you and South Africa a wonderful and successful World Cup event.
3. But 2010 also is significant for a number of other notable reasons:

For the European Union this coming Sunday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since its creation was proposed by the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, in 1950.

The Union was born - always a political objective, using economic means to promote it. As you will know, so successful was it, that over the years other western European countries gathered around this project – today the EU comprises 27 Member States that collectively strive to build a Europe that respects the freedoms and identity of its close to half a billion citizens.

Also, 2010 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement, the legal basis that regulates our cooperation. Much progress has been achieved (as also pointed out by Deputy President Motlanthe on April 22<sup>nd</sup>).

For South Africa 2010 marks – although no formal commemorations have been planned – 100 years of uninterrupted sovereignty. On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1910 the Union of South Africa was formed, thus ending the Anglo-Boer ... or at it has more recently become known, the South African War, as well as effectively ending colonial rule.

But 2010 is notable too for being the year in which the world is starting to pick up the pieces after the financial crisis – the worst on record for the EU and the Eurozone. Bear in mind though, that the European Union has grown through crises. Also, remember that not longer than five decades ago 15 – if not 17 – of today's 27 EU Member States lacked democratic institutions.

In March this year President Barroso presented Europe 2020 - it sets out the vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century with three key priorities:

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

4. Moving closer to home, and with home I do mean South Africa, I have over the past few years come to recognise some distinct characteristics, most noticeable of which is South Africans' tendency to complain. Let me be blunt: there are few places in this world where the grass is that much greener. Many South Africans' despondency is in my opinion, misplaced.

Within the last week at least one rating agency increased South Africa's rating as an investment destination – contrast this with the "down-gradings" that are taking place for many developed countries in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis. Equally encouraging, and after careful due diligence, was the \$250 million investment commitment into the local mining sector of a Dutch fund manager that made headlines just one week earlier. I for one believe that despite the not insignificant challenges South Africa faces, and let's be honest, will continue to face for some time, the grass here is some shades greener than in many parts of the world that South Africans seem fond of comparing the country to.

5. By the same token, too little has changed for too many: I believe that the Rainbow miracle is not a lost dream but that it is being held ransom by attitudes ... attitudes of whites and blacks alike.

After five years in South Africa I cannot help but feel that there remains too much exploitation of "black" people ... or as South Africans have become used to saying: the formerly disadvantaged. The promise of 1994's New South Africa seems to have bypassed many, if not most, of the disadvantaged and I consider this a tragedy for those of us who have committed more than words to making South Africa a "better place for all".

Equally, I am struck by how easily and destructively the race and/or ethnic card can be played, often with seemingly little concern or appreciation for the greater good ... and with greater good, let me be clear, I mean benefit for the majority.

6. On the upside, Minister, South Africa deserves to be congratulated for the freedoms it guarantees its citizens, through its Constitution, including ... and tough as it might be at times ... freedom of the press, as well as for maintaining a vibrant and outspoken civil society.
7. This, coupled with strong foreign confidence in South Africa's market economy is why I strongly hold the view that South Africa will not, indeed cannot, go the "Zimbabwe way".
8. In closing, two points on our relations:

First, South Africa – European Union relations are thriving, even if mentioned only rarely at DIRCO or DTI. Next week sees the 10th SA/EU Ministerial and the 3<sup>rd</sup> SA/EU Summit has been set for October this year.

Second, our joint Development Programme is delivering. I am under no illusion about the complexity of "getting the development paradigm right". But our 30 ongoing projects (ranging from employment creation to local economic development – as in Limpopo, to social services) are making a real difference.

This year we and our South African partners conclude on the Midterm Review of the Joint Country Strategy/Multi-annual Indicative Programme. I note that the Midterm Review found that in the post-economic crisis period our joint programme's heavy emphasis on service delivery and employment has become even more relevant.

9. I trust that you have had the opportunity to view the "Working Together" exhibition before having joined us upstairs – I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Paul Weinberg, who along with fellow photographers Graeme Williams and Matthew Willman, spent much of the past few months recording how our EU/SA collaboration is helping people improve their lives. Paul, to you and your team a hearty word of gratitude indeed.

On that note, I would like to now hand over to Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim who kindly took time out of a busy schedule to join us here today. .... But, before doing so, a heartfelt word of gratitude to you and to Deputy Minister Sue van der Merwe for being as "inclusive" as you have both been, for so many years, and in spite of hardships you have had to endure yourselves.

Thank you.

*(1100 words)*