



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SOUTH AFRICA DAY REMARKS**

DELIVERED BY DEPUTY MINISTER NOXOLO KIVIET

16 NOVEMBER 2022

EXPOCUBA, HAVANA

(SALUTATIONS)

(1) Greetings to all who are attending this prestigious event. I bring greetings and good wishes from all people of South Africa. Cuba may be far in terms of distance but it is one of the countries that are very close in the hearts of South Africans. It is my pleasure to be here today as we celebrate South Africa's participation at this prestigious fair showcasing the important general commercial exchange in Cuba and the Caribbean. On behalf of the people of South Africa we are honoured and grateful for the invitation. I am also honoured to for the opportunity that has been given to the South Africa government agencies in the built environment and construction companies here today represented by Amedzo Trading and Projets, Umso construction and Vharanani group.

- (2) Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, South Africa's relationship with Cuba is deep and highly significant. We, as a country and people are forever indebted to Cuba for all the sacrifices that this country has made for South Africa and the Southern African region as a whole. We really mean it that we owe the freedom that we enjoy in our country and region to the sacrifices of the people of Cuba. The Cuban armed forces stopped the apartheid juggernaut in its track and beat it where it prided itself as being the strongest: in the air. At the battle of Cuito Cuanavalle in Angola, the apartheid forces were thoroughly beaten and they had to beat a hasty retreat into Namibia.
- (3) That defeat forced the apartheid regime to talk to the liberation forces in Namibia and our own country, South Africa. That led to the détente in the whole region and Southern Africa could breathe a sigh of relief as the beast made a retreat and negotiations for an end to oppression made strides. That was primarily the result of the glorious victory at Cuito Cuanavale by the combined forces of the freedom-loving people, ably supported by the glorious armed forces of Cuba. We shall not forget and we are forever grateful to Cuba. We shall always stand with our brothers and sisters of Cuba. We will remember former President Nelson Mandela after his release he visited this beautiful Island to express his gratitude to the people of this country for their efforts in the South African struggle. He said I quote ***'the Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of South Africa'***. He further called Castro's revolution ***'a source of inspiration to all freedom loving people'***
- (4) Ladies and gentlemen, South Africa and Cuba are bound by ties of culture, history, shared struggles, international solidarity, and a joint commitment to advance the development agenda of the South. Cuba is a strategic partner for South Africa in the Latin American region and in multilateral fora. The excellent SA/Cuba bilateral political relations need to be underpinned by a stronger economic partnership, larger trade volumes, and investments.
- (5) As a Department of Public works and Infrastructure of the government of South Africa, we are also heavily involved in all programmes and projects that our government has with the Republic of Cuba. Our visit here follows the visit by

Minister, Ms Patricia De Lille, in May this year. Her trip was aimed at strengthening existing relationships and partnerships, focussing on economic and trade opportunities in the built environment for the benefit of both countries. We are cognisant of the need and the objectives echoed by the 2019 South Africa-Cuba Joint Consultative Mechanism commitments, affirming the importance of developing more robust and mutually beneficial economic and commercial relations to match the depth of diplomatic and political relations between the two countries.

(6) The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and the Cuban Ministry of Construction entered into an Agreement on the recruitment of Cuban Technical Advisors to South Africa on the 4th of July 2007. Both the DPWI and the Ministry of Construction of Cuba continue with the implementation of the agreement through the deployment of Cuban Technical Assistants at national and provincial level. In addition, during Minister De Lille's visit, Minister Rene Villafaña, expressed a great deal of interest in engaging with South Africa in more detail on the possibility of South Africa deepening its trade and investment in Cuba. This wish has been made possible by South Africa's participation in the 38th edition on FIHAV.

(7) In July this year Deputy Minister Botes paid an official visit to Cuba. The aim was to strengthen the relationship between the two countries. One of the key priorities of the Deputy Minister's visit was to facilitate the strengthening of trade and economic relations, science and innovation and cooperation in new areas such as agriculture, arts, construction, culture, and sport.

(8) Key messages that South Africa conveyed during the JCM was to promote South Africa's world class capabilities and expertise in several areas such as agriculture, education, health, science and innovation, construction and engineering, mining, manufacturing, tourism, sport, arts and culture and the strengths of SA's science councils and higher education institutions and industry associations. These exchanges will increase cooperation such as Cuban Technical Advisors (CAT) Programme, trade and investment, and enable skills sharing in the construction industry of both Cuba and South Africa. All these efforts echoes the inspiring words of Commander In Chief Fidel Castro

when he said I quote '***We must establish a new world order based on justice, on equity and on peace. Our country is not just Cuba; our country is also HUMANITY***'

(9) As you may be aware to realize these cooperation I am here leading a delegation that is participating in the 38th edition of FIHAV and conducting recruitment and interviews for the CAT program. The rationale for our participation is informed by our continued deepening relationship we have established with the Republic of Cuba where we share common values and strategic political engagements at national and multinational level through the United Nations system.

(10) South Africa's participation at FIHAV 2022 will serve as an opportunity for South African and Cuban Companies to collaborate with the view of identifying mutually beneficial opportunities geared towards enhancing an increase in economic trade relations. Although some South African companies have previously participated in the annual FIHAV Trade Fair, it will be the DPWI's first participation at this important event. In the past this event attracted approximately 2000 companies in different sectors from 55 countries around the world bringing together the international business community and a broad representation of foreign producers and investors. This is a significant number participating in Cuba taking into consideration the economic, commercial and financial blockade that Cuba has endured for many years.

(11) We expect a number of outcomes from our participation in FIHAV. Among them are:

- To provide an interactive platform for South African companies in the built environment especially emerging companies to share knowledge and ideas on Construction and alternative construction methodologies
- Provide an opportunity to showcase South African infrastructure projects in Cuba resulting in unlocking opportunities for South African capital and construction materials and components and engineering services.

- To provide an opportunity to South African Companies for networking among stakeholders from a diverse international background.
- Participating in the FIHAV 2022 will also provide an opportunity for different stakeholders including government leaders and policy decision makers and the private sector to engage in a meaningful way.
- We hope it will also serve as a space for identifying potential opportunities for further engagements on issues related to the built environment for economic development and growth.
- The exhibitors at the exhibition are drawn from entities and professional councils reporting to or associated with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and Construction Companies linked to them.

(12) Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as stated before that DPWI will utilize this opportunity to engage with the relevant Cuban Ministry of Construction and conduct the recruitment process of Cuban Technical Advisors (CTAs) who will partake on the phase III of the programme as per the extended Bilateral Agreement between the Republic of South Africa and the Republic of Cuba. The recruitment will be followed by the Cuban Student Exchange Programme and deployment of Public Works Sector Professionals to Cuba for the skills transfer Programme in the coming year.

This will be the third phase of CTA's exchange programme. During phase I, 107 CTA's were recruited and were deployed in KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, and Free State provinces. During Phase II, 30 CTA were recruited and they were deployed in the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

(13) Benefits of this program are

- Skills transfer – we proud that Six hundred and forty nine (649) engineers in South Africa have benefited so far
- Capital Projects - three hundred and ninety six (396) projects were implemented. Those included building of hospitals, library building, schools and water treatment projects.

- (14) The recruitment for phase III will be targeting Construction Project Managers, Structural Engineers, and Geologists specializing in Dolomites. The recruited Cuban Technical Advisors will be deployed within the Public Works Sector.
- (15) Last but not least, we would like to once again thank the people of Cuba and the government of Cuba for inviting us to FIHAV and related activities. We want to drink deep from the well of goodwill of the people of Cuba. We reiterate our undying love and loyalty to this island nation. We also agree with our former President Nelson Mandela a very good friend of Commander In chief Fidel that **'a very good head and good heart are, and will always be a formidable combination'**
- (16) I am reminded of the words by the Indian Industrialist and former chairman of Tata Sons, Ratan Naval Tata when he said I quote **"If you want to walk fast walk alone. But if you want to walk far walk together"**. It is my wish that this partnership sees both countries prospering together and reaching greater heights.

Muchas gracias – thank you so much- Ndiyabulela.