

DRAFT TOAST REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, MR NTOPILE KGANYAGO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN ON 12 OCTOBER 2007

Your Excellency, Ambassador Ramon Gil-Casares,
Excellencies of the diplomatic corps,
Esteemed colleagues,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a pleasure and an honour to join all of you today in celebrating the National Day of the Kingdom of Spain. On behalf of the South African government and the South African people, I wish to convey my sincere best wishes to His Majesty the King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia and my warmest greetings to the government and the people of the Kingdom of Spain on this very happy occasion.

Your Excellencies,
Spain is undoubtedly one of the success stories of the European Union. The story of contemporary Spain is one of tremendously impressive progress in building up a stable democracy and in putting in place measures that have driven the rapid rise in living standards since it joined the European Union in 1986.

The outside world has watched with admiration as Spain diversified its economy during the last decade or so, moving from an essentially agricultural economy to one producing manufactures and providing services. Spain is now the 8th biggest economy in the world and the world's 4th largest foreign investor. This is a truly remarkable achievement!

Economic relations between South Africa and Spain have grown markedly in the past few years. Spain is now South Africa's 9th most important export market. South Africa's exports to Spain in 2006 totalled Euro 1.4 billion (an increase of 7.6 per cent on the 2005 figure). Spanish exports to South Africa grew by 16.9 per cent in 2006. In the past ten years South Africa's exports to Spain increased by **274 per cent** and Spanish exports to South Africa recorded a **300 per cent** growth.

Despite the increase in two-way trade between SA and Spain over the past five years and an increase of 1 473 per cent in Spanish direct investments in SA between 2003 and 2005, opportunities to increase trade and investment relations are plentiful.

Our political relations have become dynamic as shown by the frequent exchanges of high-level bilateral consultations as well as by the active political dialogue and collaboration in international fora.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Let us look forward to more exchanges between our politicians and officials, our business persons and our professionals as these would more practical content and expression to our bilateral relations.

Ladies and gentlemen, October is transport month in South Africa

Over the next few years our government is embarking on an ambitious infrastructure and investment programme, which will position our country as an investment destination of choice and aims to step up economic growth, which will be shared by all South Africans through increased development and employment.

In regard top transport infrastructure, I am glad to note that there is increasing interest of Spanish business to explore investment opportunities in South Africa with the main investment so far being that of Dragados y Construcciones, which was involved in the construction of the N4 Bakwena Platinum Highway in 2002. Dragados has invested more than R2 billion in the N4 highway project and has also brought in an additional R284 million foreign direct investment into South Africa for this project.

The South African economy is certainly going to be an exciting place to be in for the next few years.

Our government has often stated its vision for a better life for all and hence a world that is different to the one presented to us, another world especially on the African continent.

Spain is located at the crossroads of European and African civilisations. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Spain views Africa as one of the most urgent and critical challenges facing the global community. Spain's increased diplomatic presence in Africa bears testimony to this. The inauguration of 'Casa Africa' (Africa House) in the Canary Islands is a most welcome initiative and tangible evidence of the serious interest that Spain is now taking in Africa. Casa Africa will be a focal point for cultural, social and economic activities involving Spain and Africa. It will coordinate the efforts of the public and private sectors in Spain to build relations with the African continent.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Saint Isidore once wrote:

Spain is the most beautiful of all lands extending from the West to India, for through her, East and West receive light.

Today may the light of our cooperation, solidarity and friendship inspire all of us as we work to build a world that is more democratic, more open, more free and at peace.

May I now invite you all to join me in a toast to the continued good health of His Majesty King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia and to further enhancing the friendship and cooperation between South Africa and the Kingdom of Spain.

!Muchisima gracias! I thank you!

