

**Minister of Public Works**  
**Ms S Sigcau**  
**14 November 2003**

[Back](#)

## **Official inauguration of the new South African Chancery Berlin, Germany**

The Master of Ceremonies, Captain Teuteberg  
The South African Ambassador to Germany, Dr Sibusiso Bhengu  
The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma  
The South African Minister of Social Development, Dr Zola Skweyiya  
The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr J Fischer  
All Senior Officials in attendance  
Ladies and Gentlemen

As we approach the end of the ten years of democracy and freedom in South Africa, the country and its people can look back with awe and pride at some of the achievements they have attained in the past decade. Since 1994, some of the most significant changes in government policy have occurred in the field of International Relations.

Accordingly the ANC-government in 1994 set out to achieve certain broad objectives in International Relations and these included amongst others, the following:

- Ensuring South Africa's acceptance into the community of nations and establishing relations with other countries
- Expanding and diversifying relations and attracting Foreign Direct Investment
- Promoting South - South cooperation and transforming North-South relations.

South Africa has successfully normalised its relations with the world. The country has joined all significant regional, continental and multilateral institutions, and is actively promoting its own interests (political and economic) as well as that of Africa and the South. South Africa has built bilateral relations with Africa, the South, and strengthened relations with the North. Our presence in Berlin today is symbolic of our efforts to consolidate the above achievements.

As part of its core functions, the National Department of Public Works is responsible for the planning, acquisition, maintenance and ultimately disposal of state's immovable assets, namely land and buildings, to provide conducive physical environment that meets the social, technical, functional and financial expectations of government and its departments.

The successful completion of the R115 million South African Chancery in Berlin, Germany, is the jewel on the crown of our extensive building programme (of ± 6 000 projects of varying size and scope) that the Department of Public Works manages on behalf of the state and its organs, including user departments such as the Department of Foreign Affairs.

It was in this spirit, and in fulfilment of its mandate, that the National Department of Public Works, as early as 1997, initiated the Berlin Chancery Project and appointed MMA Architects and ARUP Consulting Engineers as consultants. A prerequisite of their appointment was that they must have Berlin links in order to assist with the onerous rules and regulations of the Berlin Authorities with respect to approval of drawings, and an assurance that the design complies with the very strict building and safety regulations.

After a setback in the process, the designing was resumed in 2000 this time under the Project Management of the National Department of Public Works. Following the approval of the final design in May 2001 by the client department, the drawings were then submitted to the Berlin Authorities for approval. The building licence was finally granted in January 2002.

Eleven tenders were received and a vigorous adjudication process ensued before the contract was awarded to Wilhem Fussler GmbH and signed on 15 March 2002. Work on site started three days (18 March 2002) thereafter.

I am told that it was very important that the site clearance and tree felling were completed before the end of March after which date the Berlin Authorities would not allow any tree felling for environmental reasons i.e.

because the birds start to nest. As Public Works, we sympathize with Berlin Authorities. We have always maintained that our built environment must co-exist with our natural environment and this position is well captured in our 2000 legislation for the establishment of the Council for the Built Environment, as one of the mandates of the CBE. The council was established to regulate critical build environment professions of architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, property valuers and quantity surveying. The council is also expected to advice government on any matter falling within the scope of the built environment including public health, safety and the environment.

In terms of the design, the architects have endeavoured to retain a distinct South African / African influence complete with sand stone and granite of South African origin which adorn the external façade. Main entrance canopies are silk-screened with San Rock Art images, one of the distinct aesthetic symbols of Africa and a centrepiece of our coat of arms.

We take pride in the beautiful finished product and hope that it will add value to the staff and functions of the South African Berlin Chancery. For us the structure is a confirmation of our footprint in the international arena, considering that the site has been owned by the South African government since before World War Two.

In conclusion I like to thank the people of Germany in general and the 3,4 million inhabitants of the Berlin city in particular for presenting the world with a model of reconstruction and development. The physical rebuilding of the city following the end of the World War Two and the reconstruction of Berlin at the end of Cold War in 1989/90 gives us hope as we position ourselves as country to play a leading reconstructive role in a peace-time Africa, to revive infrastructure and rebuild the moral character of the Continent. Your humane leadership in reaching out and touching fellow Germans encourages us. We observed with interest as Germany commemorated on 09th November the 65th anniversary of the ideological divide, which pitted citizens of this country against one another and plunged the whole world into a devastating war between 1939 and 1945. As this building marks our friendship and cordial relations with your country we believe that the proposed 30 million dollar Jewish memorial near Berlin's landmark Brandenburg gate, will mark the triumph of human spirit over man-made divisions and unite German people for a prosperous and brighter future.

[top](#)