



**SOUTH AFRICA AND REPUBLIC OF KOREA:
30TH ANNIVERSARY OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS**

**CONGRATULATORY REMARKS BY ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
ASIA AND MIDDLE EAST: AMBASSADOR NM LALLIE, AT A SEMINAR:
*REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS: PARTNERSHIP,
OPPORTUNITIES AND SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE***

23 AUGUST 2022

Your Excellency, Ambassador Chull-Joo Park, ROK Ambassador to South Africa
Ambassador Woon-Ki Lyeon, President of the Korea-Africa Foundation (KAF)
Excellencies and other Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Mr Moeletsi Mbeki, National Chairman of the South African Institute of International
Affairs (SAIIA)
Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive of the South African Institute of
International Affairs (SAIIA)
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is such an honour and privilege to join you on behalf of the Government of the
Republic of South Africa and specifically the Department of International Relations
and Cooperation at this high-profile event to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of
diplomatic relations between South Africa and the Republic of Korea.

At the outset allow me to congratulate Ambassador Park and the Embassy team, the
Korea Africa Foundation (KAF) and the South African Institute of International Affairs
(SAIIA) for arranging this seminar focusing on the *Partnership, Opportunities and
Shared Vision* between our two countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen

South Africa deeply values the partnership with South Korea which dates back to 1992, two years after the late and former President Nelson Mandela was released from prison, and which has evolved significantly over the last 30 years.

However, our historic contact can be traced as far back as the Korean War of 1950-53, when the 2nd Fighter Squadron of the then South African Air Force (SAAF) was part of South Africa's contribution to the United Nations Command with a total of 826 South Africans who fought in Korea, with 36 casualties. It is notable that these fallen heroes are aptly honoured at a section of your new Korean Cultural Center in Brooklyn.

I believe our partnership, which is based on common shared values and aspirations to build peace and prosperity for our respective people, also forms a strong basis for the strengthening of our bilateral relationship and to create the conditions for our democracies to thrive. Indeed, our bilateral cooperation serve as a solid foundation for the many opportunities for both our countries and respective regions to address the socio-economic challenges of our people.

With the continued support of the Korean Government, we have been able to make progress in addressing the challenges of unemployment, inequality, and poverty faced by the majority in this country aligned to South Africa's national priorities. Notably, over the last few years the timely support from the ROK to South Africa, the region and Continent to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is commended. We remain determined to work hard to set our economy on a growth trajectory, development, and a better quality of life for all, especially after the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen

South Africa and the ROK diplomatic relations have strengthened across all sectors of cooperation. Our two countries have thus far concluded sixteen bilateral agreements, ranging from air transport, protection of investments, avoidance of double taxation, science and technology, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, extradition, ICT, vocational training, and energy. This year, we will celebrate another milestone as our foreign ministers have agreed to meet annually, and will co-chair the first Ministerial Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC). During the visit of Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr GNM Pandor to the Republic of Korea, on 11 October 2022, we are confident that additional agreements will be signed in arts & culture and agricultural cooperation at the inaugural JCC.

We celebrate this 30th year commemoration with our economic partnership on strong foundation of our relations. SA is the ROK's largest trading partner in Africa while the ROK is South Africa's fourth largest trading partner in Asia. Trade between South

Africa and the ROK continues on an upward trajectory despite the challenges presented by COVID-19. Total trade was approximately R47 billion in 2021, with SA exports to the ROK at R31 billion and SA imports about R16 billion thus reflecting a solid positive trade balance.

South Africa remains grateful for the strong investment footprint of the ROK in our country and also into Africa, especially in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which I note it is one of the discussion points after lunch. The ROK has significant investments in several sectors of the SA economy, inter alia through Hyundai; LG, Samsung Electronics; KC Cottrell, to name a few.

Earlier this month both the Minister Pandor and the Minister Patel of Trade and Industry and Competition, separately met with the Vice Chairman & CEO of Samsung Electronics, Mr Jong Hee HAN during his visit to South Africa. Mr HAN reflected on the current state of Samsung's activities and discussed additional opportunities for collaboration with the South African Government and local business.

Distinguished Guests,

Both countries share painful histories of conflict, violence, and exploitation. However, today we can celebrate our two countries' belief in shared universal values, the most important core value being freedom. As the ROK recently marked the 1945 end of colonial rule on the Korean Peninsula, South Africa also annually celebrate the end of apartheid rule and of achieving our long hard struggle to achieve freedom and democracy since 1994. South Africa agrees with the wise words of President Yoon during his inauguration in May 2022 reminding the world that: *"We know that in order for everyone to enjoy freedom, everyone must be allowed to enjoy a certain level of economic freedom...When prosperity and economic freedom flourishes, that is when freedom reaches even the darkest corners"*.

We appreciate the role of your country in contributing to our people's freedom e.g. in their quest for quality education and inclusive economic growth. In this regard let me also acknowledge that Under the Korean Global Scholarship Programme (KGSP) administered by the National Institute for International Education (NIIED) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) under the banner of its Knowledge Sharing Programme (KSP), the ROK has been very active in assisting South Africa through valuable knowledge and skills transfer initiatives in various areas of fields. On the other hand, the South African community in the ROK, largely graduates, continue to make a significant contribution in teaching English at Korean schools all over the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The ROK today is the tenth largest economy in the world and is rightfully taking on a greater role befitting its stature as a global leader. Similarly, South Africa is an

economic powerhouse in Africa and the world with a prominent international and multilateral profile. We see our countries actively and jointly protecting and promoting universal values and international norms that are based on freedom and respect for human rights. In this regard, I am pleased to note that South Africa and the ROK are supporting each other's candidatures to serve on the United National Human Rights Council 2023 – 2025. We are also encouraged by recent engagements with the ROK on reform of the UN especially the UNSC.

South Africa, informed by our own experiences and foreign policy principles premised on the Diplomacy of Ubuntu: "I am because you are", remains keen to work together to address common global challenges of food insecurity, global health security, peace and security, climate change, as well as human security internationally.

While recognising that there is more scope for enhanced cooperation between South Africa and Republic of Korea (including African region within the context of ROK-Africa Forum), we look forward to this seminar interrogating areas of mutual interest for future cooperation, specifically also focused on climate change and green energy opportunities.

Let us utilise this opportunity of the 30th commemoration to come together and build new bridges of cooperation for the future, as our prosperity depends on the economic success of each other, while we move forward in solidarity as we forge a better future for our people.

Congratulations again to our two countries in celebrating the 30 years of relations, while at the same time honouring the substantial achievements in co-operation over this period.

I THANK YOU