

**Statement by Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses,  
Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs on the occasion of  
the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Republic of South Africa's  
Freedom Day  
Thursday, 27 April 2017**

Your Excellency Thami Xoliswa Nomathamsanqa Ngwevela, High  
Commissioner of the Republic of South Africa;

Your Excellencies, Heads of Mission and other Members of the Diplomatic  
Corps;

Members of Staff of the High Commission of the Republic of South Africa;

Members of the South African community resident in Trinidad and Tobago;

Specially invited guests

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great honour that I stand before you this evening to extend on behalf of Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley and the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and on my own behalf, warm greetings on the occasion of the Anniversary of South Africa's 'Freedom Day'.

Twenty-three years ago in 1994, South Africans affixed their indelible mark in South Africa's first ever all-race, democratic election, doing away with decades of racial oppression sanctioned under the apartheid system. The occasion heralded the birth of a new South Africa, one where all peoples, regardless of race, could come together and exercise one of the most important freedoms of a democratic nation.

One cannot understate the intense struggle and suffering that so many had to endure. However, we can at the same time celebrate the indomitable spirit, strength and resilience of a people who were fighting for a better and greater South Africa, not just for themselves, but for their children and their children's children. In this regard, I pay special homage to South Africa's first black President, the late Nelson Mandela - anti-Apartheid activist and joint recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. At this juncture, allow me to recall a statement he made which articulates the tenacity of South Africans,

*"We were expected to destroy one another and ourselves collectively in the worst racial conflagration. Instead, we as a people chose the path of negotiation, compromise and peaceful settlement. Instead of hatred and revenge we chose reconciliation and nation-building."*

Now in its third decade of democracy, South Africa serves as a shining beacon in the world today. The strength of her diversity has paved the way for excellence in a plethora of areas including culture and the arts, education, sport, and science and technology, among others. In so doing, South Africans have garnered international acclaim for outstanding work such as Nadine Gordimer, the first South African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature; noted playwright, novelist, actor and director Athol Fugard, not to mention the many accomplished cricketers who have secured their place in the history of the sport. It would also be amiss of me to not mention the incomparable Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a champion for social rights during and after Apartheid and the recipient of a number of awards including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 to name but a few.

Ladies and gentlemen, Trinidad and Tobago stood in solidarity with all the people of South Africa who suffered in various ways during the Apartheid era and I am proud to say that the relationship between our two great nations has not faltered. With the establishment of diplomatic relations on January 10, 1995, this relationship has grown from strength to strength. It was further consolidated through the opening of the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission in Pretoria in December 2004 and that of the South African High Commission in Port of Spain in December 2006.

Ties between Trinidad and Tobago and South Africa have flourished resulting in past high level visits between our countries, including most recently the visit by the President of Trinidad and Tobago in June 2015 and the subsequent visit in July 2015 of Mr. Luwellyn Landers, Deputy Minister

of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa to Port of Spain.

We have also enjoyed active bilateral relations in various spheres of cooperation. With regard to culture, artistes of both countries continue to collaborate, producing captivating bodies of work such as the afro-soca composition 'Possessed', featuring the South African male choral group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. The artistry of the music video is also worth mentioning having been filmed in South Africa. Other fruitful collaborations have occurred between renowned South African trumpeter and composer Hugh Masekela and the Petrotrin Siparia Deltones Steel Orchestra, as well as the hosting of a Trinbagonian-style Carnival named *Caribbean Mas Feeva (CMF)* in the town of Bela Bela in 2012.

In the area of education, Trinidad and Tobago's High Commission in Pretoria has created an ongoing partnership with the Kgabo Primary School in Atteridgeville and the Tsaroga Phoka Primary School in Soshanguve, as well as with Education Africa in the Annual Schools Marimba/Steelpan Festival. There has also been tertiary level bilateral engagement including the initialling of a Memorandum of Understanding on March 27, 2017 in Cave Hill, Barbados, between The University of the West Indies (UWI) and South Africa's University of Johannesburg (UJ) for the establishment of an Institute for Global Africa Affairs. At the St. Augustine campus of the University, an international study tour to South Africa remains a mainstay of the UWI's Discover Series. Other notable areas of bilateral engagement between Trinidad and Tobago and South Africa include energy and trade.

Trinidad and Tobago is intent on deepening its relationship with South Africa by intensifying current cooperation initiatives, while charting a trajectory into new areas of South-South collaboration. To this end, Trinidad and Tobago commits itself to the ongoing negotiation process regarding the establishment of political bilateral consultations and the various area-specific Agreements.

On an international level, I note that our two countries share similar commitments and concerns on various global issues such as the impact of climate change, human rights violation and the proliferation of transnational crime and terrorism. Trinidad and Tobago considers South Africa a strong ally and looks forward to heightened engagement as these matters are addressed in multilateral fora.

Ladies and gentlemen, early in my remarks I quoted the first President of the post-Apartheid era and, in concluding, I wish to end with remarks made by His Excellency Jacob Zuma, the current President of the Republic of South Africa, during last year's "Freedom Day" celebrations,

*"Let me reiterate that our freedom was not free.*

*It was fought for and many lives were lost for its attainment. We therefore have the collective responsibility to defend it as South Africans with the same vigour as when we fought for it. We must unite and not allow anything to threaten the freedom and democracy we fought so hard for."*

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is my esteemed privilege to once more convey on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and on my own behalf, sincere congratulations to the Government and People of the Republic of South Africa as they celebrate the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of “Freedom Day”.

I thank you.