



Opening remarks by H. E. Sibongiseni Dlamini-Mntambo at a reception in honour of the visit of H. E. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, and in commemoration of OR Tambo Centenary and in celebration of Canada's 150th

14 September 2017,

Her Excellency Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane

Deputy Minister Diane Jacovella

Director-General, Kgabo Mahoi

Members of the Diplomatic corps based in Canada,

His Worship, Jim Watson, Mayor of the city of Ottawa

Senior government officials from South Africa and Canada

Members of the South African Portfolio Committee on International Relations,

South African Heads of Mission here this evening,

Special guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening, Bonsoir, Sanibonani

South Africa, Ladies and Gentlemen, is a country of diversity and it is sometimes referred to, as the 'Rainbow Nation'. The rich ethnic diversity of its citizens, which includes 11 official languages makes South Africa the melting pot of cultures is a true phenomenon. The "proudly South Africans" agree that theirs is a beautiful country "alive with possibilities". South African citizens, the country's most

valued asset, the pulse of the nation unanimously agree that despite its painful past, there is so much to be celebrated and be grateful for.

“South Africa is a country where creative expression flourishes and its endless cultural diversity is embodied through traditional and modern interpretations of songs, dance, theatre, design, fashion and food”. Being in touch with each other through these interpretations.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the reasons we have invited you to join us here this evening is to reflect on the legacy of one of the founders of our democratic nation, Oliver Reginald Tambo (affectionately known as OR). A South African anti-apartheid politician and revolutionary, who served as President of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1967 to 1991.

For those of you who have been to South Africa, the chances are that your point of entry has been the OR Tambo International airport in Johannesburg, an airport named in his honour. And which, I must add has been ranked the 2nd best International Airport in Africa after the Cape Town International airport.

O. R. Tambo would have turned 100 this year. He dedicated his life to the pursuit of the liberation of South Africa. The increasingly oppressive apartheid regime forced O.R. into exile. During this time, O.R. lobbied various governments and leaders to ensure that focus did not shift from South Africa's liberation.

Also, in recognition of this great statesman's role in bringing about democratic South Africa, the headquarters of our Department of International Relations and Cooperation in Pretoria has been named the OR Tambo building in Pretoria. South Africa's diplomats who get despatched to all corners of this planet leave with the words of OR Tambo in their minds. And what was his message? During an address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1976, he said <and I quote>

“We will have a South Africa which will live in peace with its neighbours and with the rest of the world. It will base its foreign relations on mutually advantageous assistance among the peoples of the world.” <end quote>

I therefore stand before you, Ladies and Gentlemen, as one of these diplomats; humbled and honoured to have been given this opportunity as a result of the struggle of OR Tambo and the countless men and women in South Africa and in the world, who refused to tolerate the crime against humanity that apartheid was.

Another important reason we are here today is to recognise and celebrate Canada’s important milestone, 150 years of confederation. A country, whose relationship with South Africa dates back during our struggle era. It is therefore fitting that as South Africa we celebrate with you.

Ladies and gentlemen, my role here today is to welcome you all to this event and I sincerely hope that you will enjoy this evening with us. But, before I leave the podium, allow me to introduce to you our guest speaker for this evening.

I am deeply honoured to be introducing Her Excellency Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa.

Born in South Africa’s beautiful Limpopo province, She became an active member of liberation organisations, including the United Democratic Front, the African National Congress (or ANC) and the ANC Women’s League.

After serving as a Member of Parliament in the democratic South Africa, she was appointed High Commissioner to Malaysia and then to India. In 2005, she was appointed Member of the Executive Council (or Provincial Minister) for Limpopo’s Department of Government and Housing. She has served as Minister of International Relations Cooperation since her appointment on 11 May 2009.

As South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Nkoana-Mashabane is entrusted with the formulation, promotion and execution of South Africa's foreign policy, taking overall responsibility for all aspects of South Africa's international relations in consultation with the President.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Her Excellency, Maite Nkoana Mashabane to Canada and to the podium.