

COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE BI-NATIONAL COMMISSION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA.

His Excellency Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, invited His Excellency Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic of Botswana to the Inaugural Session of the South Africa – Botswana Bi-National Commission held on 21 November 2013. The Bi-National Commission was preceded by the Senior Officials and Ministerial Meetings held on 18 -19 and 20 November 2013, respectively.

The Agreement establishing the Bi-National Commission between the two countries was signed on 29 August 2012 in Gaborone during President Zuma's State Visit to Botswana. The Bi-National Commission merges the two then existing bilateral mechanisms, namely the Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation and the Joint Permanent Commission on Defence and Security.

The two Presidents were accompanied by Ministers and Senior Officials representing the following sectors: Agriculture, Defence, Energy, Environment, Home Affairs, International Relations, Justice, Labour, Minerals, Science and Technology, Security, Trade and Industry and Water, amongst others.

The two Heads of State met for private discussions before the work session of the Bi-National Commission. During the official talks, the two Presidents discussed bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. On bilateral co-operation, Their Excellencies underscored the excellent relations that exist between South Africa and Botswana, founded on deep historical, cultural, linguistic and family ties, as well as shared values of mutual respect, commitment to democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Their Excellencies noted with great appreciation the progress made in the implementation of 34 agreements signed between the two countries, with specific reference to immigration, defence and security, energy, trade, transport and environment.

The two Presidents underscored the importance of expediting essential infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges that will help facilitate trade and movement of people and goods between the two countries.

On regional issues, the two Heads of State discussed the political and security situation in the SADC region. They commended the people of Madagascar for holding peaceful and credible Presidential elections held on 25 October 2013. The two Presidents further urged the people of Madagascar to maintain the same spirit and commitment to democratic processes in the second round of Presidential elections scheduled for 20 December 2013.

Regarding the situation in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Their Excellencies expressed hope that the parties involved in the Kampala Talks will soon finalise the agreed outcome of their negotiations.

The two Heads of State expressed concern over the unfolding security situation in Mozambique and expressed hope that the situation would soon be resolved.

On international issues, Botswana congratulated South Africa on her election to the United Nations Human Rights Council and South Africa thanked Botswana for the invaluable support in this regard.

His Excellency Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, expressed gratitude to His Excellency President Jacob Zuma, the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to him and his delegation.

The President of Botswana extended an invitation to the President of South Africa to the Second Session of the Bi-National Commission to be held in Botswana at a date to be mutually decided.