

**ADDRESS BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA,  
MOHAU PHEKO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
FREEDOM**

**TOKYO, JAPAN 25TH APRIL 2014.**

Honorable Minister Ichihara, Parliamentary Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps

Your Excellency's dear Colleagues

Captains of Industry

Distinguished guests

Ladies & Gentleman

Fellow South Africans sons and daughters of our beautiful soil:

The bright sun smiles down on our people as we mark South Africa's Freedom Day, and celebrate our country's Second Decade of Democracy.

We feel immensely honored that on this happy day we have been granted the privilege to host the distinguished leaders and representatives, and guests here tonight.

Your presence among us when we confronted the apartheid crime against humanity gave freedom the possibility to emerge triumphant. Your presence today expands our joy that freedom's opportunities have given us the possibility to begin the long walk to a life of dignity for all our people.

This occasion launches the celebration of the rebirth of our nation and its full acceptance into the international community. We have forged a place for ourselves in the international community by being the first to voluntarily dismantle South Africa's nuclear weapons program. We have become members of the G20. We have as a young nation been given the opportunity by our African brothers and sisters to serve on the UN Security Council twice. We have hosted the first FIFA Soccer World Cup on African soil. We hosted the WSSD, We have infused new life into the climate change negotiations through our hosting of CoP 17.

Its hard to believe that we have sent a person to space, successfully implemented the largest free treatment program for HIV/AIDS, won some Oscar awards, and

globalized the Vuvuzela. We buried an iconic figure Madiba. President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. What a legacy. What a foundation.

Our bilateral relations with Japan at the strategic level are growing. This year mark 104 years of our relationship The bilateral relationship between South Africa and Japan has been elevated to a strategic level and is becoming more ambitious, developing more diverse links, as we continue to work together.

For too long our country represented the ugly and repulsive in human society. It was a place where happiness could only break through in short fleeting bursts, briefly streaking across our skies like a dying comet.

It was a place where being born black was to inherit a lifelong curse. It was a place where being born white was to carry a permanent burden of fear and hidden rage.

Despite the fact that we are a mere 20 years removed from the period of racist dictatorship, it is today impossible to imagine a South Africa that is not a democratic South Africa. Our fifth election on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 shows that peaceful transition and the will of the people to govern is still evident and strong.

Nobody in our country today views democracy as a threat to their interests and their future.

We have gathered here today, on Freedom Day, because in time, our people, together with the billions of human beings across the globe, who are our friends decided to say - an end to all that!

Today we launch our third decade of democracy and an ambitious full calendar of 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events that will see us dancing, talking, eating and celebrating until June 2015. We have nominated distinguished 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ambassadors to share the essence of South Africa here in Japan in their respective fields. These are women and men who have consistently represented South Africa's interest with distinction!

I invite each of them to join me on the stage for the launch our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program:

- Mr Thomas Kantha- Anti-apartheid movement Ambassador
- Mr Uli Külz-Rugby Ambassador
- Mr Ichiro Uchihara Diamond Jewellery Ambassador
- Mr Shin-ichiro Sawano – Tourism Ambassador
- Ms Prisca Molotsi Arts & Culture Ambassador
- Prof Masafumi Nagao -Dialogue Ambassador

- Ms Yumi Tanabe Wine Ambassador
- Mr Kunihiko Ishikawa-Food Ambassador
- Mr Yoshinaro Akeno Science & Technology Ambassador (**who will join us later in the evening**)
- Ms Yuko Arimori-Comrades Marathon Ambassador (**in absentia**)

We are determined that where once we were the terrible exemplar of racist bigotry, we should now and in future testify to the possibility of building a stable and viable non-racial society.

Today we begin our Third Decade of Democracy. We are convinced that what has been achieved during the First two decades demonstrates that as Africans we can and will solve our problems. We are equally certain that South Africa will record new advances as she pursues the goal of a better life for all. She will do what she can to encourage a more equitable and humane new world order.

On this historic day, the beginning of our Third Decade of Democracy, I extend best wishes to all our people for A Happy Birthday! To our friends from and in all parts of the world, we say thank you for being with us on this momentous day.