

## **Address at the Opening of the Second Session of the South African-Algerian Bi-National Commission**

17 October 2001

Your Excellency, President Bouteflika,  
Your Excellencies, Ministers and Ambassadors,  
The Business Delegations from Algeria and South Africa,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome to South Africa and to this Second Session of our Bi-National Commission.

We are meeting here today to review the progress that we have made and to take new decisions further to cement the relations between Algeria and South Africa.

As we are all aware, when we established the Bi-National Commission, we sought to encourage, develop and consolidate political, economic, cultural and technological relations between our two countries and peoples.

The BNC strengthened our already strong relations and laid the basis for all of us to work together with the leadership of other countries on the continent to initiate concrete programme for the renewal and recovery of Africa.

Naturally, as we review our work, we will do so in the context of our common desire to consolidate the relationship between South Africa and Algeria but within the framework of the new approach to development in Africa. I refer here both to the African Union and MAP or the New African Initiative.

In furtherance of our strategic relationship, we signed nine (9) new Agreements in the Inaugural Session of the BNC in the year 2000. This was in addition to the eight (8) Agreements signed during the JBC in 1998. We now have a total of seventeen (17) Agreements between our two countries.

Accordingly, these agreements form the building blocks of our strategic partnership, around which meaningful relationships at the political, economic and social levels are constantly strengthened.

We will obviously also look closely at the nine different clustered Technical Working Groups (TWGs) which are supervised by the Political Committee of the BNC headed by our respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

The establishment of a Business Forum that meets parallel to the BNC is based on our understanding that economic development and the challenges of creating an enabling environment for business, in both our countries, can be expedited through direct and regular interaction between our business people and in the context of building strong public private partnerships.

President Bouteflika and I remain convinced that significant economic progress can be achieved for Algeria and South Africa, through the pursuit and promotion of well-defined projects in strategic economic sectors.

While taking into account progress made by the Technical Working Groups and the Business Forum since September 2000, it is important that the Second Session should seek further to explore and enhance this strategic relationship between our two countries.

In this regard, there are five critical areas that are showing some potential of taking our relationship to higher levels.

The first of these is in the areas of Trade, Finance, Customs, Chamber of Commerce as well as Industry, SMME, the State Corporations and Pharmaceutical Industry.

We are of one mind that we should construct a preferential trade system between our two countries and thus increase trade between Algeria and South Africa.

The second is the area of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, Forestry and Environment. Our common challenge is to increase our capacity for water management. Our two countries have similar problems of water scarcity occasioned by similar climates.

We are indeed happy that our Water ministers together with the Nigerian minister of Water Resources signed an agreement on the 11th September this year.

Through this agreement we will use our joint capacities to ensure collaboration in water purification, waste water treatment and in the training of science and engineering specialists.

This will clearly be to the benefit of our two countries.

We have learned that Algeria will, in the next few years, become one of the largest producers of grapes. South Africa has an established wine industry and I trust that together we have the possibility to build a strong wine industry between our countries.

We also need to strengthen our collaboration in the field of agricultural and food research so that we take advantage of our comparative advantages in the Agro-industrial sector.

This should include Fishing, so that we can exchange expertise in the regulatory mechanisms as well as the technology of fish harvesting, canning and marketing, helping to build competitive industries.

The third critical area is that of Transport, Tourism, Public Works and Housing. This is largely the area that deals with Infrastructure.

We must work towards the situation such that as we build infrastructure we use our own resources and expertise. As we construct roads, build harbours and upgrade and improve existing facilities I am certain we can work together in a mutually beneficial manner.

It is encouraging to see that there are already significant engagements between companies from our two countries in the various areas of infrastructure development.

Both Algeria and South Africa have a huge potential in the Tourism industry. Despite the immediate problems that I believe we will overcome, we need to explore ways and means of improving this critical industry that will assist in the creation of much needed jobs in our countries.

The fourth area is that of Energy, Hydrocarbons and Mines. Algeria already has a developed and strong industry and has a lot of experience to share with South Africa.

Clearly, we have to enhance our capacity and skills development in the area of beneficiation of raw materials as well as improving the infrastructure in the energy, hydrocarbons and mining.

Already, there are oil and gas explorations in Algeria and South Africa and joint ventures in other African countries.

There are opportunities in the construction and maintenance of pipelines, co-operation in downstream petrochemical industries and in the marketing of hydrocarbons and value-added petrochemicals.

The fifth area is Information Technology, Telecommunication and Communication. There are opportunities that should be explored in a number of information and communication fields including in the fibre optic, Internet systems and supply of equipment.

Work is already being done in all the five areas that we have mentioned. This opens up opportunities that we should pursue with some determination.

While we mention some of these areas as having the potential of taking us forward in the short term, we should still emphasise that all the areas that form the essential core of the Bi-National Commission, are of a strategic nature, and we should spare no effort in ensuring that we achieve advances in these areas as well.

For Algeria, for South Africa, for all of Africa, through the programmes that we have identified, we are taking a journey into a more humane, people-centred and prosperous future. To arrive there, we have to work harder.

As Frantz Fanon, the great champion of our people said in 1960:

"The inter-African solidarity must be a solidarity of fact, a solidarity of action.... Africa shall be free. Yes, but it must get to work, it must not lose sight of its own unity." (*Towards the African Revolution*, Monthly Review Press 1980, p. 173)

Although Frantz Fanon did not live to see a free Africa, he has inspired all of us to struggle hard, to work hard for the realisation of the common vision.

Clearly, what motivates us in this practical programme of action is a profoundly human understanding and agreement that none but ourselves can set our countries and continent on a recovery path.

Relying on this Bi-National Commission and its different Working Groups, we have embarked on an important path of development that should be a good example of intra-African and South-South co-operation.

The commitment and passion of all our representatives here, to develop our countries and peoples, will ensure that we do succeed. Once more I welcome our Algerian friends to this, their second home, and wish our delegations success in their work

I thank you.