Reply to the toast Remarks of The President of The Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

Sheraton Kampala Hotel, Kampala, Uganda: 12 December 2005

Your Excellency, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and Mrs. Janet Museveni,
Your Excellency, Vice President Gilbert Balibaseka Bukenya,
Your Excellencies, Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen:

My wife, my entire delegation and I are honoured and delighted to pay a state visit to your beautiful country, Uganda. We thank you, Your Excellency, for your gracious and kind hospitality.

We also wish to convey the warmest greetings of the government and the people of South Africa to Your Excellency, to the government and the people of Uganda.

We are indeed very happy to be among the sister people of Uganda who stood shoulder to shoulder with their South African brothers and sisters as we waged a long and bitter struggle to end the pernicious system of apartheid.

Once more, we are here to say to you, Mr President, and through you to the Ugandan masses - thank you very much for your unwavering solidarity and support, which helped us to achieve our liberation.

Both our countries are still healing from the wounds of tyrannical regimes whose negative impact we have a responsibility to overcome, to lay the foundations upon which our peoples can build a future free of hatred, free of bitterness, free of oppression and free of conflict.

Since our liberation in 1994 we have strengthened the relations between our two countries as demonstrated by the growth in our economic and other relations, as well as the various agreements we have concluded, covering various important areas such as air services, taxation, trade, investment, health, and agriculture.

I am especially pleased Mr President that a good number of South African companies have invested in Uganda, making South Africa one of Uganda's leading source of foreign direct investment. Both these companies and our government are determined to continue to look for additional ways by which we can make our own contribution to the development both of Uganda and South Africa.

In this regard, Your Excellency, I am pleased that our governments share a common determination further to strengthen our political, economic, social, and cultural co-operation.

The establishment of the South Africa-Uganda Joint Permanent Economic Commission (JPEC) following the agreement our Ministers signed today will make a critical contribution to help us translate that determination into reality. I am certain that the Commission will serve as an important instrument in the common struggle to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment in both our countries.

Indeed, Your Excellency, through this Commission, we will be in a better position to identify and engage priority areas for joint action, and deal with important matters such as investment and the mobilisation of capital, technology transfers, identification of infrastructure projects, and cooperation in the fields of education and student exchanges.

Mr President, you have, in the past, correctly drawn attention to the fact that the relatively small size of our countries and economies seriously limits our possibility properly to integrate ourselves in the global economy in a manner that helps us to break out of our condition of underdevelopment.

I am certain that as we further expand and deepen our cooperation for the mutual benefit, we will begin to respond to the appeal you have been making consistently, for us to agglomerate into larger political and economic units, better able to respond to the challenge of globalisation.

In this context, I would like to assure Your Excellency of our full support for the effort in which Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya are involved to develop and consolidate the East African Community as a political and economic partnership of African states. I would like to believe that the Community will play a vanguard role in the continental struggle to achieve the critically important goal of African unity.

Your Excellency,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for your leadership as we worked together to help our sister country, Burundi, to move away from the horrors of war and conflict and build a country based on tolerance, reconciliation and unity.

Further, we are very happy that your stewardship, through IGAD, helped to steer the peace process in Sudan and Somalia thus setting important base for lasting peace and stability in this region.

Clearly, you played that important role, Your Excellency, because you believe that peace, stability and security are fundamental to development and a better life. The work done in Burundi, Southern Sudan and Somalia communicates an important message that as Africans, we must continue to work together and make whatever necessary contributions to ensure lasting peace and security in the rest of the continent including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cote d'Ivoire.

Your Excellency, Uganda and South Africa have the same vision of an African renaissance. We share a vision of a continent that is able to utilise its resources to improve the living conditions of its people; a continent that is developed and prosperous; a continent whose people are no longer defined by poverty and underdevelopment.

Accordingly, together with other African countries we continue to work within the African Union and to ensure the success of the AU's development agenda, through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Clearly, we have to intensify this work until all our people, in all our countries, enjoy a better life.

Your Excellency,

Once again we thank you for your gracious and kind hospitality. We also thank the people of this country for their enthusiastic and warm reception. They have really reminded us, in the true African spirit, that we have come back home.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Please rise and join me in a toast to the good health and prosperity of His Excellency, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and Mrs Janet Museveni, and to the continued excellent relations and good friendship between the wonderful people of Uganda and South Africa! To good health, prosperity and friendship!

Thank you.