

## Remarks at the Official Banquet in honour of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany

21 January 2002

Your Excellency President Rau and Mrs Rau,  
Distinguished members of the German delegation,  
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps,  
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,  
Fellow South Africans,  
Ladies and Gentleman:

On behalf of the government and people of South Africa, my wife and I are very happy to welcome you Mr President, Mrs Rau and our friends from Germany. We are especially pleased, Mr President that you, an eminent German, European and citizen of the world, a fellow-combatant against the evil system of apartheid, have at last had the possibility to visit a country you helped to liberate.

Your presence here will serve to strengthen the historical ties of friendship between our two countries and peoples, ties that have existed for more than two centuries ago.

It was first in the foothills of the Langeberg Mountains in July 1737, that Georg Schmidt established a mission station in Genadendal (the Valley of Grace), in a series of whitewashed thatched houses. Here he began to work among the Khoi people and started a school in 1738.

Schmidt was a member of the Moravian Church, also known as the United Brethren. Operating from its centre in Herrnhut in Saxony, this Church became the first Protestant Church to establish an organisation for the purpose of sending out missionaries to foreign lands. Their work did much to encourage others in Germany and Europe to do the same.

Later German church missions and settlements would spread to Bredasdorp, Elim, Malmesbury in the Cape, to KwaZulu-Natal, Rustenburg and various other centres.

Today there is a museum in Genadendal tracing these socio-cultural and religious ties and the people of this town have a proud history of struggle against segregation and apartheid.

The schools established by the German missionaries and the skills that the German immigrants brought would help to build this country and contribute to the betterment of all of South Africa's people.

In retracing this history of settlements and of struggle, we become aware of how far we have travelled together, of how our relationship first established in the early colonial period, was renewed in the period of our new democracy. It takes on an even deeper meaning now in this new century and places new demands upon each and both of us in these new times.

This morning you gave me a dossier, Mr President, from the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg, containing information about a project on the history of our two countries. The missionaries who came to South Africa as early as 1834 kept records of their mission work here in South Africa. There are a number of valuable materials from indigenous workers in the mission in mainly four African languages, Zulu, Pedi, Venda and Xhosa. The history of the communities touched by the Mission, their social situations and cultural contexts, are waiting for interpretation by scholars. The Evangelical Missions in Berlin and Brandenburg decided to open this information to the public so that scholars could come and interpret these writings. I have decided to take on this project myself and study the relations between Germany and South Africa over the last two hundred years and I will report to you Mr President at the end of the year on progress made.

It is in the context of a great global promise of a better life for all but also a world reality characterised by huge pockets of poverty and inequality producing hopelessness and despair especially among the people

of the developing countries, that we meet here today to consolidate and further deepen our relations, for the mutual benefit.

Your programme here in South Africa aptly demonstrates the depth of the relations of friendship and co-operation which we enjoy, covering a wide range of issues.

In this regard your visit over the next few days to several development projects in which your country has made substantial investments further underscores the commitment and depth of Germany's engagement in the development of our country.

We greatly value the presence of a very large number of German companies in South Africa, and the fact that they have, of their own accord or through mechanisms like the Southern Africa Initiative of German Business, become active and conscious partners in our socio-economic development - an endeavour which I am sure will grow even more in the future.

The twinning arrangements between various towns and regions in our two countries are also indicative of the common commitment to build a solid partnership between our two peoples and countries.

Yet, it has not only been in the bilateral sphere that Germany has played a role in our development. Once more, Mr President, I would like to convey our appreciation of what Germany did to ensure the successful conclusion of the Trade and Development Agreement between us and the European Union.

We are also pleased to note your constructive contribution to our continent as a whole through your support of the objectives and indeed the realisation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

As we take NEPAD into its implementation phase, we believe that through your efforts and participation, we shall be able to move faster on the road to Africa's socio-economic recovery and development. In this regard, I am happy to see that your Commissioner for Africa, Deputy Minister Uschi Eid, is also present here tonight as part of your delegation.

As you will recall, Mr President, when the Federal Republic of Germany was chair of the G8, the Non-Aligned Movement was, for the first time, invited to meet the G8 in Cologne. This has led to further fruitful dialogue between the North and the South, including the current engagement between the G8 and Africa on NEPAD.

Working together at both the bilateral and multilateral levels, we will ensure, Mr President, that we change our continent of Africa from a place of despair to a home of hope and human fulfilment. We are proud and inspired that we have the German people as our firm partners.

May our relationship first established in the foothills of the Langeberg continue to bear fruit as we meet in Berlin and Pretoria and as our peoples engage each other in all areas of human endeavour.

In this context, Mr President, I would also like to express our full support for the Locum II Conference aimed at mobilising both our peoples into a cooperative development initiative that will address many issues and strengthen the people-to-people relations.

Of course, we will also continue to consolidate our relationship through the Binational Commission as sister countries conscious of our membership of a great human family that needs enduring peace, shared prosperity and sustained development.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I ask you to rise and drink a toast to His Excellency, President and Mrs Rau and to friendship between our peoples.

I thank you.

