



**STATEMENT BY MINISTER NKOANA-MASHABANE
SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
COOPERATION AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 25TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**TUESDAY 04 MARCH 2014
GENEVA**

Check against delivery

Mr President, Ambassador Dong Ella,

The President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E John
Ashe,

Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-Moon,

Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay,

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you warm greetings from the Government and people of South Africa, the land of Nelson Mandela who left us with the words that (and I quote): "We shall never allow our country to play host to racism. Nor shall our voices be stilted if we see that another, elsewhere in the world, is victim to racial tyranny" (close quote).

We congratulate our Gabonese brother, Ambassador Dong Ella, for assuming the Presidency of the Council, and other members of the Bureau on their appointment; and assure them of our full support. Similarly, I wish to thank all member states for the confidence they showed to my country for voting us back into the Council.

Mr President, the post-apartheid South Africa will be twenty years old. Our struggle was fundamentally for decolonisation and our right to self-determination, both of which are affirmed very strongly in the UN Charter and Vienna Declaration and the Programme of Action (VDPA), which essentially protects human dignity. Our transformation since our freedom would have been meaningless if it did not fundamentally change the lives of ordinary South Africans, black and white. We stand before you today to say that in the two decades of our freedom, we have a constitution that promotes and protects civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.

Nelson Mandela may have left us but his legacy and a vision of a non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous South Africa lives on. In this regard, I would like to thank the international community for their outpouring support to our nation as we grieved and buried a truly international icon.

As South Africans, our commitment to human rights is one that remains forever strong inspired by our compatriots who paid the ultimate price in the fight against racism and injustice. Your solidarity over many decades with our struggle is remembered and cherished.

Notwithstanding what we have achieved, we recognise that we must do more to move South Africa forward in the fight against the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment as manifestations of the enduring legacy of apartheid.

Mr President,

South Africa is therefore firmly committed to the mandate of the United Nations Human Rights Council cognisant of the huge responsibility which its 47 members carry in this regard. As Members of the Council, we should at all times be guided by a common desire and collective vision to constantly develop norms and standards for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including respect for international humanitarian law. This will ensure that the Council guarantees (i) maximum protection, (ii) adequate remedies to all victims of human rights abuses and violations through a uniform regulatory framework, and (iii) that there is no impunity for human rights violations.

The twentieth anniversary of freedom finds South Africa on a solid footing regarding human rights and democratic values. In this regard on 7 May 2014, we will again go back to the polls with our citizens exercising their democratic right to vote for their fifth administration. In the Continent, we are also marking major milestones, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity, the adoption of Vision 2063 when it is finalised, the Pan African Women's Organisation (PAWO) heading for its 52nd Anniversary, and 30 years since the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

Mr President,

In honouring our global icon, it is imperative that we continue the unfinished business by taking forward his vision of a world free of racism. I raise this issue because the world cannot afford to slide back and the Council has the responsibility to ensure that the commitment of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) are fulfilled. This Council owes it to Madiba to unite behind the work that needs to be done in this regard.

South Africa welcomes the proclamation by the UN General Assembly at its 68th Session of the International Decade for People of Africa Descent which will commence on 01 January 2015. The African Union has its own programme to reach out to People of African Descent across the world, including having hosted the first AU Diaspora Summit.

Mr President,

The spirit of Vienna as encapsulated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) should be our common launching pad for the advancement of our current agenda. The VDPA was indeed seminal because for us as South Africans, it establishes the importance of all human rights, including the right to development, with none superior than the other. That is why South Africa believes that there can be no hierarchy of rights. Therefore as we push for more to be done on civil and political rights, we must ensure that economic, social and cultural rights also receive equal zeal and dedication. The VDPA in affirming the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, requires us to advance every right with unstinted fervour and commitment. For South Africa, the inextricable link between civil and political rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other are also embedded in our Constitution, in particular the Bill of Rights. Mr President, it is from this point of view that my Government approaches the work of the Council

South Africa stands ready to work with all countries in the Council. For the Council to deliver on this vast mandate, it is important that the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is funded through assessed contributions, commensurate with the challenges we face is predictable. We must resist the bilateralisation of the mandate of the HRC through earmarked donor funding to this Office. This will ensure less politicization of the work of the Council and enhance its objectivity, thereby making it more objective. South Africa believes in multilateralism and the global system of governance including the United Nations. At the heart of this is

an effective HRC that has credibility in rising to all challenges and remains true to its mandate.

Mr President,

It is a shame that the Palestinian people continue to be denied their inalienable right to self-determination and continue to have their rights trampled on by an occupying force that has itself known what it is to be victimised in the same manner that it is victimising and displacing Palestinian people. It is even more saddening that this Council has thus far failed to hold the occupying force accountable for its action. Instead more is demanded of the Palestinian people and less is done to restore their dignity.

Mr President, the Human Rights Council has been seized with the issue of Sri Lanka for a while. Let me share with you, Mr President our approach to the Sri Lanka situation. It is important that we allow Sri Lankans to find each other, and out of this find solutions that are durable for their country. We as, as South Africans also had to find each other and consequently find our own solution to our own problem. This is our wish for the people of Sri Lanka.

With regard to the situation in Syria, South Africa deplores the senseless violence that continues unabated in Syria from whatever side it comes. South Africa fully supports the UN process including the Geneva Talks to find a lasting political solution to the Syrian crisis. In this regard, we urge all parties to stop the violence and to continue the negotiations in earnest and without preconditions.

Mr President,

On the Development Agenda Beyond 2015, South Africa starts from the premise that development is a continuum. Therefore, we must spare no effort in striving still to meet

the targets set for the MDGs by 2015 and build on the progress accomplished on these. Furthermore, we welcome the outcome of the High-level Special Event on the MDGs, as contained in UNGA Resolution A/Res/68/6, entitled "Outcome document of the Special Event to follow-up on efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals", which locates the negotiations on the post-2015 Development Agenda firmly within the UN intergovernmental processes stipulating that the negotiations will begin in September 2014 on the basis of the Rio Principles. We need to bear in mind that centrally the Development Agenda Beyond 2015 is about development, and not renegotiating agreed outcomes of major UN summits, conferences and other negotiation tracks.

We look forward to work with all countries on issues affecting women, children, persons with disabilities and indigenous people.

Mr President,

South Africa is committed to host the African regional seminar focussing on the plight of the LGBTI during the first half of this year, mindful that this challenge is a global challenge that is widespread far beyond South Africa and the African Continent.

In conclusion, Mr President we should all recall that racism knows no boundaries and we should fight it wherever it exists as President Mandela declared in his statement as quoted earlier.

I thank you Mr President.