

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY H.E. AUGUSTING KPEHE NGAFUAN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE
FREEDOM DAY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
FRIDAY, 23 MAY, 2014**

Mr. Ambassador;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Representatives of International Organizations

Officials of Government;

Dear Friends;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honored to form part of the 20th Anniversary Celebrations of the Freedom Day of the Republic of South Africa. On behalf of H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and the Government and people of Liberia I wish to extend profound greetings and heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. Ambassador, and through you, to H.E. President Jacob Zuma who will be inaugurated on tomorrow Saturday May 24, 2014 for a second term as President of the Republic of South Africa after his successful re-election in a historic democratic process.

Let me also congratulate the African National Congress (ANC) which won about 63% of the votes cast paving the way for its fifth straight elections victory since 1994. To the people of South Africa in general, I salute your indomitable will to succeed. In spite of your diversity, you have largely succeeded in uniting your country for the common good, an attribute that makes you to be deservingly called the **RAINBOW NATION**.

South Africa's Freedom Day is meant to commemorate the first post-apartheid elections held on April 27 in 1994 which was won by the

illustrious Nelson Madiba Mandela after twenty seven years of imprisonment on Robben Island as well as to celebrate freedom for all South Africans irrespective of racial, economic, religious and political differences. The elections of 1994 were the first elections in South Africa in which the right to vote did not depend upon race. Freedom Day is also meant to pay homage to South Africa's Bill of Rights that is widely recognized as one of the most people-centric and inclusive legal instruments in the world.

We join you to commemorate this day with a mixture of joy and sadness. We are joyous because the people of South Africa finally have freedom, but we are sad nonetheless because this is the first commemoration of your country's Freedom Day without the great Madiba, a trailblazer of global peace and reconciliation whose mortal journey ended on December 5, 2013; a fearless and selfless fighter for racial equality and dignity. Liberia and the world will continue to miss Madiba's wise counsel, resilience, and unmatched spirit of forgiveness.

Mr. Ambassador:

We warmly recall Liberia's own efforts and contributions towards the struggle for freedom and independence not only for South Africa, but for the entire Southern Africa and the African Continent as a whole, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who struggled for human freedom and self-respect. This was a duty assigned to us by history as Africa's first Republic and by our consciousness that our contributions and support were based on moral, humanistic and brotherly grounds.

Liberia was not only vocal at the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in advocating for the total emancipation of the people of South Africa from the manacles of racial discrimination and the worst kind of human sufferings on the Continent and in the world, but

also played host and granted succor to several liberation figures including Joshua Nkomo, Sam Nujoma and the Legendary Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, to name a few. Liberian passports, financial and other forms of support were provided to our southern African brothers and sisters to allow them traverse the globe in search of increased diplomatic, moral, material and financial support in their resistance to the unbearable physical and psychological pains caused by colonialism and apartheid.

Mr. Ambassador, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today we are very proud that the Republic of South Africa plays a leading role in regional and global affairs politically, economically, and socially. We also commend the people of South Africa for the many achievements they have made since coming out of the dark era of apartheid. South Africa is now more than ever very engaged in the search for peace wherever there is conflict on the Continent and the world and has been very active in the UN, AU, Non Aligned Movement, and other domains of multilateral interactions.

Mr. Ambassador:

As you are aware, I was invited by my South African counterpart Madam Maite Nkoana-Mashbane to make an official visit to South Africa during which time we would have signed agreements impacting several sectors in further demonstration of our deepening bilateral relations. The visit was postponed due to the South African elections; we anxiously look forward to making this visit which will provide our two countries a platform to establish a Liberia-South Africa Joint Commission on bilateral

cooperation with a view to widening the ambit of our interactions in the mutual interest of our two peoples.

I wish to reaffirm that our doors remain open to working with the Embassy, the Government and people of your great country to expand people to people cooperation. We also look forward to exploring more pragmatic and innovative ways of escalating investment opportunities.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

For us in Liberia, suppression of one African nation means suppression of all African nations and freedom for one African nation redounds the freedom of all African nations, thus, celebrating this 20th Freedom Day gives us immense pleasure.

We pray that God Almighty will continue to bless the souls of all the men and women who sacrificed their time, finances and even their lives to see your country reach where it is today. May God Almighty continue to guide your leader H.E. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, and the great people of South Africa as they pursue greater national harmony, as well as social, economic and political progress.

TOAST

Mr. Ambassador, Excellencies, Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Officials of Government Present, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, before I take my seat, on behalf of H.E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and in my own name, I like to request that you kindly rise and raise your glasses and drink lustily to the good health and prosperity of H.E. Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, and the Government and people of South Africa on this 20th Anniversary

of the Republic of South Africa; and to the sustained vibrancy of Liberia-South Africa bilateral relations.

I thank you.