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**DIPLOMATIC SCENE**

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**SA and Ghana strengthen ties**

**INTERNATIONAL Relations Minister Malie Nkoana-Mashabane last week led a delegation to Accra, Ghana, for the 4th Session of the South Africa-Ghana Permanent Joint Commission for Co-operation.**

The joint commission aims at strengthening bilateral relations and co-operation between the two countries in the fields of mining, retail, insurance, transport, tourism, banking, telecommunications, construction, services, franchising, manufacturing, fishing, aviation, and energy. The session was a platform to discuss regional, continental and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

The bilateral political relations between South Africa and Ghana are very good, with both countries maintaining residential diplomatic missions in each other's capitals. There are more than 60 registered South African companies operating in Ghana. They include MTN, AngloGold Ashanti, Goldfields, Shogun Resources, NCR, Vodafone, Deutsche Bank, Standard Chartered, Steinhoff, and Stears.

SA investors are active in mining, retail, insurance, transport, tourism, and banking. - Staff Reporter

**SAKHLIE NDZALI**

IT WAS an auspicious day of celebration at the Pretoria National Botanical Gardens yesterday as the delegation of the EU to South Africa celebrated their 60th anniversary. The event marked the day in 1950 when Robert Schuman, one of the founders of the EU, made his “Schuman Declaration”, outlining a vision to unite separate European states into a single community.

The EU ambassador to SA, Marcus Carnoro, said the day should be a reminder of Schuman’s vision to unite Europe, rebounding from the devastation of World War II. Sharing Carnoro’s sentiments was SA’s Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Senzeni Zokwana, who said the unique EU integration model remained an inspiration to many regions of the world, including the African continent.

He also praised Schuman’s style of leadership, adding that leaders around the world could learn from it. “His leadership demonstrated first and foremost that planting the seed of unity, solidarity and peace would later become the vision that the EU would see occupy its rightful place in the global affairs and would provide the basis of peace,” Zokwana said.

Members of the EU delegation to South Africa, including Germany, the UK and the Netherlands, also acknowledged their own bilateral relations with SA under the framework of the SA-EU Strategic Partnership, which is only one of 10 in the world and the adoption of the Joint Action Plan in 2005.

In May 2007, Zokwana said SA continues its engagements with the EU as a bloc, which is SA’s largest trading partner and foreign investor. “Over 20000 EU companies operate within South Africa creating over 500000 jobs.”

Furthermore, the European Investment Bank has also been playing an important role in supporting SA’s National Priorities. Since 1995, the bank has provided over R40 Billion in loans to SA borrowers.

**GERARD K. LINDNER**

GERMAN ambassador to South Africa, Walter Lindner, yesterday played host to legendary South African journalist, Allister Sparks, author of the memoir 'The Sword and the Pen'.

Sparks, who is in SA for a six-week trip, said he was impressed by the South African people's spirit, resilience, and ability to overcome challenges. The visit would also help him gain insights into the country's political and cultural landscape.

Despite the political turmoil, Lindner said he would always be a second home for journalists and free speech.

**SPARKS LOOKS BACK ON HIS CAREER**

In the Rand Daily Mail, Sparks recalled his days as a journalist, noting the changes in the country over the years. "It's been a pleasure to see how SA has evolved, especially in terms of media freedom," he said.