

Speech in SONA Debate

19 February 2020

Minister Naledi Pandor

A better Africa and a better world.

Madam Speaker,
Chairperson of the NCOP,
Mr President,
Deputy President,
Honourable Members

We welcome the address given by the President last Thursday and plan to work hard to realize the priorities set out by the President. We noted Mr President that our opposition colleagues chose to ignore your speech and the priorities you announced and merely resorted to the tradition of casting aspersions and sowing doom and gloom as a way of creating pessimism in the wonderful proud, robust and capable nation of South Africa. A nation that will work with you Mr President and the ANC to create a better South Africa, a better Africa and a better world.

This year South Africa has assumed the chairship of the African Union at a time of increased hope and aspiration. Of course as with millions throughout the world we are faced by challenges but there are visible signals of triumph over despair in our continent. Africa has been struggling to fully throw off the shackles of colonialism and enslavement for over four hundred years, time is fast running out and we as South Africa have to utilize the chairship to intensify efforts directed at succeeding in development and to build on the momentum set in motion by previous chairs of our union.

The deliberations and key decisions of the Summit last week suggested Africa is ready. The agreement that we should address illicit financial flows, corruption, human development, infrastructure, and practical action on the massive agenda set by the AfCFTA point to a genuine desire to place the continent on a different trajectory and we know that you Mr President and South Africa will and must play a key role in ensuring this new determination to implement Agenda 2063 succeeds.

Our government has selected five priority areas as our focus for this year. The response from the Union membership has been one of overwhelming support particularly for the objective of silencing the guns as part of our path to the heightened development of Africa. We will focus on peace and security, the financial inclusion of women and creating conditions for their genuine empowerment, promotion of accountability and transparency in governance through implementation of the APRM, advancing Africa's climate change responses by attending to green economy opportunities and ensuring firm consistent support for sustainable and successful implementation of the continental free trade area agreement. We have also undertaken to act decisively on building the AU institution we have the privilege to host, the Pan African Parliament.

Our cabinet and the AU member states are fully aware of the complexity underpinning the theme of South Africa's tenure as chair. It is an important theme underpinning the nexus between peace and economic inclusion, development and ending war and conflict. We will strive to address the root causes of conflicts such as poverty, inequality democracy deficits and the negative role played by foreign interests that benefit from instability in resource rich African countries.

Madam Speaker, Mr President, we are fully alert to the fact that these positive aims for Africa do not come accompanied by many friends. The global geo political environment is one that has become increasingly hostile to Africa's interests and ambitions. Rather than experiencing an increasingly progressive world concerned about development of the most vulnerable we are facing increased nationalism, self interest and greedily voracious interest in Africa's rich resources. Our continent as evidenced by Libya has become the

site for proxy international conflicts, the host of increased extremist groups and terrible devastation of helpless communities. We need to intensify the training and development of our African security and intelligence agencies and work closely together to successfully fight terrorism and all its manifestations.

On the multilateral front South Africa must continue the work it is doing within the UNSC to ensure a focus on its core role of peace and security, and to actively promote the fundamental structure and composition of the UNSC. While focusing on Africa's key priorities we will not desert our friends and the struggle for freedom in Palestine and in Saharawi. We firmly believe the people of Palestine must be the ones who shape the outcome of their struggle and that no one can ever impose half a freedom on a freedom loving nations. We will continue to urge Morocco to act in honour of UN resolutions and the AU to ensure that struggle remains on its agenda.

Madam Speaker, Mr President we have noted visible signs of Africa addressing its infrastructure and other challenges. Five strategic initiatives deserve mention. First, the Kinshasa-Brazzaville Bridge and Rail project which has secured funding, second, the Lamu Port southern Sudan Ethiopia transport corridor which has registered good progress with berth 1 completed and berth two to be ready end of this year. Third, the ICT One network Africa Broadband and optic fiber projects linking neighboring states in east Africa and fourth, our own Lesotho Highlands project phase 2, fifth, the trans Africa highway project nine highways eventually connecting about 500 million people as it passes 41 cities in sub Saharan Africa and linking 56,683 km, a significant future contributor to the trade connection of Africa. These and many other infrastructure initiatives indicate our continents determination to succeed.

This year also marks our second year as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. We will continue our efforts to encourage dialogue as a means of resolving conflict and will firmly advocate for efforts to reform the UNSC to make it more representative, democratic and inclusive. South has been a strong voice for democracy peace and a renewed

commitment to multilateralism in order to advance progressive institutionalism and solidarity as the basis for building a just international order.

We are convinced that as chair of the AU, South Africa will contribute towards Africa's progress and its vision which is rooted in durable stability growth and development. Mr President your plans for greening our energy sources, supporting youth entrepreneurship and promoting and inculcating innovation in higher education will definitely set South Africa on a sustainable path of development. The ANC welcomes all the initiatives you announced and believes that they will unlock higher growth, economic stability and increased investment both foreign and domestic.

Thank you.