



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Remarks by Minister Derek Hanekom at the Celebration of the French National Day in Pretoria on Thursday, 14 July 2016

The Ambassador of France, H.E Ms Elizabeth Barbier
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps
Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners
Members of the Diplomatic Community,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Bonjour, and good afternoon to you all.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this important day in the history of France with you.

On behalf of the government and the people of the Republic of South Africa, I extend to the government and the people of the French Republic our heartfelt congratulations on this special celebration of the National Day of France.

Your Excellency,

France and South Africa share much in common. Both our countries are blessed with beautiful landscapes and scenic wonders. We are steeped in heritage and culture, and we are attractive to tourists from around the world. France attracts more tourists than every other destination in the world. South Africa is the premier tourist destination in Africa.

The strong ties of friendship between our two countries were reinforced during President Zuma's State Visit to France this week.

The state visit coincided with the Centenary Commemoration of the Battle of Delville Wood. The South African Delville Wood memorial has been transformed to ensure that the historical role played by black South Africans in the First and Second World Wars is accorded the same recognition that was given to white South Africans.

Our histories are intertwined. The influence of the French Huguenots who settled in the Cape in the late 1600s is still prevalent in the magnificent vineyards in that part of the world. The "French Corner", or Franschhoek, is now world-renowned as one of the most beautiful and picturesque towns in the world, and it is thriving on tourism.

South Africans who visit France enjoy wonderful experiences. A tour of the Palace of Versailles gives tourists a peek into a bygone world of amazing splendor, experiencing the art at The Louvre inspires the imagination, and a cruise along the Riviera lifts the spirits. France offers visitors a magnificent range of experiences.

France is also one of South Africa's core source markets for tourists. French tourists are making the best of our favourable exchange rate to enjoy our splendid wildlife, our natural beauty, shopping, wildlife, nightlife, culture and heritage, and our beautiful beaches.

South Africa is a warm and sunny destination in middle of the French winter. We have 260 registered tourist guides who offer their services in French, allowing tourists to experience the full meaning behind the sites that reflect the origins of life on earth, the development of humanity, the technological capabilities of indigenous civilisations, and our recent political history. These guides are bringing to life places like the Vredefort Dome, The Cradle of Humankind at Maropeng, Mapungubwe and Robben Island.

About 130 000 French tourists visited South Africa last year. More than half came here for the first time, but almost one quarter were repeat visitors. This demonstrates the enduring quality of our offering, which attracts many of those who have experienced it to come back for more.

South Africa enjoyed a 37% increase in French tourist arrivals in April this year, compared to the same month last year, and we look forward to welcoming even more people from France in the future.

Your Excellency,

The economic relations between France and South Africa continue to grow, and there is room for further expansion. France continues to be one of our biggest trading partners and investors, and we welcome the presence of French companies in our country.

There are now 365 French companies operating in South Africa, employing 36 000 local people. Last year alone, French investments in our country amounted to R24 billion, creating 4000 jobs.

South Africa and France will continue to explore opportunities for economic cooperation. The focus for both our governments is to create quality jobs. South Africa is working intensely to promote growth and create sustainable jobs, to diversify our economy, and to ensure that development is inclusive of all our people.

South Africa and France are also major destinations for students from Africa. We have signed a Declaration of Intent to strengthen the cooperation in higher education, training and skills development, and to accelerate the movement of students between the two countries.

We are also pursuing cooperation in energy, science and technology, health and transport.

Your Excellency,

The recent handing over of digitised Rivonia Trial records by President Hollande to President Zuma was a remarkable event. France has assisted South Africa to safeguard a valuable piece of our history for generations to come, and we are extremely grateful for the gesture.

We will never forget the role of the French people in supporting the struggle against Apartheid, and our journey towards liberty and equality.

I ask you to join me in a toast to the good health and prosperity of the people of France, and to the continued good relations and friendship between France and South Africa.

I wish all the people of France a happy Bastille Day!

Merci, Siyabonga, I thank you!