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Speech on the occasion of the celebration of the 59th National Day of the Central African Republic

13 August 2019

H.E. Ambassador Andre Nzapayeke and the members of the Embassy,
The Dean of the Diplomatic Community, H.E. Ambassador M'Poko,
Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Members of the Diplomatic Community
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Government and the people of South Africa, to join the Government and the people of the Central African Republic in celebration of your 59th National Day of Independence.

Our two sister Republics enjoy strong diplomatic relations which date back to 1993 and it is our hope and wish that, on your 59th anniversary of independence, the people of the Central African Republic enjoy peace, development and economic prosperity.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

South Africa congratulates the government and political parties in the Central African Republic for the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation that was signed in Bangui on 6 February 2019. It is our belief that without peace and security there cannot be development, and our two countries share a common vision of a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

It is on that basis that we continue to strengthen the bond of friendship that exist between our two countries.

In April 2017, the warm and cordial relations between our two countries were further solidified when His Excellency, President Faustin-Archange Touadera, undertook a working visit to South Africa. Discussions between our two Heads of State laid the firm foundation for cooperation in a number of areas and in particular, South Africa agreeing to assist in the areas of developing peace and security and strengthening economic cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Subsequent to President Toudera's visit, significant progress has been made in our bilateral relations, including the opening of the South African Embassy in Bangui in June 2017.

The Agreement on the establishment of the Joint Cooperation Committee has been successfully negotiated by our officials and is ready to be signed by our respective Ministers. This Agreement will

contribute to enhancing our cooperation in the areas of the economy, environment and tourism, defence and security.

Your Excellency,

Most recently, two delegations led by the Ministers of Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation and Repatriation, and Humanitarian Affairs and National Reconciliation, travelled to South Africa to study and hold in-depth discussions regarding peace, reconciliation, demobilisation, as well as creating new institutions. In this regard, we are pleased to have partnered with **In Transformation Initiative**, a South African group of experts in this field.

The first delegation was met by DIRCO's Director General, Mr Mohaoi on 5 July 2019 and the second delegation was met by Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini on 15 July 2019. We were humbled by the interest of the Ministers in South Africa's success story of truth and reconciliation. Both visits created the opportunity for us to further strengthen our bilateral relations.

We also welcome the third delegation, present here with us today, friends from the Office of the President. This delegation is here for discussions related to security sector reform. We wish them a memorable stay in our beautiful country.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

South Africa is committed to deepening the bilateral economic relations for mutual benefit of the people of our two countries. A number of South African companies have seized opportunities and are currently operating in the Central African Republic, in the fields of telecommunication, health, infrastructure, mining, geology and water.

In closing, Your Excellency, I would like to congratulate the Government and the people of the Central African Republic for choosing the path of peace and reconciliation, despite many challenges.

May you become a beacon of prosperity and stability. Our countries are united in the vision of a prosperous Africa and a better world.

Thank you.