

Ms Nomatamba Tambo Consul-General of the Republic of South Africa Hong Kong SAR & Macao SAR Freedom Day Speech:

"Our Freedom day celebrations this year take place just after our fourth democratic elections since 1994.

I am happy to report that the ruling party, The African National Congress has once more been entrusted by the citizens of South Africa to lead them towards greater economic and social development.

The government has committed itself to clean governance, efficiency, protection of the rule of law and a free and open society.

Our political landscape has changed significantly over the course of this year.

Some old alliances have been broken and some new ones have been formed. A healthy society can withstand political re-alignment and South Africa has proved to be just that.

A record number of the youth have turned out to vote, which shows that our youth not only respect the sacrifices made to give them the vote, but that they are keen to participate in moulding a vision of South Africa that fits in with their sense of self and their sense of who South Africans are.

It is estimated that nationally 80% of South Africans voted this year. Including for the first time under the auspices of our new democratic dispensation, those South Africans who have made their homes abroad. The sterling job done by the Independent Electoral Commission has even meant that prisoners have found it far easier to vote at this election.

All this augurs well for South Africa and goes a long way to proving that our democratic processes are strong, well entrenched and that we have achieved a level of political maturity that is quite remarkable for such a young democracy.

We have come a long way from our divided and bitter past to a society based on equality, dignity and respect for human rights.

On Freedom Day, the South African government reaffirms its commitment to consolidate democracy and create a South Africa united in diversity.

We commemorate the heroism and sacrifice over the years of struggle to win our freedom with the solidarity of people from across the globe. Those friends of South Africa can be assured that the effort they put into obtaining freedom from oppression for the South African people will never be forgotten.

We celebrate the continuing hope and resilience of our people, working together to achieve the vision of our Constitution.

As a people, South Africans can be proud of the manner in which their government has worked with our brothers and sisters on the African Continent through the African Union and the South African Development Community to assist as peacekeepers, where necessary, by providing humanitarian aid and working towards a more peaceful and prosperous continent.

Whilst having made tremendous strides in order to create a better life for all South Africans, by broadening access to basic services previously denied to most, the Government of South Africa will continue to struggle against unemployment, poverty and crime.

The goal of the South African government is to halve poverty and unemployment by

2014. These goals are achievable if we all take responsibility for each other and if we continue to reach out and encourage those members of society who are still disadvantaged as a result of our past history.

The 2009 Freedom Day Celebrations express our pride in the achievements we have made as a nation in the past 15 years. We can only continue to grow as a nation, improve as a people and never stop our quest for a better life for all."