

Joint Statement
26th South Africa – European Union, Inter-Parliamentary Meeting

31 October - 1 November 2018

Parliament of South Africa, Cape Town
South Africa

The 26th South Africa - European Union Inter-Parliamentary Meeting (IPM) between Members of the South African Parliament and Members of the European Parliament took place in the Parliament of South Africa on 31 October and 1 November 2018.

Members reiterated their recognition that Inter-Parliamentary Meetings have played an important role in strengthening South Africa - EU relations, and fostering understanding and implementation of the strategic partnership through joint action. They highlighted that the IPM dialogues take place in a constructive spirit and from the perspective of monitoring progress and sharing best practices.

Members welcomed the strong relations between South Africa and the EU, recognizing that the moment is politically appropriate for fostering this decades-long value-based partnership with renewed ambition. Members called for the building of even closer ties, as equal partners and in the framework of a wider regional alliance and cooperation between the African Union and the EU, with a focus on sustainable, mutually supportive growth, for industrial and Small and Medium Enterprise development, infrastructure and agriculture, including the agro-processing, to strengthen value-addition in Africa.

The Delegation welcomed the upcoming address by President Cyril Ramaphosa to the European Parliament, Strasbourg on 14 November 2018. Additionally, Members highlighted the unique opportunity of the seventh South Africa – European Union Summit of 15 November to anchor the relationship strategically, based on past associations and looking far into the future. The Summit offers an extraordinary chance to build alliances on the basis of shared interests and of the joint EU and SA commitment to effective multilateralism. In this context, the Delegation shall scrutinise the implementation of the Summit's conclusions.

Members reaffirm the central role of the United Nations and the need to secure a rules based international system that protects fundamental principles such as peace and stability, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Members underlined the mutually strategic importance of the South Africa – European Union strategic relationship, a stronger partnership with South Africa means a stronger connection between the European Union and the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa. This should be in the context of regional integration and cooperation with the African Union, as framed in the Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs.

The Delegation acknowledged that climate change is having an impact globally, and agreed that addressing global warming should be a joint priority on sustainable development under the framework of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. As international relations are being challenged on this issue around the world, Members recognized South Africa’s regional role and voiced their support for South Africa’s agenda in addressing climate challenges and concerns, and for its leadership at the upcoming COP24 in December.

Members welcomed the envisaged African Continental Free Trade Area, and the prospects of building on the current regional integration processes supported by the EU and the Economic Partnership Agreements and further, call for the swift implementation. Members emphasized the importance of trade between South Africa and the European Union and highlighted the role trade plays in facilitating peace.

The Delegation agreed that fostering job creation should also be a joint priority, and exchanged views on the appropriate instruments to achieve this goal. For instance, Members discussed how additional private investments could be attracted to South Africa through policy certainty and examined which industrial sectors or regions should be primarily targeted, and called for partnerships in infrastructure development, particularly in strategic areas such as energy, water management and digital infrastructure. In this regard, European Members emphasized the importance of building a strong, resilient digital economy based on a skilled workforce, secure infrastructure, and research and innovation clusters fostering collaboration between leading universities and industry.

Members also called for broader partnerships with EU stakeholders for innovation exchange and technology transfer.

At the same time, the Delegation recognized that there are some trade impediments between the European Union and South Africa that have to be resolved through continuing constructive dialogue. Members agreed that a speedy and sustainable solution should be found especially in the sectors of poultry, wheat, citrus in the light of a broader agenda.

The Delegation acknowledged the importance of education, for promoting equality and opportunity, creating a robust and innovative economy, resourced by a vibrant private sector and anchored in a solid public commitment to sound governance and common good. Members welcomed South Africa's goal to address the needs of the job market by focusing on youth and education, ensuring young generation acquire the necessary skills to engage with socio-economic activities.

The South African Members acknowledged and expressed their appreciation for financial support provided by the European Union to the education sector in South Africa.

Members called for a greater involvement of youth in decision - making processes and issues that affect them. The South African Members highlighted the importance of and support for the recently launched Youth Employment Service (YES) initiative, which aims to create 1 million internships for the unemployed youth over the next three years. This will contribute to reducing youth unemployment.

Members welcomed the election of South Africa as a non-permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council from 2019 to 2020, and the opportunity for the European Union and South Africa to work closely together to ensure peace and security, as well as to advance an ambitious human rights agenda. Members agreed to explore the deepening of cooperation in mediation, conflict prevention, peace and security on the continent, in alignment with the EU-Africa agenda.

The Delegation agreed that modern day slavery can affect people of any age, gender or race and that no country is free from modern slavery. They recognised the need for greater coordination of efforts to combat it at an international level.

In this context, they urged both the EU and AU Member States to swiftly prepare the action plan for the implementation of the conclusions of the 5th AU - EU Summit in Abidjan.

The 27th Inter-Parliamentary Meeting will take place in Europe in the second half of 2019 and take the legacy forward.

The Delegation mandated their Co-Chairs to forward this statement to the President and Members of the European Parliament, the President of the European Commission, VP/HR Federica Mogherini and the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Parliament of South Africa, the President of the Republic of South Africa and the Executive.

Issued: 1st November 2018