

Joint Communiqué on the occasion of a Working Visit to the Republic of South Africa, by the Right Honourable, Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane for the official launch of the Bi-National Commission on 28 September 2023.

1. At the invitation of President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, The Right Honourable, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, paid a Working Visit to the Republic Inaugural Session of the Bi-National Commission (BNC) between the two countries.
2. The two Heads of State and Government acclaimed the Official Launch and the Inaugural Session of the Bi-National Commission (BNC) as momentous and historic occasion which reflects a shared commitment not only to take the cordial and friendly relations which so happily subsist between the two neighbourly countries to a new height, but also to continue to deepen and integrate further the existing bilateral economic cooperation. In this regard, the Heads of State and Government acknowledged that the Official Launch and the Inaugural Session of the BNC are a result of a joint effort and endurance which culminated in the signing of an Agreement in November 2021, elevating the erstwhile Joint Bilateral Commission of Cooperation (JBCC) to a Bi-National Commission (BNC), during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The two Heads of State and Government recognized that the Official Launch and the Inaugural Session of the BNC took place in the month of September, which is a Heritage Month in South Africa and, in this context, acknowledged that the peoples of both countries do not only share a common heritage and cultural affinities, but also very close kinship and languages.
4. The two Heads of State and Government considered that the Official Launch and the Inaugural Session of the BNC represented the furtherance of historic bonds of friendship and solidarity cemented during South Africa's struggle against colonialism and apartheid. In this regard, they paid tribute to the 42 South Africans and Basotho heroes and heroines of the Maseru massacre who paid the ultimate price in the hands of the apartheid machinery in 1982.
5. The Summit of the two Heads of State and Government received the report of the Council of Ministers and commended the Council and the Committee of the Senior Officials for a diligent work done in reviewing the decisions of the erstwhile JBCC, which was held in Maseru, the Kingdom of Lesotho on 20 November 2020.
6. In this regard, the Summit of two Heads of State and Government took note of the progress made in the implementation of the JBCC 2020 decisions, which included amongst other the decision to review the JBCC signed in April 2001 and transformed it into the BNC, which is elevated to the Summit of the two Heads of State and Government.
7. The Summit noted progress on a number of key fields and areas of cooperation including on political and strategic cooperation; defence and security; education and training; information, communications and technology; sports and recreation; trade and

Industry, including the implementation of cross-border value chain projects; migration; social development; water and energy; health and labour; diplomatic consultations; to mention but few areas and fields of cooperation.

8. The Summit noted that while there is commendable progress made under the 2001 JBCC framework, there are a number of challenges and outstanding matters to be addressed to ensure smooth trade facilitation and investments, easy movement of people, goods and services given the unique geographic locations and proximity of the two neighbourly countries. In this regard, the Summit of the two Heads of State and government directed the respective Ministers of Home Affairs to finalise work on the establishment of a new model on migration to facilitate ease of movement of people, goods, and services between two countries.

9. In relation to the trade facilitation the two countries will expedite the programme of action to remove technical and non-tariff barriers to trade including the commercialization of at least two additional border posts.

10. The Summit commended the flagship collaboration and partnership in the area of water resources for mutual benefit of the peoples of both countries and agreed to explore further partnership and collaboration in the field of renewable energy in hydro, wind and solar resources. In this regard, the Summit of the two Heads of State and Government directed the respective Ministers responsible for Water, Energy and Electricity to urgently finalise modalities for cooperation and partnership in this field to ensure sustainable supply which will further bolster economic development in both countries.

11. The two Heads of State and Government further noted that there is a considerable increase in the number of formal Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding in the number of fields and key areas of cooperation, under the erstwhile JBCC (2001 -2021), which need to be either reviewed or implemented. In this regard, the Summit directed the respective Ministers and Senior Officials to convene regular consultative meetings to review progress in the implementation these formal Agreements and to review the instruments, where necessary.

12. The Summit of the two Heads of State and Government considered and approved the decisions and the Joint Action Plan of the Inaugural Session of the BNC. In this regard, the Joint Action Plan will serve as a tool for monitoring and evaluating progress on the decisions of the Summit, under the Bi-National Commission.

13. The two Heads of State and Government utilised the occasion of the Official Launch and the Inaugural Session of the Bi-National Commission to apprise each other on domestic issues and exchanged views on regional, continental, and international developments of mutual interest. In this regard, H.E. President Rampahosa commended The Right Honourable the Prime Minister, Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the progress made towards finalization of the National Reforms Process. President Ramaphosa re-affirmed the continued support of South Africa to the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho in this noble endeavour.

14. Regarding the regional, continental, and international developments of mutual concern and interest, the two Heads of State and Government expressed a concern on the increase of unconstitutional changes of governments in some parts of the African continent including the Republics of Gabon, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Sudan, and Guinea. They further considered the security situation in the Sahel region, Eastern DRC, and the Northern Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique.

15. The two Heads of State and Government reiterated their unwavering support for the people of Western Sahara in their quest for the right to self-determination. Similarly, they renewed their commitment to support the Palestinian people in their struggle to co-exist with the State of Israel within the internationally recognised borders.

16. On candidatures to the international system, The Right Honourable, the Prime Minister Mr Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane reiterated the government of the Kingdom of Lesotho's support for the South Africa candidate to the vacant position in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which will be filled through an electoral process in November 2023.

17. The Right Honourable, the Prime Minister Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane expressed his gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to him and his delegation and further extended an invitation to H.E. President Ramaphosa to Maseru, the Kingdom of Lesotho, for the Second Session of the Bi-National Commission in 2024 at a date to be mutually determined.

18. Both Heads of State and Government were accompanied by delegations of Ministers and Senior Government Officials.

DONE IN PRETORIA, 28 SEPTEMBER 2023.