

# Speeches

## ADDRESS BY VICE ADMIRAL (Ret) J MUDIMU AT THE MILITARY ATTACHE AND ADVISORY CORPS (MAAC) HELD AT GEROTEK ON 10 MARCH 2016

Programme Director, Members of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps present here today, Export Council Representative of the AMD, Armscor and Denel Executives in our midst, ladies and gentlemen,

"A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so"

Professor Chinua Achebe, [1930 – 2013] Things Fall Apart (The African Trilogy, Vol.1).

I start this address with the words of this world acclaimed son of the soil precisely because I consider all of you under this roof as my kinsmen, gathered here today to share our experiences, challenges and opportunities on issues that face not only Africa but all our friends the world over.

Programme Director, it is 33 days to the day since a section of Lily Mine in Mpumalanga, South Africa collapsed, taking with it Pretty Nkambule, Solomon Nyerende and Yvonne Mnisi, all employees of the Mine. They have not been heard from since. After many fits and starts, their potential rescue is now a nightmare from which we all wish to be woken up. No less so with their families, who are called upon by this cruel circumstance to come to terms with their possible futures without their loved ones, their breadwinners. Theirs was always going to be a precarious life. They braved their entry into the bowels of mother earth daily and sighed in relief at the end of each shift, eking out an existence and hoping for a better future for themselves and for their children.

I am certain that in their hopes of hopes, they envisioned the day in which their children would at least be spared the daily terror of deep underground mining, where each breath of oxygen is totally dependent on a myriad of factors over which they have no control.

I would posit that this life and death existence is no different, Programme Director, from that of a mother who sells whatever possessions she has and puts her children on a rickety boat to an unknown place, hoping for a better future for herself and her children.

Whether the boat is safe for the voyage or not, whether it is overloaded or not, whether there will be enough to eat on the way, whether on reaching its destination, if it reaches the destination, they will be admitted into the new country and fulfil their dreams of a life worth living, they do not know.

But by hope and perhaps by prayer even, miners and migrants brave the odds and either triumph as the embodiment of the human spirit, the way that Professor Chinua Achebe did using his pen or perish as reminders of our unjust world.

It is against this background that meetings such as these should ultimately mean something to the man and woman who contemplate a life in the bowels of the earth or a journey to another world, perhaps never to return.

It is the dreams and hopes of the perished and the suffering everywhere in Africa that should inform whether a meeting such as this results in closer working ties between our peoples and governments with a view to **"HARNESSING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS FOR MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES"**, that is the theme of this gathering here today.

If by meeting like this, we can have fewer people journeying into unknown lands in search of a better life, if we can stem the tide of the current migration, if we can make mining safer and more dignified, if we can make it possible for our children and their children to find something worth doing in their respective home countries,

this meeting would be worth its cost and your time.

Let us explore technology to find ways of working safer and better, be it in mining or in other areas of human endeavour, of creating jobs in our own locale, so that the migrants who flee their homes are motivated to stay and to contribute to their respective economies.

Programme Director, we meet at a special time in the history of this country and the biggest economy in Africa, Nigeria. As we speak, President J Z Zuma and President M Buhari are concluding their talks in Abuja about a myriad of issues aimed at strengthening the relations between the two countries and working together for the benefit of our people and ultimately Africa as a whole.

These talks happen hot on the heels of a series of meetings held last week here in Pretoria, between our Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa – Nqakula and her Nigerian counterpart, Mr Mansur Mohammed Dan Ali. The Armscor CEO and his team had a further opportunity to interact with Minister Ali as part of the South African Defence family.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these interactions are important for a multitude of reasons. It is no secret that many of South Africa's retailers, bankers and mobile operators have found a working home amongst the people of Nigeria as part of our mutually beneficial trade relations and that many Nigerians have found a working home as traders in many of our cities in South Africa. With the rating agencies contemplating a downward review of South Africa's status, the harnessing of our diplomatic relations for mutually beneficial business opportunities cannot be over-emphasised.

Indeed, the strengthening of our relations with Nigeria should be seen as an example of how as Africa, we can work together, for the benefit of our economies. The opening of the BRICS Bank Regional Office as recently announced by the participating countries should serve as an antidote to the ongoing Afro-pessimism and the growth of the East South Relations. It is these East South Relations that will bring the required relief for infrastructure growth in the continent as well as the much needed intra Africa trade.

This East and South approach provides us with the best hope of stemming the unbridled migration that has beset the world over. It provides an opportunity to author a new chapter in human affairs, a fresh start, a new dawn, even a game-changer. In the words of Africa's own, the late Thomas Isidore Noel Sankara [1949 – 1987] from the land of the upright men, the Burkinabe, and we quote:

"You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness. In this case, it comes from nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on old formulas, the courage to invent the future".

That is the challenge that we face today. The old formula of looking to the multilateral lending organisations for debt relief while we fail to produce our own products, using our own knowledge base and empowering our own people should be banished into our less than illustrious past.

Programme Director, let this not detract from the fact that our relations with our traditional trading partners in the West have assumed a new dimension in line with the change I have referred to. Nothing signifies this more than the recently concluded AGOA talks with the United States of America, where it was shown that negotiating as equal partners for the benefit of everyone yields better results than brinksmanship. This type of engagement should now be replicated in the defence environment, so that we do things together as partners, as Kinsmen. We continue to use systems and products from various Western countries and our aim is to have sustainable relations with all of them based on mutually beneficial engagements.

Ladies and Gentlemen, during the MAAC meeting held here on 13 February 2015, I gave you a detailed account of Armscor's capabilities and our willingness to work with you and your respective countries for our mutual benefit. I do not consider it necessary to provide that information again; as I am sure it can easily be accessed on our website.

Since our last meeting, Armscor has developed a new Strategy titled In Time on Time – Towards a Sustainable Future. Being cognisant of its rapidly changing operating environment, Armscor' new Strategy as approved by

the Council on Defence is supported by Five Pillars as follows:

- **Financial turnaround and business re-orientation** – to ensure that Armscor generates sufficient income to meet its funding needs in the near to medium term through innovative business initiatives.
- **Acquisition excellence** – to meet the SANDF's materiel requirements on time and in time.
- **Technology advancement** – to direct and sustain research and development in line with the capability requirements of the DOD.
- **Industry sustainability** – to sustain and support the South African defence industry so that it meets the requirements of the SANDF and contributes to economic development.
- **Stakeholder engagement** – to build, maintain and strengthen relationships with all stakeholders through different marketing communication and engagement platforms.

As an off-shoot to this Strategy, Armscor has been mandated to concession the two Special Economic Zones in the Eastern Cape in order to achieve the following national objectives:

- To facilitate the creation of an industrial complex;
- Having strategic national economic advantage for targeted investments and industries in the manufacturing and tradable services;
- Taking advantage of existing industrial and technological capacity and;
- Promoting integration with local industry and increasing value-added production, promoting regional development as well as broadening economic participation for small, micro and medium enterprises and cooperatives and promoting skills and technology transfer.

Our Minister of Defence has also issued a directive that all acquisitions undertaken by us on behalf of the DOD must where possible take into consideration Indigenisation of Design i.e. we must support local designs to create depth to SA Inc technology and Localisation of Technical Capability i.e. we must ensure that there is sufficient local technical capability to support local indigenous designs and manufacturing.

In line with the need to transform the defence sector to meet the requirements of our diverse country, a Defence Charter is being discussed by all the relevant stakeholders. This Charter will give direction to the defence industry on the participation of hitherto marginalised communities of this country. This then sums up our strategic intent for the near term and we invite all of you to collaborate and participate in the unfolding opportunities that this strategy aims to produce.

To conclude, let me go back to the theme of the gathering of Kinsmen, to remind you that we will once again be gathering during the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) 2016, which will be taking place on 14 – 18 September 2016. This is the single most important assembly of defence capabilities on the African soil and it is aptly named African Aerospace and Defence because it seeks to provide Africa with a platform through which it can showcase its capabilities.

I accordingly urge all of you to come to the AAD 2016 and share in the opportunities that it presents. Perhaps by so doing, we will find ways of building safer communities in which migration and mine subsidence can be a thing of the past.

I THANK YOU.