

SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE 19TH ANNIVERSARY OF FREEDOM DAY

Minister of Environmental Protection
Honorable Amir Peretz

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps

Ambassadors and Heads of International
Organisations.

Honoured Guests

Let me first of all welcome you all on behalf of the South African embassy in Israel to this celebration of the 19th Anniversary of the Freedom Day. My wife and I are happy to receive you only a few months of our arrival in Israel.

Freedom Day to us represents the Day when all South Africans said we will stand together and determine our future through a common vote. By this vote a new democratic order was set up with new institutions among them the National Assembly, the Executive and the Constitutional Court as the highest court in the land.

These institutions have continued to champion democracy and the Constitutional Court has played a critical role in this regard. Political and human rights have largely been secured. In 2014 will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Freedom Day and also this is the year will hold our 6th democratic elections.

People often ask about the lessons of freedom in South Africa and there is only one answer to that question and that is, in South Africa we learnt that freedom is indivisible. Simply put

you cannot be free whilst maintaining laws that limit the freedom of others.

We can make a list of the many achievements of the new democracy but South Africa still falls short on the key issue of “Freedom from Want” as elaborated by Armatya Senn, the renowned developmental economist.

As I was preparing for the this day, I also paid a visit to the Tel Aviv Diamond Exchange, the largest in the world, and was impressed by the operations there and the critical role the exchange plays. This reminded me of history of diamond mining in South Africa which dates back to 1867, with almost 150 years of uninterrupted mining. But I, as black South African I have never held a rough diamond in

my hands, which I did this week thanks to the Tel Aviv Diamond Exchange.

This is the case of almost all of Africa where resources have been extracted and locals have not seen many benefits from them.

South Africa's freedom was born of struggle and international solidarity and foremost in this was the African solidarity. This month marks the 50th Anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity /African Union.

Let me end my speech by this story.

In 1898 a great son of Africa, who went on to be the first African to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960, Chief Albert Lutuli was born in South Africa. As the president general of the African National Congress (ANC) he groomed future

ANC leaders like Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo.

On receiving the Nobel Peace Prize he had this to say; “ ... let me invite Africa to cast her eyes beyond the past and to some extent the present with their woes and tribulations, trials and failures, and some successes, and see herself an emerging continent, bursting to freedom through the shell of centuries of serfdom. This is Africa’s age- the dawn of her fulfillment, yes, the moment when she must grapple with destiny to reach the summits of sublimity saying - ours was a fight for noble values and worthy ends, and not for lands and the enslavement of man. Africa is a vital subject matter in the world of today, a focal point of world interest and concern. Could it not be that history has delayed her rebirth for a purpose? The situation confronts her with inescapable

challenges, but more importantly with opportunities for service to herself and mankind.”

[<http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/speeches/luthulifreedom.php>.]dated 4/30/2013

I thank you.