

Chairperson

Deputy Minister

Secretary for Defence

Chief of the SANDF

Members of the PDSC

Colleagues from the other government departments

Stakeholders of the DoD

Ladies and Gentlemen from the Media

I want to thank you for honouring this invitation to what is not really a media briefing in the conventional sense, but rather a networking session on an important issue for all South Africans, the future of our national defence force.

The SANDF, itself a direct product of our people's struggle for freedom and democracy is turning 20 years this year, at the same time as our country mark the same number of years since the birth of our democracy.

This is not the only reason why the SANDF occupies a special place in our society, it is also a national asset equipped with special capabilities to defend our freedom and democracy, creating conditions of peace and security necessary for us to enjoy the benefits of freedom.

It is for this reason that discussion on the future of the SANDF, more recently initiated by the release of the report of the Defence Review Committee, occupies an important place in our nation's public discourse.

It for this reason that we are here today and I invite you to engage with us honestly and to see this networking session as constituting an important part of this public discourse.

Chairperson and colleagues,

On 19 March 2014 Cabinet approved the Defence Review Committee's Report which recommends a comprehensive defence policy blueprint for approximately the next 20 years.

The Defence Review Committee was appointed by the Ministry to assist government to assess the state of its defence organisation, mandate, capabilities and design with a view to identify areas requiring review and suggest future interventions. This is a normal process of review that is done by all defence forces globally.

In other words, the Defence Review is a government process of honest introspection about our ability to execute the Defence mandate as directed by our Constitution (1996).

The Defence Review that was approved by Cabinet last month is only our second since 1994, and the first one to review the work of the SANDF based on practical functioning of our military in a democracy.

The 1996 White Paper on Defence and the 1998 Defence Review focused on the challenges of the transition from Apartheid to a democratic South Africa. Issues arising from the integration of seven statutory and non-statutory forces into one South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the transformation of the latter were central

to these two documents. Since then the role of the SANDF at home, in the Southern African region and the rest of the continent has increased to an extent not envisaged by the 1996 White Paper and the Defence Review that followed two years later.

While the 1998 Defence Review assumed that the Defence Force would only deploy one battalion for external operations in Africa, by 2006 as many as four were deployed in various parts of the continent. Currently we have two battalions in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Darfur region of Sudan. Commitments in Africa far exceeded what was anticipated in the aftermath of the advent of democracy in 1994. In the SADC region, various treaties and protocols on defence and security cooperation require the SANDF to commit troops and assets. At home the Defence Force has taken over the patrol of land borders from the police, committing four battalions.

While Southern Africa, with the exception of the eastern DRC, enjoys stability, this is sadly not the case in the Great Lakes Region and the Sahel. As a key economic player in the continent, and that having set an enviable example of peaceful conflict resolution, South Africa is expected to play a leading role in the stabilisation of the continent. Most importantly, however, it is also in our national interest to have a stable continent, with accruing benefits for a shared food security, development, security and the building of economic relations with the rest of the continent.

Commitments made in the past 16 years have resulted in a mismatch between what is expected from the Defence Force and resources allocated to it. This is a crucial point highlighted in the current Defence Review Committee's report.

The decisions by Government over the last twenty years to prioritise socio- economic needs of South Africa that were neglected in the past resulted in the tension between the defence mandate, government expectations and resource allocation. This has impacted negatively on some of the SANDFs crucial capabilities.

The report notes that the longer the current state of affairs is perpetuated, the greater the effort and cost will be, to reverse the decline and restore the capabilities required to safeguard South Africa's borders, protect its maritime trade routes, defend the country against aggression and conduct peace missions.

The Defence Review states that: "the defence budget must meet the financial requirements that arise from the roles and mission sets assigned by government to the defence force."

From this observation, it is clear that this mismatch has caused over-stretch and a decline in most aspects of the defence force's work. There is thus an urgent need to:

- Comprehensively capacitate and equip the SANDF,

- Address the maintenance and reorganisation of its infrastructure footprint,

- Rejuvenate and expand its human resource component, and

- Fund the operational deployments of the SANDF.

These and other shortcomings must be addressed to prevent the steady decline of the SANDF and the potentially disastrous consequences that could follow.

The question crucially posed by the Defence Review is, what is it that we want the SANDF to do at home, in the region and the rest of the continent? Once that question is definitively answered, adequate resources must be allocated to enable it to execute its mandate with the requisite effectiveness and efficiency. Given the on-going geo-political challenges on the Continent and South Africa's national interests, Cabinet is of the clear view that South Africa's defence responsibilities cannot be scaled down. Consequently, the resources allocated to defence must be commensurate with South Africa's defence responsibilities and tasks.

Despite the constraints mentioned above, the SANDF is intact and has performed admirably well. This was acknowledged by the Commander-in-Chief, President Jacob Zuma, when we marked Armed Forces Day on 21 February this year. On that occasion he said, **"the SANDF has played a leading role in post conflict peace support and reconstruction. The success story of Burundi and the work of our women and men in the Comoros elections are a case in point. Over the past thirteen years South Africa has deployed its forces as part of the peacekeeping mission of the UN in the DRC (MONUSC). Peace and stability is slowly returning to the DRC, culminating in the recent success of the Intervention Force Brigade constituted by three SADC force contributing states, including South Africa. We certainly do not believe that the end of war will resolve all of the DRC's problems, but it will create the conducive environment in which the Congolese people themselves can take charge of their own destiny, something that cannot be achieved in conditions of war."**

As we celebrate 20 years of democracy and of the creation of the SANDF, we salute our men and women in uniform for a job well done at home and in the rest of Africa.

As we look forward to the next twenty-years, we must take all measures to ensure that the Defence Force is not handicapped in any way in the execution of its Constitutional mandate. This is precisely what the Defence Review is intended to achieve. Its report makes recommendations on the assumption that the military will continue to have four main responsibilities. These are:

- To defend and protect South Africa
- To safeguard its borders and infrastructure
- To promote peace and security in Africa
- To perform developmental and other tasks assigned to it

On the basis of this assumption the Review recommends that we strive to achieve five "milestones" which are:

- To arrest the decline through focussed interventions.
- To rebalance the force for future growth.
- To ensure that the defence capacity meets current needs.
- To develop capacity to meet future strategic challenges on the Continent.
- To build the strength to deal with a war should the need arise.

To be able to achieve the above, the Defence Review recommends that we enhance:

- The rapid reaction capability.
- The border-protection capability.
- The peace-keeping and a peace-enforcement capability.
- The medium and a heavy combat capability.
- The maritime security capability.
- The cyber-defence capability.
- The disaster management capability.

There are costs attached to these milestones. However, the Defence Review qualifies its pronouncements as being initial, high-level estimates. It is up to the leadership of the SANDF to develop a Force Design and Force Structure that will allow for more precise costing. A general point is, however, mentioned that at approximately 1.1 per cent of GDP, current funding levels are inadequate and below the international norm of approximately two per cent for a developing country at peace.

It can be argued that, although South Africa is a developing country at peace, its responsibilities on the Continent justifies that defence expenditure be set at slightly above two per cent of GDP.

We are also urged the Defence Review Committee to develop a coherent policy on the defence industry, an industry which has a vital role to play in re-equipping the SANDF. The defence industry has enormous potential to contribute to economic growth, job creation, technological innovation, scientific research and skills development. It needs, however, as a base, to have a sustainable and long-term role as supplier to the SANDF for it to realize this potential. Government as a whole also needs to assist the defence industry penetrate export markets to create more jobs at home and generate foreign revenue.

At my request the Review identified 'Quick -Wins' which can be done at minimal or no cost. These relate mainly to the re-structuring of the three arms of service – Army, Navy and Air Force; improvements at our medical institutions; commitments to urgent acquisitions; and management of the Naval Dockyard. We have already started addressing some of these issues.

The report before you is a bulky one. Most of you gathered here have sufficient interest in defence matters to go through it. The Committee consulted with a wide range of stakeholders including ordinary members of communities throughout the country. We will continue to engage you in the next phase of the Review process, namely: policy formulation, legislation and implementation. It is important for us to build a national consensus on defence policy given their critical importance.

The strategic environment in Africa and the rest of the world changes rapidly.

Recently the African Union (AU) invited willing members to contribute human, financial and material resources to an initiative called African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis (ACIRC). South Africa is one of 10 countries to commit to ACIRC.

What this means is that South Africa is almost certain to increase its commitments on the Continent. We, as Government, make these commitments and we therefore have a solemn duty to ensure that our Defence Force is adequately prepared to execute missions successfully.

With regard to the current review, the Department of Defence will immediately establish an internal capacity to monitor the implementation of the review and the identified quick-wins. Enterprise-wide Program Office to look at the staggered implementation of the report, in terms of

the various milestones and time-frames adopted by Cabinet. This Office will keep abreast of developments and be able to develop policy responses for the consideration of the Minister.

We are certain that the current report of the Defence Review constitute a solid foundation on which we can start to address the long term challenges facing our Defence Force.

The work of the Committee has been extensive and comprehensive, and I will now allow one of the members of the team to make a presentation of the executive summary and key recommendations made.

I thank you