

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY
VETERANS MS LN SISULU ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CELEBRATION OF 10 YEARS OF PEACE SUPPORT
OPERATION, BLOEMFONTEIN, 16 OCTOBER 2009**

The President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF Ministers and Deputy Ministers present here, Premier of the Free State, The Mayor of Mangaung, Secretary for Defence, Chief of the South African National Defence Force, Chiefs of the Services and Divisions, Members of the Plenary Defence Staff Council Flag Officers, Members of the South African National Defence Force, Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Members of Media, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today provides an opportunity for all in the African National Defence Force, to thank the President for his leadership Mr President.

We are indeed humbled by your presence as the Commander-in-Chief on such an occasion. You continue to inspire us to greater heights of the commitment, patriotism and dedication. We are encouraged by your presence with us having taken time to be with your troops and share this special moment with them.

One of the highlights of our successes in peace-keeping has been the outcome of the Burundi peace process which was led by you. Your leadership proved that indeed we can bring about peace in our continent. I want to acknowledge former Minister Nqakula, who under your guidance was instrumental in the outcome of the talks in Burundi. Supported by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Ms Dlamini-Zuma we were able to bring a peaceful settlement in that country. We thank you for your support Ministers.

I would like to thank the Premier of the Free State and the Mayor of Mangaung who both have lend their support for the success of this special day aimed at acknowledging our soldiers and their contribution to the creation of peace in the African continent. The people and the city of the Bloemfontein have been understanding and supportive over the past week as we were preparing for this event. Furthermore, I want acknowledge the Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee on Defence who are with us and the eminent

statesman Andrew Mlangeni, one of the first cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe to be trained outside South Africa. I am also glad that we have amongst us the Chairperson of the newly formed Interim National Defence Force Service Commission Judge Bosielo, who is here to acquaint himself with our environment.

Programme Director

Today's event is a valuable contribution to the knowledge that our soldiers have helped bring peace and stability in the continent. Our members have over the years worked very hard to advance our foreign policy through our participation in peace keeping missions abroad. These members have continued to represent our country in the most difficult parts and conditions of our continent driven by what guides them - the Constitution of the Republic.

Accordingly, these members, singly and collectively, like the members of the rest of the South African National Defence Force, have at all times remained loyal to the imperative to defend the law and the Constitution, serving as the professional force required by our Constitution. This means that all of us who constitute the national defence system, from the Commander-in-Chief, through the Ministers and the Officers Commanding, down to the officers and privates in the Army, the Air Force, the Navy, Defence Intelligence, the Medical Services and Joint Operations must, at all times, act strictly according to the Constitution and the law.

In this regard, all of us who constitute our country's national defence system must always remember that our Constitution makes the unequivocal determination that "the Defence Force is the only lawful military force in the Republic".

Today we have a South African National Defence Force that has the capacity to accomplish the full range of defence strategic objectives and missions that are consistent with the domestic and international tasks which South Africa has set itself.

It is pleasing to note the many achievements of our National Defence Force in furthering our African Agenda in support of continental peace and stability. The presence of the SANDF has been appreciated in

countries such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Comoros and Sudan, where it has supported peace processes aimed at permanent stability, national unity and reconciliation, democracy and development.

Once again, on this occasion, ten years ago, the South African National Defence Force discharged its responsibilities with great distinction and loyalty to the national cause.

Thank you.