

# **JOINT COMMUNIQUE ON THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN-CUBAN JOINT BILATERAL COMMISSION ON ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND BUSINESS COOPERATION**

**Pretoria, 10-12 December 2001**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Mr Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry and his Cuban counterpart, HE Mr Jorge Aspiolea, President of the Cuban National Institute of Hydraulic Resources (Ministry) presided over the first meeting of the South African-Cuban Joint Bilateral Commission in Pretoria between 10 and 12 December 2001.

In their opening remarks the Ministers charged their delegations to produce a work plan which would give effect to the various proposals for cooperation that had been identified.

Both Ministers emphasized the warm and friendly relations between the two countries founded on support and cooperation that goes back to the 1960s.

## **2. HIGH-LEVEL VISITS**

Minister Aspiolea was received by :

Acting President Jacob Zuma

Mr Kader Asmal, Minister of Education

Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, Minister of Health

Mr Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry

Further meetings after the conclusion of the Commission meeting are foreseen with Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Dr Ben Ngubane, Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.

Minister Aspiolea accompanied Minister Kasrils on a visit to Nondweni Village in the Northern Province to view the achievements of government in the provision of clear water to rural communities. They participated in the opening of a bridge over the Great Letaba River. He further engaged in discussions with representatives of the provincial government and the community. This enabled both of them to talk about the cooperation between the two countries which was well received by the community.

Similarly, the Ministers visited Flag Boshielo Dam and purification works and the water reticulation programme. This also enabled Minister Aspiolea to view the service provision to the community including the implementation of the government's basic free water programme. He also engaged in discussions with the local community.

They will also be visiting Durban Metro and the rural areas surrounding Ethekwini to see progress in relation to water services and sanitation and to meet with the local government representatives of the community.

### **3. PREPARATORY WORK**

Working sessions between representatives of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, and the Cuban delegation produced the text of an agreement which will be signed during the closing ceremony at 09:00 on 12 December 2001.

#### **4. CLUSTER WORKING GROUPS**

The Commissions divided into two cluster working groups to deal with its work :  
Economic Development Issues and Social Development Issues and Construction. The chairs of the working groups will report to Ministers at the closing session.

#### **5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER**

##### **5.1 Water Affairs and Sanitation**

- In the area of water affairs it was agreed that a programme to second at least ten specialists in rural water service and sanitation would be established and they would commence their work in February 2002. An agreement was drafted for signature.

##### **5.2 Trade and Industry**

- A Cuban Business delegation will visit South Africa in March 2002 to explore opportunities;
- South Africa has been invited to participate in an African pavilion in the Cuban international trade fair in November 2002.

##### **5.3 Agriculture**

- Further work was done on series of agreements in the field of agriculture, including general cooperation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and animal health, which are expected to be signed when the Minister of Agriculture visits Havana in May 2002.

#### **5.4 Minerals and Energy Affairs**

- The South African side proposed a detailed exchange of information on the countries' resources capacities and legal arrangements with a view to possible cooperation in the fields of geology and geophysics, mining technologies, petroleum, electricity and renewable energy.

#### **5.5 Double Taxation**

- The South African side proposed the negotiation of a double taxation agreement and provided a text for study by the Cuban side.

#### **5.6 Cross-cutting issues**

Several issues such as future cooperation on information and communication technology, on biotechnology, medical equipment and construction which are of interest to several Departments, were identified.

#### **5.7 Multilateral Affairs**

- It was agreed that South Africa and Cuba should coordinate their positions for the forthcoming rounds of negotiations in the World Trade Organisation.

### **6. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION CLUSTER**

#### **6.1 Education**

The Parties agreed to conceptualise a programme for the upgrading of mathematics and science skills in the teaching profession. Further negotiations will be conducted during the visit in March 2002 by the Cuban Minister of Education.

## **6.2 Sport and Recreation**

Both Parties expressed their interest in sports exchanges, and exchange of experts in high performance sports. Cuba offered two undergraduate sports scholarships for 2002-2003.

## **6.3 Arts and Culture**

A work programme to implement the existing Cooperation Agreement is to be signed in February 2002.

## **6.4 Science and Technology**

A programme of cooperation in Science and Technology is expected to be finalised during a Biotechnology Workshop in Cuba in January 2002.

## **6.5 Justice**

South Africa proposed the negotiation of Agreements on Extradition and Legal Cooperation in Criminal Matters.

## **6.6 Housing**

It was proposed that the Cuban curricula for the training of community based architects and engineers in the housing field be assessed for applicability to South African circumstances.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The two Ministers will receive reports from the Cluster Working Group and make closing comments at the final session of the Commission Meeting at 09:00 on Wednesday, 12 December, at the Diplomatic Guest House, Matroosberg Road, Waterkloof Heights, Pretoria. The Agreement on Water Affairs will be signed and a Press Conference will then be given by the Co-chairs, Ministers Kasrils and Aspiolea.

**Released by the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa.**

**Further inquiries, Ronnie Mamoepa (082-990-4853)**