

French Institute of South Africa

10 November 2011

Speech by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Clr Mpho Parks Tau, on the occasion of the French Institute of South Africa offices in Braamfontein – Johannesburg

Programme Director

French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs: Mr Alain Juppé

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Representatives of the French Embassy

Distinguished Guests

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

PROGRAMME Director, we are delighted to be part of this occasion – the opening of offices in Braamfontein by the French Institute of South Africa. We especially appreciate the fact that the French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Mr Alain Juppé came personally to open these offices.

On behalf of the City of Johannesburg Council, its residents and citizens, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the French Government, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the French Embassy in South Africa for preferring their offices to remain in the Inner City of Johannesburg – Braamfontein.

This decision taken by the French government is clearly indicative of the strength of the relationship between South Africa and France which is also reflected in our growing trade and tourism numbers.

It is important to state that anyone who is familiar with the complexities and challenges of urban renewal and regeneration will agree that we cannot under-estimate the strategic importance of the Inner City. The Inner City has not only just been the historical centre of Johannesburg; it has also been its symbolic, economic as well as its cultural centre.

Last month – in October, Mr Minister, this City turned 125 years. On the 19th of November, the City together with the private sector will be celebrating Johannesburg's 125th Birthday. We may, amongst other things, have to clean and spruce up the Milner statue, investigate the actual condition of the Von Brandis Statue and make known to the public, the early history of Johannesburg through exhibitions and similar events. This will add momentum to our on going Inner City Urban Renewal and Regeneration efforts.

Johannesburg grew from tent town to wood and iron shanties to bricks and mortar buildings at the pace of an historical wink of an eye. Within less than two decades since its formal proclamation the broad outlines of the City, as we know it today was already well established.

This City has also continued to shape our history as it evolved over decades.

The Inner City of Johannesburg boasts symbolic land marks such as:

The Hillbrow tower, Diagonal Street, the Carlton Centre, Constitution Hill and the Nelson

Mandela Bridge. These Inner City landmarks give all Johannesburg residents a sense of place.

In terms of the Central Business District, there are many of the great mining houses and financial institutions that anchor the Johannesburg and South African economy which continue to be headquartered here.

The Inner City also has an enormous concentration of cultural assets – from the Market and Civic Theatres, to the Standard Bank and ABSA galleries, to the City's own Johannesburg Art Gallery and the Central Library. This includes, amongst others institutions such as the new Origins Centre at WITS University.

The importance of the Inner City also extends to the fact that it is also a key location and a transportation hub. It is the biggest transport interchange in the country, with many different modes – car, taxi, bus and train, both local, national and international – coming together in the same place. It is estimated that well over 800 000 people pass through the City daily as they go to their different destinations.

For all of these reasons and more, the Inner City of Johannesburg is of central strategic importance to the working of our City as a whole. We therefore have no intention of relegating it to a lesser place or position.

Mr Minister, please allow me to congratulate you, the French Government and the French Embassy for choosing Braamfontein to house your offices. You have succeeded to send a message that the Inner City is a centre of development that matters. A place where investors can put their money and expect meaningful returns.

Programme Director, I would therefore, like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the French Government.

South Africa is France's primary trading partner in Sub-Saharan Africa. France is South-Africa's 9th import- and 16th export destination. To South Africa, France exports mainly pharmaceutical products, aeronautical and capital goods, chemicals and vehicles. Its exports amounted to €1732 million Euros in 2010. France imports from South-Africa: coal, electronic components, steel, aeronautical goods, vehicles and citrus fruits. Its imports amounted to €1045 million in 2010.

Foreign Direct Investment has become a key component of national development strategy for South Africa as well as for France. 200 French firms are based in South Africa and most of them in Johannesburg. Altogether, they employ approximately 29 000 people and France is ranked the 9th foreign investor in South Africa.

South African Foreign Direct Investment in France has shown an upward trend. Steinhoff International Holdings Ltd., Africa's largest furniture maker, recently bought PPR South Africa's Conforama chain for €1.207 billion Euros (\$1.66 billion US dollars) in cash to strengthen its position in Europe.

The French South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FSACCI) created 27 years ago, constitutes, through its panel of services, activities and its network of members, an

efficient business support mechanism for French companies in South Africa and for South African companies wishing to set up business links with France.

Programme Director, the cultural relations between France and South Africa are numerous: we appreciate the fact that through the Embassy of France's cultural services, the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), and the 14 Alliance Française throughout South Africa, they form an important network of strong partnerships with various festivals, universities, artists, museums and galleries, as well as government institutions and businesses.

The French Development Agency (AFD) assisted the City of Johannesburg with one of our flagship water project, Gqinamanzi, which is about preservation of water. Our Social Housing Company worked with Val Der Marne in developing social houses in Kliptown. Val Der Marne is currently assisting us in training facilitators in Early Childhood Development Project.

The French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), established in Johannesburg in 1995, consists of IFAS-Culture, IFAS-Research and Dibuka. It is a key player on the Johannesburg and South African artistic, cultural, academic and literary scenes. In the City of Johannesburg, we are proud of these partnership.

Programme Director, we are truly honoured by the decision of the French Government to continue to house its cultural offices in Johannesburg.

Johannesburg has a strong and well-deserved reputation as one of the foremost cities in the world. For international visitors we are known as an exciting and affordable tourist destination – the gateway into the entire African continent.

For the business community this is an essential hub of economic activity and the undisputed headquarters of regional trade, commerce and industry.

Johannesburg tells a story of a leading African World Class City rich in Cultural and Aesthetic diversity. So, Mr Minister your offices are in the right place.

Thank you