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## ANC: Zuma: Opportunities in Southern Africa (28/01/2008)

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Address by ANC President Jacob Zuma at the University of Zurich

The President of the University of Zurich,  
 Swiss Chamber of Commerce (Southern Africa),  
 Distinguished Leaders from Government and Institutions;  
 Eminent Academics, Professors, Lecturers and Students;  
 Honourable Leaders of Civil Society Organizations Present today;  
 Business Leaders, Friends of the University;  
 Your Excellencies from the Diplomatic Corps,  
 I greet you all. It is a great honour for me to interact with you today.

I believe I am expressing the sentiments of many Southern Africans when I thank you for taking an interest in our region.

Universities by nature uphold independent and critical thinking, whilst playing a critical role in developing and promoting national, regional and international production of knowledge. In addition, good Universities play an advocacy role towards community development, facilitating knowledge systems and producing programmes and projects that improve the quality of life of ordinary people.

Good Universities also pay attention towards scientific and economic research that produce applied best practices which constantly improve productivity of society and sustainably grow economies. Zurich University's contribution in this regard is well documented. I therefore congratulate the University for its role as a good global citizen.

Ladies and gentlemen, our presence on this occasion signals the borderless nature of the world today, and the unavoidable ties between the developed and developing world.

Just a few days ago we had the opportunity to meet with various global actors from the political and economic spheres at the World Economic Forum in Davos. We appreciated the opportunity provided for us to share our thoughts and experiences, while also learning from others on how they deal with challenges similar or different from ours in their own countries.

The WEF summit reaffirmed that the war against global poverty, underdevelopment and related social challenges remains a priority for us all, alongside the quest for peace and stability, dealing with climate change and others.

For us as Southern Africans, the fight against poverty and unemployment, bridging the gap between the rich and poor, and generally the need to improve the living conditions of our people remains uppermost in

our list of priorities.

In South Africa, we have been seized with meeting these objectives since democracy was ushered in during the historic elections of 1994, burying apartheid and institutionalised racism for ever. To be able to deal with the socio-economic challenges in any country requires the creation of the right political environment.

Fourteen years into our democracy, we have all the fundamentals in place, which were achieved during our unique home-grown and managed negotiation process. We have a Constitution that guarantees our rights and freedoms, a democratically elected government, a parliament of elected representatives and institutions charged with safeguarding democracy. Most importantly, we have our population which is outspoken and politically conscious, keeping politicians on their toes in defence of hard won freedoms and democracy. Regardless of our differences in terms of political persuasions as various political formations in our country, we are agreed that none of these fundamentals should be threatened or compromised.

Whatever our future holds, we all have a responsibility to ensure that the cornerstones of democracy are never tampered with or manipulated, even if the reasons appear harmless. Our continued political stability therefore depends on the vigilance of political parties, social leaders, the trade union movement, institutions monitoring democracy as well as ordinary citizens who stand to lose the most should our stability be compromised. Our Constitution has all the checks and balances plus deep rooted democratic principles to ensure a credible political system that guarantees sustained peace, respect for human rights and freedoms that are unambiguous.

Against the background of a solid and progressive political system, we have made tremendous strides to unravel the apartheid economy. The economic transformation has put in place policies designed to make our economy more inclusive and equitable in order to reduce levels of poverty and underdevelopment.

Sustainable economic development is the key to reducing levels of unemployment and increasing levels of household income. We undoubtedly have a long journey to travel before the economic policies of the ANC achieve all the desired outcomes, particularly eliminating the grinding poverty which so many still experience.

For many in our country, poverty is a way of life. It is a burden they carry every day in the battle to survive. It is not only a lack of a home or lack of a job that constitutes poverty. Lack of education, electricity, clean water and sanitation is part of the deprivation that aggravates poverty.

The economic policies of the ANC are therefore designed to create a society where people are living better, wholesome, comfortable lives in the knowledge that they have safe, warm homes with all the basic services, their children are being educated in properly resourced schools, and that they earn incomes that can put a meal on the table every day.

Once we have sustainable and comfortable households, these will extend to the broader communities that make up our society.

The ANC has firmly located our country as a developmental state. This presupposes active state intervention in the economy of the country and a sound mechanism to address the needs of the people. We have come to the conclusion that a complete free market economy, without any form of state regulatory intervention, will not be able to address the huge and unacceptable backlog in service delivery, and eradicate poverty and under development.

One of our focus areas this year is to tackle unemployment, which has already begun to decline. Since 2004, our economy has been creating about half a million jobs each year.

The international investor community is a key partner in assisting us to maintain or improve on this trend. While encouraging the South African business sector to invest in the economy, we are also outward looking, and invite international investors to take advantage of the opportunities provided in our development-focused economy.

We made our intentions clear in the ANC's annual January 8 statement, which is the blueprint for the government programme of action for the year. We want to make the creation of decent work opportunities the primary focus of

our economic policies. We will make maximum use of all the means at our disposal, as the ruling party in government, to achieve this goal. We have also stated that we want this objective to be reflected in the orientation and programmes of development finance institutions and regulatory bodies; through government procurement policies; in the sequencing of industrial and trade policy reforms; and in our macroeconomic policy stance.

To create the job opportunities, we must amongst other things work to further absorb the unemployed by promoting labour-intensive production methods and procurement policies, a significant expansion of public works programmes, and an enlarged national youth service. Improved macroeconomic conditions, reduced government debt and improved revenue collection has meant that greater resources are available for social and investment programmes, providing an opportunity, among other things, for a massive public sector infrastructure programme. The public sector infrastructure programme will surely provide opportunities for investors to participate. We also intend to focus more this year on the promotion of small and micro enterprises, including cooperatives. This sector requires the state to deploy resources to build capacity and institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, Southern Africa's overall policy on social development emphasizes adequate social investment, particularly in human capital development, through education and health. In our own country we have also decided to prioritise education and health as the core elements of social transformation.

With regards to health, the fight against poverty in the sub-region is increasingly coming up against the debilitating HIV and AIDS pandemic. In 2005 it was estimated that about 5 million South Africans were living with HIV. The fight against AIDS can only be won through collaboration. We have a formal partnership against AIDS in our country in the form of the South African National Aids Council. The structure brings together government, business, labour, women, youth, religious leaders, entertainment fraternity and many others bound by a common goal of ensuring that the epidemic does not reverse the gains we have made.

The primary aim of the HIV and AIDS National Strategic Plan is to reduce the rate of new infections by 50% by 2011. We also seek to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, families, communities and society by expanding access to appropriate treatment, care and support to 80% of all HIV positive people and their families by 2011.

Other aspects of the plan are research, human rights and promoting access to justice. To be able to grow our economy and improve the socio-economic status of our people, we need to invest in education. There are many measures that we are looking into, including the improvement of the conditions of service as well as training of our teachers.

Most important is the plan to improve the access of poor South Africans to quality education, through progressively introducing free and compulsory education for the poor until they enter university. We also have an ambitious project to be launched by our government this year, to teach about five million adults basic literacy and numeracy by 2012.

I am mentioning all these developments to enable you to appreciate the challenges and the work we intend to embark upon, in which we will appreciate your partnership and support.

Ladies and gentlemen, the strides we have made since 1994 in growing our economy and improving the quality of life of our people have brought along unintended consequences, such as serious pressure on our energy sources. South Africans have in recent weeks, as you may have heard, experienced power outages. The government has declared a national electricity emergency to deal with the energy challenge.

Our government has called upon all citizens to become part of a national movement to conserve electricity in their residential areas and workplaces whilst ensuring that key functions, safety and security are not compromised.

While government admits that planning could have been better a few years ago, we must also appreciate that we have a growing economy that is working at full capacity. In addition the rising standards of living, and the fact that close to 3,5 million homes now have access to electricity since 1994 have put increasing demands on our electricity utility Eskom.

We have been assured by government and other key roleplayers that there is no threat to the 2010 Soccer World Cup spectacular as plans to ensure electricity security during that period are well advanced.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me also address a question that often arises with regards to crime in South Africa. I would like to assure you that together with our government, we will do all in our power to drastically reduce the levels of crime in our country. The ANC government has stated its goal of reducing serious and violent crime, and in particular contact crimes, by 7 to 10% a year. There are various measures that are being put in place to achieve this and other crime busting goals. Planning is also on track for security during the

Soccer World Cup. In order

to improve the capacity of the SA Police Service to perform security functions at our borders and during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the number of employees will increase from the approximate 165 000 members to 193 000 by the end of 2009/2010 financial year. This will be complemented by the expansion of the police vehicle fleet, equipment supplies, technological infrastructure, and reservists.

Ladies and gentlemen, in discussing the opportunities that would prevail in the Southern African region, we remain mindful that we are an integral part of the African continent, and that our destiny is intertwined with the rest of the continent.

As South Africa in particular we continue to look beyond our borders in seeking solutions. We recognize the need for peace and stability in our continent, and remain involved in various initiatives to bring about peace, stability, reconstruction and the building of democratic institutions.

We remain hopeful as processes are underway to find lasting solutions to conflicts that continue, among others, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Somalia and others. We are optimistic that a solution will also be found in Kenya, to return the situation in that country back to normality.

We cannot even begin to talk about sustainable economic growth in the midst of conflict of any form, hence the investment in peace making and peace keeping by South Africa and other sister countries.

With regards to opportunities in the SADC region, the process of forging economic integration on the African continent will continue during the course of this year.

The implementation of the SADC Free Trade Area, which will be pursued in earnest this year, will greatly enhance the economic development of the Southern African region and contribute to improving the capacity of the countries of the region to respond to the needs of their people.

SADC provides opportunities in various sectors such as Energy, Tourism, Environment and Land Management, Water, Mining, Employment and Labour, Culture, Information and Sport as well as Transport and Communications. Other key sectors are Finance and Investment, Human Resource Development, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Legal Affairs and Health.

The ultimate objective of SADC is to build a Region in which there will be a high degree of harmonisation and rationalisation to enable the pooling of resources to achieve collective self-reliance in order to improve the living standards of the people of the region.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have noticed that the ANC as the ruling party in South Africa is always of interest to our development partners for understandable reasons. I am sure you are now at ease following the December national conference of the ANC, which reaffirmed the tradition of in-built internal democracy and collective leadership within the movement. We emerged from the conference as a united movement ready to face the challenges of coming decades, and to lead the nation towards a united and prosperous South Africa. We are ready to drive the movement and our government towards swift and effective implementation of our programme of action for 2008, and move smoothly towards the general elections in 2009.

Our next general elections will take place as efficiently and as smoothly as all previous ones. The advantage of doing business with South Africa is the consistency, certainty and stability that prevails at all times, despite the robust political climate that prevails during any political contest in the country.

Ladies and gentlemen allow me to thank the Swiss Chamber of Commerce (Southern Africa) for hosting us, in collaboration with the University of Zurich, in particular the Europa Institute and Economiessuisse at the university. We hope to see you in South Africa soon as potential investors, tourists or in any other capacity.

I thank you.