



**REMARKS DELIVERED BY MINISTER SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA IN THE
PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON
BEHALF OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
01 JULY 2026**

- Your Excellency, Ambassador L. Brent Bozel III,
- Former President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency, Thabo Mbeki
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps and International Organizations,
- Officials of the Government and Business Leaders,
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are honoured to join you this evening as you celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America. On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of South Africa, I extend our warmest congratulations to the Government and people of the United States on this historic milestone.

Two hundred and fifty years is a remarkable achievement in the life of any nation. It is an opportunity not only to celebrate the founding ideals of liberty, democracy and human dignity, but also to reflect on the enduring partnerships and friendships that have been forged across generations and continents.

Your Excellency, We wish to express our sincere gratitude for your warm welcome and generous hospitality.

This anniversary takes place at an important moment in the history of both our countries. The United States is entering a consequential midterm election period, while South Africa prepares for local government elections. These democratic processes remind us that democracy is not an event but a continuous journey, requiring active participation, accountability and a shared commitment to the aspirations of our citizens.

As Nelson Mandela wisely observed:

"No single person can liberate a country. You can only liberate a country if you act as a collective."

This timeless message speaks not only to nation-building within our respective countries but also to the importance of partnerships between nations. It is through dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect that South Africa and the United States continue to advance shared interests and contribute to global peace, prosperity and development.

Your Excellency, The year ahead presents an opportunity to continue building on the foundation laid by recent high-level engagements between our two governments. Our bilateral relationship is mature, multifaceted and resilient. While friends may occasionally differ, true partnerships endure because they are anchored in shared values, strong institutions and deep people-to-people ties.

Indeed, the recent engagement between President Cyril Ramaphosa and President Donald Trump in May 2025 demonstrated the importance both countries attach to maintaining open channels of communication and working constructively to strengthen bilateral relations. The outcomes of these engagements continue to provide a platform for expanding cooperation in trade and investment, technology, innovation, security cooperation, education, and cultural exchanges.

Your Excellency, Our two countries have, at times, encountered differences of perspective on matters of policy and international affairs. Such moments are neither unusual nor insurmountable in a mature relationship between sovereign nations. What distinguishes enduring partnerships is not the absence of disagreement, but the willingness to engage openly, respectfully and constructively in pursuit of common ground.

In this regard, the recent bilateral engagements, including high-level consultations, technical trade discussions, diplomatic outreach by both countries' embassies, and the reciprocal appointment of ambassadors, have laid an important foundation for rebuilding trust and advancing cooperation. These developments reaffirm a principle that has long underpinned South Africa's diplomatic approach: that dialogue, engagement and mutual respect remain the most effective instruments for resolving differences and deepening understanding between nations.

President Nelson Mandela captured this sentiment perfectly when he stated:

"No problem is so deep that it cannot be overcome, given the will of all parties, through discussion and negotiation rather than force..."

These words remain as relevant today as they were when first spoken. They remind us that strong bilateral relationships are built through engagement, mutual respect and sustained dialogue not through intimidation, public recrimination or diplomacy conducted through social media platforms. It is through direct conversation, patient diplomacy and a commitment to understanding one another's concerns that nations are able to overcome challenges and build stronger partnerships for the future.

It is in this spirit that South Africa approaches its relationship with the United States: as a strategic partner, a valued friend, and a country with whom we seek to build a relationship that is mutually beneficial, forward-looking and grounded in respect for each other's sovereignty and national interests.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, The relationship between South Africa and the United States is ultimately about people.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Americans visit South Africa, making the United States one of our most important overseas tourism markets. These visitors contribute significantly to our economy, support jobs and businesses, and, most importantly, return home with a deeper appreciation of South Africa's people, culture and natural beauty.

Similarly, thousands of South Africans study, work, invest and travel in the United States, strengthening the bonds that connect our societies. Through educational exchanges, sister-city partnerships, cultural programmes, sporting exchanges and business networks, our peoples continue to build bridges that transcend politics and geography.

As we celebrate this milestone anniversary, we are reminded that the strongest diplomatic relationships are those that are underpinned by enduring human connections.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Sport remains one of the most powerful expressions of these connections.

This year, the United States welcomes the world through its hosting of the FIFA World Cup, bringing together nations, cultures and communities through the universal language of sport. South Africans understand well the transformative power of sport diplomacy and the ability of major sporting events to unite people across differences.

As a nation that successfully hosted the FIFA World Cup in 2010, South Africa wishes the United States every success as it showcases its hospitality, diversity and organisational excellence to the global community. We are confident that the tournament will further strengthen international goodwill and create lasting memories for millions around the world.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Trade and investment remain a cornerstone of our bilateral relationship.

The United States continues to be one of South Africa's most significant trade and investment partners, with bilateral trade supporting economic growth, industrial development and job creation in both countries. More than 600 American companies operate in South Africa, employing well over 130,000 South Africans and contributing to skills development, innovation and economic transformation.

Likewise, South African companies continue to invest in the United States, creating employment opportunities and contributing to local communities across several American states. These investment relationships demonstrate the confidence that businesses from both countries have in each other's economies and the mutual benefits that arise from closer economic cooperation.

As our economies adapt to technological change, evolving supply chains and new global challenges, there remains considerable potential to deepen cooperation in critical minerals, advanced manufacturing, energy, digital innovation, agriculture, health sciences and infrastructure development.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, As South Africa marks the second year of the Government of National Unity, we remain focused on advancing inclusive economic growth, creating jobs, reducing poverty and building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

Strong international partnerships are essential to achieving these objectives. The United States remains an important strategic partner in supporting economic development, investment, innovation and skills development.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, As we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of American Independence, let us reaffirm our commitment to a relationship founded on mutual respect, shared prosperity and friendship between our peoples.

On behalf of President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Government and the people of the Republic of South Africa, I have the honour to wish happy Independence Day to President Donald Trump, the Government and the people of the United States of America.

May the friendship between South Africa and the United States continue to flourish
for generations to come.

Happy 250th Independence Day.

I thank you.