



**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**M.G.P LEKOTA**

**MINISTER OF DEFENCE**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**COMMISSIONING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NAVY SAS AMATOLA  
MEKO A200 PATROL CORVETTE, 16 FEBRUARY 2006, SIMONSTOWN**

*Keynote Address by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of South Africa,  
Honourable Mosiuoa Lekota, on the occasion of the commissioning of the  
South African Navy's first Valour Class MEKO A200 Patrol Corvette, SAS  
Amatola, Simonstown, 16 February 2006.*

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- **PROGRAMME DIRECTOR;**
- **OUR FIRST LADY, MRS ZANELE MBEKI;**
- **HON ALEC ERWIN, MINISTER FOR PUBLIC ENTERPRISES;**
- **MR JANUARY MASILELA, SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA;**

- **GENERAL GODFREY NGWENYA, CHIEF OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE;**
- **VICE ADMIRAL MUDIMU, CHIEF OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NAVY & MRS MUDIMU;**
- **MR POPO MOLEFE, CHAIRPERSON OF THE ARMSCOR BOARD;**
- **MR SIPHO THOMO, CEO OF ARMSCOR;**
- **SENIOR MANAGEMENT, ADMIRALS & GENERALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE;**
- **OFFICERS OF THE SAS AMATOLA & OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NAVY;**
- **DR BORGSCHULTE, CEO & CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THYSSEN KRUPP MARINE SYSTEMS;**
- **MR KEMPFF, BOARD MEMBER OF THYSSEN KRUPP MARINE SYSTEMS RESPONSIBLE FOR SURFACE VESSELS;**
- **MR MULLER, BOARD MEMBER OF THYSSEN KRUPP MARINE SYSTEMS;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA;**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS;**
- **LADIES & GENTLEMEN.**

Today's ceremony marks the commissioning of the SAS Amatola, the first of South Africa's four Valour Class MEKO A200 Patrol Corvettes acquired under the Strategic Defence Packages (SDPs).

This commissioning is an important milestone in the modernization of the capability of the South African Navy and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

The corvettes will be critical in ensuring that for many years to come the Navy will be able to provide the requisite levels of operations and support to ensure stability, peace and security of both the Indian and Atlantic Ocean coastlines of South Africa, Southern Africa, and further afield.

This specific capability will complement the Submarines, Strike Craft and Inshore Patrol Vessels as part of a comprehensive strategic defence capability we are building for both our national defence requirements and our involvement in peacekeeping peace support operations across the continent, and wherever we may be called upon to serve.

In keeping with the principles of Nepad and the 'African Agenda', growing our capability for homeland defence and collective self-reliance is critical. Maritime defence capability is therefore essential for our role as a global player fully prepared for any threats to the critical economic activity of the international sea routes around us.

The SAS Amatola is being released to the South African Navy at a time when the South African Development Community (SADC) has just established its Regional Brigade in pursuance of the African Union's (AU) resolution of establishing five regional brigades. It is our firm belief, therefore, that the acquisition and commissioning of the SAS Amatola is an addition to the arsenal at the disposal of the SADC Brigade.

This strategic initiative will have a major impact on how we, together with our brothers and sisters on the continent of Africa, will position ourselves in the international defence, peace and security arena.

South Africa is a sea-faring nation, internationally recognized for its naval history and traditions, and, a growing maritime economy, with over 95% of imports and exports of the region passing through our harbours. This proud heritage and our growing economic potential, coupled with the imperative for optimum defence capability both at home and abroad, convinced our Government to replace our ageing fleets through a long-term and multifaceted approach.

Our role with regard to our broad participation in SADC, the AU and UN multilateral peace and security initiatives on and around the continent of Africa will be significantly improved by our rapidly advancing capability on the high seas and the inland rivers and lakes of several countries on the continent.

In this regard we are not only looking to providing South African support to peace support operations and support for post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts, we are also broadly engaged in ensuring that within SADC we have the requisite levels of interoperability of human resources, training, technology and related systems.

Programme Director,

This morning's event is also a milestone in the quest of the Department of Defence to rejuvenate the SANDF with young talent, fully diversified in terms of both race and gender. The confluence of advanced technology and our ability to attract the requisite numbers of talented young men and women to join the SANDF through the Military Skills Development System (MSDS) is at the core of our ongoing transformation to enhance our future capability to contribute meaningfully to national, regional and continental initiatives.

In this regard I have noted that the South African Navy is progressing steadily with its transformation agenda and that specific attention is also being paid to gender equity. The appointment last year of our first woman in command at sea, the appointment of the first black woman diver, the appointment of the first woman Coxswain on the SAS Protea and the submarine training of two women in Germany, are all hugely significant milestones in the transformation of defence in this country.

An important aspect of service delivery from the Department of Defence to the general public of South Africa includes job creation, skills development and career options for young men and women in both defence and generic training support for a wide range of activities in other critical areas of economic development.

An acquisition like SAS Amatola and the significant contribution of local defence industry in this development represents a veritable showcase of South African technology, engineering innovation and industrial capacity. Over and above this significant contribution by South African companies to the platform of the ship, approximately 75% of the combat system of the SAS Amatola is locally designed and built by over 20 South African companies and research institutions.

This has not only helped preserve the defence technology base of the nation but has also enabled local companies to position themselves for export opportunities as well as making themselves attractive partners for international high-tech companies seeking investment in South Africa.

Further, the MSDS, the Service Corps skilling and employment assistance programme, and Youth Foundation Training Programme ,are well positioned and ready to contribute to the Government focus on Accelerate Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA).

Programme Director,

Contextualising this morning in the bigger picture of positive developments in our country, the region and the continent, the South African President's recent State of Nation Address comes to mind. I refer here specifically to the related themes of optimism, the 'Age of Hope', and South Africa as a 'Winning Nation'.

This morning's event takes place not only against a backdrop of a mood of national optimism about the future, but also presents us with tangible signs of success, hope and progress at home and in the SADC region:

- i. The recent adoption of a constitution in the DRC, the integration of the DRC armed forces, and related security sector reform and disarmament initiatives;
- ii. The successful Presidential elections in Burundi;
- iii. Progress regarding the operationalisation of the Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP);
- iv. The continental Regional Early Warning System, as well as the SADC Brigade of the African Standby Force and the SADC Mutual Defence Pact.

All of this points to advancement in leaps and bounds. We are now collectively capable of pre-emptive and rapid response to situations both military and humanitarian.

Programme Director,

We welcome the announcement by the Minister of Finance that R3,1 billion has been added to our budget to embark on defence modernization and infrastructure. This will bolster our capacity to carry out our work more efficiently.

Finally, I would like, on behalf of the South African Government, to thank the German Government for its continued cooperation and support. In addition to SAS Amatola we look forward to the arrival of the first of our German built submarines, S101, in April this year, and the imminent Naval exercise between our two countries.

To the Secretary for Defence, Chief of the SANDF, Chief of the South African Navy, and all relevant South Africa Department of Defence Officials, and participants from South African defence industries I extend warm congratulations to all for the successful completion of this project.

I now hand over the SAS Amatola to the Chief of the South African National Defence Force, Lt General Godfrey Ngwenya, who will render the necessary tasking to the Chief of the South African Navy.

Thank you.