



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

Pils laukums 3, Rīga-50, LV-1900, tālr. 7092122, fakss 7320404,  
prese@president.lv, www.president.lv

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### **Address by H.E. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, on the occasion of the accreditation of the Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to Latvia, Riga, February 11, 2003**

Your Excellency,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of South Africa to Latvia.

I am pleased to note that South Africa was the first country in Africa to recognize the reestablishment of Latvia's statehood in August of 1991, and that the relations between our two countries since then have been friendly and cordial. Although the bilateral contacts between our countries have not been very active to date, I see good prospects for the strengthening of Latvian and South African bilateral cooperation in the spheres of economy and trade, as well as in increased educational and cultural exchanges. Latvia appreciates the interest of South Africa in expanding the scope of our bilateral relations.

Although Latvia and South Africa are geographically distant countries as you, your Excellency, have pointed out their paths of development have been similar, particularly during the last decade, which has been marked by significant changes in both of our countries. Latvia shares South Africa's aspirations to overcome the consequences of past wrongs and injustices, and appreciates South Africa's efforts to build a modern, civic society based on the rule of law, the respect for human rights and the ideals of freedom. I had the opportunity to learn more about the success of your country while participating in the UN conference against racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, which was held in Durban in 2001. I take this opportunity to commend the international initiatives launched by South Africa within the framework of the United Nations. These initiatives have been designed to address the most pressing challenges to African and world development.

Your assignment to this esteemed diplomatic post coincides with a significant period in the history of Latvia and the entire Baltic region. The invitation that Latvia received at the end of last year to join the NATO Alliance, along with the completion of accession negotiations with the European Union, lay a solid foundation for Latvia's further development. I am confident in Latvia's ability to take an active part in those processes to which we have given priority, such as European security and sustainable development. I am also convinced that in the very near future, the relations between Latvia and South Africa will develop as relations between an EU member state and a significant partner of this organization in Africa.

Your Excellency,

Latvia has always been open to friends and cooperation. I wish you success in carrying out your responsible duties as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Latvia. I am convinced that your assignment to this post will provide a new impulse to a closer partnership between our countries and our people.