

# SA, Russia condemn DPRK nuclear test

South Africa and Russia have condemned the latest nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).



(Image: GCIS)

The two countries have called on the DPRK to follow the requirements of the UN Security Council after that country's latest nuclear test, with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation saying the test was "a clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions".

The nuclear test, which the DPRK claimed was successful, was conducted at 11:57am local time (0257 GMT) in that country's Kilju County, North Hamkyung Province.

The blast triggered an artificial earthquake with a magnitude of 4.9 that was detected in the town where the DPRK nuclear test facility is located.

Both Pretoria and Moscow said the DPRK's nuclear test constituted a threat to lasting peace in the Korean Peninsula, to regional and international security and stability in North-East Asia.

This emerged during a meeting between International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, which was held in Pretoria on Tuesday.

## Drop it

Speaking to the media after their meeting, Nkoana-Mashabane said the DPRK should completely drop its nuclear programme and return to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Nkoana-Mashabane said government was convinced that nuclear weapons threatened the total annihilation of humanity and were therefore not a source of security.

Speaking through an interpreter, Lavrov said by conducting the new tests, the DPRK has once again ignored and disregarded the UNSC decisions.

"Such behaviour is inconsistent and obviously deserves condemnation," Lavrov said.

The two ministers had met to discuss a range of issues such as the planned state visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the implementation of the 11th South Africa-Russia Intergovernmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) decisions as well as an update on the upcoming Brics summit to be held in Durban.

"The meeting provided an opportunity for a frank appraisal of the status of our bilateral relations, including projects and strategic issues that will be tabled during the state visit," said Nkoana-Mashabane.

## **Trade ties to receive attention**

The two countries have acknowledged and agreed to work on their lacklustre bilateral trade and other ties.

South Africa's trade exchanges with Russia are low compared to its other Brics partners. The Brics countries include the five leading emerging market economies of China, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa.

"We recognise that the level and momentum of our trade, economic relations and technical cooperation still has much potential for improvement," said Nkoana-Mashabane.

She told reporters that the focus should be to prioritise capacity building and skills transfer, particularly in strategic technology areas.

"Our challenge and priority going forward is to focus our attention and resources on critical priorities, concrete projects and instruments that will enhance our economic relations and technical cooperation, whilst simultaneously identifying and addressing the challenges that constrain our economic relations and technical cooperation," she said.

## **Building Brics**

Russia, which has highly skilled people in science and technology, offers huge opportunities for trade and investment partnerships, especially in minerals, energy, agriculture, education and skills development.

Lavrov believes that the upcoming Brics summit will further strengthen relations not only with South Africa but the continent at large, saying it would be good to hear African problems from African people.

For the first time, the representative body of the African nations has been invited to participate in the summit.

The participation of the African Union will not only herald a new chapter in Brics-Africa relations, but will also foster economic integration of Africa with the rising powers, said Lavrov.

South Africa regards Russia as a strategic partner. While there is no structured mechanism for political dialogue between the two countries, ITEC serves as a mechanism for broadening and deepening economic and trade ties.

ITEC serves as the engine room for the generation of new bilateral agreements and for reviewing and bolstering implementation of those agreements.

Lavrov is in the country as part of his week-long tour to three African states aimed at strengthening relations and

contributing to a solution of the regional conflicts through talks. He started in Algeria and his final stop will be Mozambique.

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