







FOREWORD

As in previous editions, the *South Africa Yearbook 2007/08* gives a comprehensive account of the programmes and policies of our government as well as the current state of the South African nation.

I am proud to give this brief foreword because through this *Yearbook* it is clear that since we attained our freedom in 1994 we have made important advances towards the goal of a better life for all.

The advances of last year, similar to those of the preceding years, indicate that while the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment are acute, we have, however, laid the necessary basis for a sustained, comprehensive and integrated development of our country.

Of particular importance, our economy is now growing at a faster rate than the country's population. This economic growth, coupled with prudent fiscal regime, have helped us to be in a better position to address poverty and underdevelopment.

Clearly one of the critical challenges is the delivery of good and reliable services for our people. In this regard, in 2007, 88,6% of South Africans enjoyed access to piped water; 80% of households in South Africa are using electricity for lighting, and unemployment decreased by 2,5% since 2003. We continue to provide free healthcare to children under six years, pregnant and lactating women; and to people with disabilities.

The National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases for 2007 – 2011 gives the country a holistic view on how to respond to this challenge. It aims to reduce the number of new HIV infections by 50% by 2011; and 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 affected people.

Over the past year alone, an amount of R100 million was allocated for bursaries in further education and training (FET) colleges, benefiting more than 12 500 students. Government has also committed R2 billion for the systematic modernising and development of the FET college sector.

The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) and the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition are some of our country's strategic interventions for economic growth and development. The successful implementation of AgsiSA will result in greater scope for faster growth. The continued promotion of access to government programmes and economic opportunities brought by democracy is being intensified to ensure that all people, particularly women and youths, benefit. Land restitution continues apace.

The fight against crime has intensified through partnerships with various stakeholders to create safer communities for all. Our goal is to reduce crime levels by between 7% and 10%, giving special focus to crime prevention, integrated law-enforcement operations and the reduction of repeat offending. The South African Police Service's strategic plan for 2005 to 2010 sets out several operational priorities, including combating organised crime, serious and violent crime and crime against women and children.

As the first African hosts of the prestigious FIFA World Cup in 2010, we are excited about the positive spin-offs the tournament will bring for our country and Africa. Investments and programmes for the World Cup will accelerate delivery and the achievement of the development goals and the target economic growth rate in the continent. We say again: *Africa's time has come! South Africa is ready!*

Government is aware that although there have been huge strides, there are still many challenges. We remain committed to working in partnership with all South Africans to create a better life for all.

The *South Africa Yearbook 2007/08* is an important resource and a critical barometer of the advances we are making towards a better life for all.



President Thabo Mbeki
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