



**MINISTRY
TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speaking notes for Deputy Minister Hlengwa at the European
Commission's Global Gateway Investment Roadshow in South Africa's
transport and logistics modernisation

Umhlanga, KZN 05th of June 2026

Opening Remarks by the Deputy Minister of Transport

Importance of Regional Solidarity within SADC

Acknowledgements:

Your Excellencies,

EU Ambassador to South Africa, Ms Sandra Kramer

Deputy Ambassador of the EU to SA, Mr Garrido Ruiz

MEC for Public Works & Infrastructure: KZN, Mr Martin Meyer

CEOs of the Industry

Executive Members from Government Department (Mr Madiya will be there)

Members of the EU Delegation and Team Europe

Partners to the EU

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning,

South Africa forms an integral part of the European Union trade partnership with at least 90% of our exports destined for European markets. The 2016 EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement is a key policy framework which provides preferential market access, such that a vast majority of South African goods enter EU markets duty-free or with reduced tariffs. According to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade report, the European Union imports of various commodities in manufacturing, mining, agriculture and others from South Africa was US\$23.82 billion in the year 2025. That alone shows a magnitude of exports to the EU and a significant economic enabler to sustain livelihoods in different sectors.

South Africa's is well positioned to play a catalytic role in advancing regional and global integration, particularly in sectors such as transport, logistics, and maritime development, which are fundamental enablers of trade-led growth.

This Roadshow is taking place at an opportune moment for South Africa to leverage and attract strategic partners and investors to assist with intent to improve efficiencies and predictability in regional transport and logistics systems. It cannot be that the port system of South Africa with eight commercial ports along the 3,000KM coastline, a good road network of about one hundred and sixty thousand kilometers (160,000KMs) and our strategic intent to move cargo from roads to rail still faces several operational challenges whereas we have willingness from the global network of investors to partner with.

The level of **cooperation and exchange of information** allows for a structured collaboration to work together towards a common goal and ensure that there is value in terms of funding projects, create jobs and building capacity across the value chain. Looking at the projects and total investments under the Global Gateway / Team Europe, the level of expertise required has potential to greatly increase the slow pace of implementation of identified projects from feasibility to initiation and to project close-out in accelerating build programmes. Addressing structural implementation gaps remain critical for South Africa to fully realise its ambitions for enhanced transport connectivity, becoming a more competitive and resilient economy and position herself as the multi-modal transport hub.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We do not exist and operate in isolation as South Africa and it is in the best interests of the SADC region to anchor these initiatives. I would like to emphasise that the region is characterised by a structurally diverse geography, endowed with renewable energy sources, comprising a combination of coastal States that serve as critical gateways to global shipping routes, alongside a number of landlocked and land-linked countries whose economic competitiveness is inherently dependent on efficient **access to trade corridors**, such as the proposed Lubumbashi Corridor. We can all agree that the availability of climate-resilient and good port infrastructure for international shipping services is required. This further reinforces the strategic importance of maritime infrastructure, rail interoperability and availability of services along the corridor as key anchors of connectivity to improve logistics and economic performance.

For instance, the proposed “Regional Green Hydrogen Corridor’ between South Africa and Namibia is going to be supported by at least 2.4 million Euros as a Grant and 21.7 million Euros of Loan is a significant step towards regional integration and economic development.

It is against this backdrop, that the **competitiveness** of both developing and developed economies is increasingly defined by the efficiency, reliability, and cost-effectiveness of their access to transport networks and port systems that leads to international shipping. South Africa, as a leading maritime economy within the region, occupies a pivotal position in shaping regional outcomes. We must begin to focus on constraints and address fragmentation at national and regional level, deliberately address these through coordinated policy mechanisms and investment interventions, hence we embrace this initiative today.

In response, a notable wave of port **infrastructure development**, rail revitalization, and road expansion programmes are currently underway across the country – expanding into SADC States, which are aimed at **enhancing efficiencies**, expanding capacity, and improving regional competitiveness within global value chains. Within South Africa, the ongoing re-development and modernisation of the Ports of Durban and Cape Town are of strategic significance, with the potential to materially influence regional trade flows, logistics costs, and the broader configuration of Southern African value chains an opportunity to reinforce South Africa’s role as a **regional**

transport hub. We also have an obligation to ensure that partnerships as a result of these Roadshows are effectively integrated into evolving port and logistics systems in a manner that reduces trade barriers and supports **inclusive growth.**

As South Africa, we continue to advance the work in alternative energy / fuels towards **transport sector decarbonisation** and we are looking forward to the collaboration from the European Union to take on-board Africa to outline the better understanding of the proposed regime under the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the Net Zero Framework. On the other hand, the Department participates in the initiative led by Minister of Energy and Electricity wherein in September, will be hosting the Africa Green Hydrogen Summit that seeks to affirm green hydrogen as a driver of economic growth, energy security and industrial development as well as Africa's potential to be a global leader and production hub. This is clearly articulated and demonstrated in the **project portfolio supported by the "Team Europe."**

I am also working in collaboration with the office of the EU Commissioner to visit one of the strategic projects – HIVE Green Ammonia in the Coega SEZ, to understand how the 'pungent gas' can transform the energy sector! But more so, to show Government support as the Department of Transport leads the development of the National Action Plan on maritime decarbonization.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen,

Equally important is the advancement of **intermodal integration** as a core organising principle of the regional transport system. Maritime development cannot be treated in isolation, but must be systematically linked to rail, road,

pipeline, and aviation networks to ensure seamless connectivity, efficiency gains, and reduced logistics costs across the value chain. A fully integrated transport system, functioning as a unified regional logistics architecture, is essential to **unlocking economies of scale, improving trade competitiveness**, and ensure coherent and globally competitive economic space rather than a collection of fragmented national systems.

It is against this backdrop, that the strategic utilisation of inland dry ports, logistics corridors, and integrated freight systems—anchored in the Department of Transport’s Regional Integration Strategy, the National Freight Logistics Strategy (NFLS), and the Road-to-Rail Migration programme and the Rail Masterplan becomes central to reshaping regional trade architecture. These instruments are not merely operational logistics tools; they constitute strategic levers for **reconfiguring trade flows**, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring that South Africa remains a critical node. These developments underscore the necessity for South Africa, through Transnet, SANRAL and other strategic State-Owned Entities, to proactively engage and position themselves as **strategic partners** in the initiatives revealed in the nation-wide Roadshow, and for that we appreciate the European Commission’s contribution and investments towards South Africa’s mission to rebuild the economy by creating work and livelihood opportunities on a large scale and most important adding to the values of “**A Nation that works for all**”

I THANK YOU ALL!