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STATEMENT BY THE HIGH COMMISSION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF NIGERIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The High Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Republic of South Africa reiterates its grave concern over the persistent incidents of violence-prone marches in South Africa. Recognising the fact that any life lost in such marches is one too many, we therefore urge the South African authorities to act decisively to ensure that no foreign national is unlawfully targeted and victimized. It is important to state clearly and unequivocally that South Africans are inherently not Xenophobic. The overwhelming majority of South Africans live peacefully alongside Nigerian and African migrants. Nevertheless, we note with concerns that many South Africans continue to hold uninformed perceptions about Nigerians and other Africans, broadly associating them with criminalities and other social vices.

In reality, the Nigerian community in South Africa is overwhelmingly composed of law-abiding, highly skilled, and economically productive individuals who have integrated successfully into all spheres of South African society. It is noteworthy that far from being a burden, Nigerian professionals, entrepreneurs, academics, and workers contribute meaningfully to the South African economy every single day. They pay their taxes diligently, create employment opportunities, innovate in key sectors, and actively participate in building the economy that benefits many nationals. Nigerian doctors and nurses, for instance, serve as specialists in hospitals across the country, saving lives through advanced medical expertise, while many others take up posts in rural and under-served areas where conditions are not favorable. Similarly, Nigerian academics and educators are helping to close critical skill gaps, particularly in literacy, mathematics, and sciences by teaching in Universities, Schools, and Training programmes that strengthen the nation's human capital.

The majority of Nigerians in South Africa are established entrepreneurs and business owners who operate formal enterprises in urban and rural centers, universities, hospitals, and corporate environments. These categories of Nigerians do not pose threat to the economic livelihoods nor stand in the way of ordinary South Africans that are creating their own value chains or opportunities. Instead, they generate their own businesses, inject capital, create jobs, and bring entrepreneurial energy that complements and expands the overall economy. These contributions, from healthcare and education to technology, trade, and services, demonstrate how Nigerian professionals and entrepreneurs are partners in South Africa's development, and not competitors or obstacles. It is unfortunate that such positive realities are often overshadowed by misconceptions and misdemeanors of a tiny minority, and we believe that greater public awareness of these facts will foster mutual understanding and respect for our shared values.

The time has come for our younger generation to fully recognize the profound economic interdependence that binds our continent. This interdependence is a natural outcome of African integration which process was set in motion right from the period of independence of many African nations in the 1960s. It is therefore not an organic outcome, rather it is the enduring legacy of the past, that has systematically sustained productive capacities in many African economies in a manner different from how classical colonial and Apartheid powers historically weakened and subordinated African economies through unequal and extractive relationships. South Africa remains the foremost beneficiary of intra-African trade and investment, recording substantial trade surpluses and repatriating billions in profits annually from operations across Africa. This economic interchange directly sustains hundreds of thousands of jobs and prosperity for South African citizens.

The legitimate presence and contributions of documented African professionals, academics, business people, and workers must be protected with the same hospitality and respect that Africans extend to South Africans. On the issue of undocumented migrants, we believe the situation is more systemic than real and would need a whole-of-society approach to address the systemic problem of delays in the processing of relevant documentation. This is because many African migrants, who originally were residing, or came to SA legally, became illegal after waiting for months, or even years, without their papers being processed for approval or otherwise.

We therefore appeal to the authorities to intensify public advocacy on the importance of interdependence that defines our African brotherhood. We believe that

sustained public advocacy and awareness will help to counter divisive rhetorics, promote factual understanding of migration, highlight the positive contributions of African migrants, and communicate the mutual economic dependence that sustains South Africa's prosperity. Political figures and community leaders are expected to foster unity and promote peaceful co-existence and harmony.

We acknowledge that South Africa faces genuine and pressing socio-economic challenges, including high unemployment and poverty, which give rise to grievances among many citizens. We also recognise that the South African government has put in place a deliberate policy of social cohesion which is aimed at solving some of the inherent socio-economic challenges of the country. It is unfortunate, however, that certain political parties and interest groups often seek to hijack or exploit these frustrations for narrow political gains, directing public anger towards African migrants. Such tactics only deepen division at a time when unity and shared solutions are most needed. We believe in the strength of intra-African relations.

However, Nigeria is concerned about the current situation because persistent failure to protect African nationals and their property or continued exhibition of inflammable rhetorical tendencies might attract outcomes that pose threat to the collective African unity and economic prosperity. We can either allow isolated violence and political opportunism to fracture our unity and reverse the gains of Pan-African solidarity, or we choose a path of shared responsibility – managed migration, strengthened cooperation, joint prosecution of criminals, and collective efforts aimed at building prosperous economies.

The High Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria remains committed to constructive engagement with the South African authorities and people. We, hereby, call for calm, sustained dialogue, and urgent collaborative action to protect lives, properties, and sustain the dream of a united, prosperous Africa.



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