

## **Gill Marcus: South Africa's new banknotes**

Address by Ms Gill Marcus, Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, at the launch of the communications campaign for the Mandela banknote series, Pretoria, 5 September 2012.

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Good morning and thank you for being with us today. I know a number of you have travelled from abroad to be here, and we appreciate your attendance and participation.

Today is a momentous occasion. The South African Reserve Bank is launching a communication campaign to showcase the country's new banknote series and to inform the public about the unique features of South Africa's new banknotes.

The front of the new banknotes feature the image of South Africa's first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela. The reverse side of each denomination features an image of one of the "big five" animals. The new notes have the same denominations, sizes and colours as the existing series, which was adopted twenty years ago.

The design and production of this new series of banknotes has been a long but exciting journey for the Reserve Bank and our key partners in the public and private sectors.

A country's currency is a fundamental component of its national identity. It should be a reflection of its culture and heritage. South Africa's banknotes have reflected aspects of its culture and heritage since the inception of the South African rand in 1961. In earlier days, South African banknotes featured such diverse images as that of Jan van Riebeeck, and later the "Big Five". What will surely become known as the "Mandela banknote series" reflects South Africa's pride as a nation and pays tribute to a much-loved world icon.

To give a brief history of South African banknotes:

About 230 years ago the Dutch Governor Joachim van Plettenberg first introduced paper money in the Cape. All the notes had to be handwritten because there was no printing press in the Cape. The money featured a government fiscal hand stamp that showed the value of the money and the authority date of the issue. It was only in 1803 that notes were printed, but they still bore the fiscal hand stamp. The early currency, including the rix dollar and stiver denominations, played a significant role in the early economic development of our country. South Africa later used the British pound sterling as its currency until 1961, when the rand was introduced. The "big five" theme was adopted after the unbanning of political parties and the release of political prisoners, reflecting what was considered as a design that would be acceptable to all South Africans. The currency was last upgraded in 2005 when enhanced security features on the "Big Five" banknote series were added. Internationally, it is regarded as best practice for central banks to upgrade the security features of their banknotes every six to eight years. This is to combat counterfeiting, which diminishes the value of real money, robs countries worldwide of billions of rand annually, and tarnishes the credibility of a currency, thereby impacting on the growth of that economy.

One of the responsibilities of the South African Reserve Bank is to protect the value and integrity of the South African currency. Through this comprehensive communication campaign, we want to ensure that all our citizens and organisations familiarise themselves with the look and feel of the new banknotes, and reinforce the culture of knowing our money. I also want to emphasise that the current notes remain legal tender and are of equal value to the new note. So whether you have the existing R200 note or a R200 Mandela note, they are both worth the same.

This is the launch of the communication campaign about the new banknotes, which we plan to introduce into circulation before the end of this year. The date on which these notes will be available and co-circulate with the current note for a while will be made public in due course.

Before then, much remains to be done and the SARB Team is hard at work with many of you to make this happen in a seamless manner.

I would like to thank all our partners: the cash industry, including commercial banks and cash-in-transit companies; the retail sector; government departments; the Society for the Blind; and the Pan South African Language Board for their sound support and willingness to play an important role in informing the broader South African public about the country's new banknote series.

We will now share with you the details and roll-out of the new banknote communication campaign. Through the campaign we hope to reach all South Africans and ensure that they are aware of the new banknotes and, more importantly, that they can recognise and become familiar with the key security features.

Thank you.