

Budget Vote speech by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, H.E. Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, National Assembly, Cape Town

22 Jul 2014

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Representatives of International Organisations,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Our membership of BRICS is stronger than before! We were there at the Summit in Sanya, China, when the vision document of BRICS was crafted and adopted. We were in New Delhi, India, when the idea of a development bank was mooted. The decision to establish the Bank was taken in Durban. From Durban to the recent 6th BRICS Summit in Brazil, this idea has now been given life. In Brazil, our leaders reaffirmed our core vision to bring about a more democratic, multipolar world order. This is the world we want. This is the world we yearn for.

South Africa, as the previous Chair, successfully brought to fruition all the key outcomes adopted at the 5th BRICS Summit in Durban last year. As such, in Brazil, the Agreement establishing the New Development Bank and the Treaty for the creation of the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement were signed. These agreements signal a historic and seminal moment since the creation of the Bretton Woods international financial architecture.

The headquarters of the New Development Bank will be located in Shanghai, China and its Africa Regional Centre will be established in South Africa concurrently. Further significant initiatives in respect of strengthening intra-BRICS economic cooperation, included the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation among BRICS Export Credit and Guarantees Agencies that will improve the support environment for increasing trade opportunities among the BRICS countries. In BRICS, the member states are equal in access, shareholding, and representation in leadership positions.

Indeed, in his State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma was unequivocal about what needs to be done to move South Africa forward in the next five years. In his own words, he said, and I quote: "As we enter the second phase of our transition from apartheid to a national democratic society, we have to embark on radical socio-economic transformation to push back the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment. Change will not come about without some far-reaching interventions."

What needs to be done in the next five years must find resonance with this undertaking.

South Africa's foreign policy is driven by the vision to achieve an African continent that is prosperous, peaceful, democratic, united and assertive in defense of its interests in world affairs. Today, as we enter the third decade of our freedom, it is therefore appropriate that we focus on the foreign policy task and challenges that lie ahead of us in the next five years.

Our foreign policy has a crucial role to play in the interventions required to realise the intended goals of the second transition. The task ahead may be daunting but our experience of the last two decades has schooled us in how to master the balance between our domestic and international priorities, and between the values we cherish and the pursuit of our national interests abroad. We move forward into the next five years conscious that we have a solid National Development Plan that seeks to guide our actions, and set priorities for our international relations mandate.

Honourable Speaker,

The continent is currently engaged in extensive consultations on its vision for the next fifty years, known as Agenda 2063, under the theme “The Africa We Want”. This vision, which is expected to be adopted by the January 2015 Summit of the African Union, spells out the aspirations of African people across all sectors and the pledges of our leaders which are translated into a “Call to Action” comprised of a ten-year action plan that will contain flagship projects.

Each AU Member State, including South Africa, is expected to contribute to this vision through inclusive national consultations by October this year. When the vision is adopted, Member States will have to align their national policies with it through a process of domestication which, in our case, will entail harmonising Agenda 2063 with our National Development Plan.

DIRCO has already begun our national consultations with different sectors. We will be approaching Parliament in due course with a proposal to consider holding a special debate on Agenda 2063. This vision has the potential to become a game-changer on the continent, and South Africa can help ensure that this happens.

Agenda 2063 will impact SADC, especially the pace and direction of the integration of our region. Our approach to the SADC region in the next five years will aim at consolidating bilateral relations with our neighbours, and strengthening SADC as an institution.

In particular, we will:

- Strengthen regional integration in our SADC neighbourhood by discharging our responsibilities towards the full implementation of our Free Trade Area and concluding the current review of the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan. The SADC-EAC-COMESA tripartite trade negotiations must reach finality as they are an important step towards the realization of the African Free Trade Area by 2017.
- Peace and political stability in our region will remain a priority. We are encouraged by the proactive and stabilizing effect that resulted from the deployment of the SADC Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of Congo where the negative forces there are either on retreat or have been defeated. On behalf of the people and government of South Africa, let me take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to our soldiers who are involved in peace missions abroad. Their selfless sacrifice continues to inspire us. In this regard, we will operationalise the Tripartite Agreement between South Africa, Angola and the DRC in support of the Peace and Security Framework Agreement for the Great Lakes Region.
- We will galvanize political support for major infrastructure projects in our region, notably the Lesotho Highlands Water project Phase II, and the Grand INGA in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

For the rest of Africa, in the context of Agenda 2063, in the next five years DIRCO will:

- Continue to strengthen bilateral relations with African countries through structured bilateral engagements to advance South Africa’s interests throughout the continent
- Intensify our work in supporting the African Union, including the AU institutions we host; namely, the NEPAD Secretariat, Pan-African Parliament and the African Peer Review Mechanism headquarters

- Strengthen Economic Diplomacy to increase trade and investment opportunities for South Africa
- Give dedicated attention to the North-South Corridor, and other NEPAD-driven Infrastructure Projects on the Continent championed by President Zuma
- Ensure speedy provision of Humanitarian assistance where needed to alleviate human suffering on the continent
- Implement the African Diaspora programme adopted at the AU Summit we hosted in 2012
- Continue peace-building and conflict prevention efforts in conflict situations in support of multilateral institutions
- Re-invigorate our Post-Conflict and Reconstruction and Development strategy in African countries emerging from conflict.

It is indeed within our ongoing strategy to continue supporting Africa's peace efforts through mediation, troop contribution for peace keeping, and by providing material and financial assistance. The sterling work of Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa in South Sudan, is one example.

The African Union Peace and Security Council has just celebrated its tenth anniversary, and we look back with pride at what it has achieved. South Africa has recently assumed its two-year membership of this organ which will be used to focus on the restoration of constitutional order in the Central African Republic, and stability in the DRC, Libya, Somalia and South Sudan.

The operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture remains a critical element in providing the African Union with the necessary capacity to respond to our challenges of peace and security. The establishment of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), championed by South Africa, is an interim mechanism to enable the African Union to respond to emerging security situations while the African Stand-By Force is being operationalised.

The increasing scourge of terrorism on our continent, especially in parts of East, West and North Africa, is a menace that must be fought and defeated.

Ladies and gentlemen,

South-South Cooperation is important in South Africa's foreign policy architecture. Our approach to South-South Cooperation in the next five years must be anchored on South-South fora like the BRICS, IBSA and FOCAC and multilateral bodies such as the NAM and the G77 plus China, as well as the network of bilateral relations we have established with countries of Asia and Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The key elements of this cooperation are the promotion of political and diplomatic relations, enhancing trade, investment and other economic relations, and collaboration on global issues for a better world.

Latin America and the Caribbean remain critically important in our quest to reconnect and reignite our relations with people of the regions. South Africa shares a long history of cordial relations with the Americas and the Caribbean.

South Africa will continue to utilise the strong political relationship with the countries of Asia and the Middle East, built on the long-standing relationships and solidarity, to further solidify relations and leverage economic, trade, investment and tourism opportunities in the region.

The restoration of lasting peace in the Middle East is in our interest. In this respect, President Zuma will be dispatching a team, led by our former Deputy Minister Mr Aziz Pahad, to Israel and Palestine to convey our growing concern with the escalation of violence there, including the endless wanton killing of Palestinian civilians and the destruction of homes in Gaza. President Zuma will be inviting Palestinian President Mahomood Abbas for a Working Visit.

The Ocean Economy, or Blue Economy, is indeed the next frontier of global economic growth, especially in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) zone.

Building on the comprehensive strategic nature of our relations, the Joint Working Group on South Africa-China Cooperation, established in March 2013, will be an instrument to help further improve trade relations between the two countries. We will be hosting the 6th FOCAC Ministerial in 2015, which is China's partnership forum with Africa.

Honourable Members,

Our partnership with the countries of the North is another pillar of our foreign policy that we will continue to expand in the next five years, through our relations with Europe, North America, and Japan. We look forward to the US-Africa Leaders' Summit, and our Strategic Ministerial Dialogue with the United States of America.

Over the next five years, we undertake to strengthen our existing political and economic relations with Europe, including with the strategic formations of the North such as the European Union. In this regard, we welcome the conclusion of the EPAS negotiations between our region and the EU.

Ladies and gentlemen,

International solidarity will continue to inspire our approach to world affairs. As such, we support the struggle for the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine and the Western Sahara. The economic embargo on Cuba has to be lifted.

South Africa's multilateral activities are inextricably linked to South Africa's own domestic priorities and those of the African continent. In this regard, the following are the key priorities for the next five years:

- Reform of the structures of global governance, including the United Nations Security Council, will remain a key focus, including on how to ensure that the African Common Position, known as the Ezulwini Consensus, advances the reform of the UN. President Zuma has challenged the UN membership not to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the UN in 2015 without a reformed UN Security Council.
- Two critical negotiations will reach their conclusion in 2015; and these are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on the basis of the Durban Plan for Enhanced Action; and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We will continue to call for the acceleration of efforts and resources to ensure the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) up to 2015 and beyond.

- On sustainable development, a key process emanating from Rio+20 was to recommend to the General Assembly a set of possible Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The process to develop these goals has just concluded in New York with South Africa's robust participation.
- On the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which emanates from the MDGs, South Africa and the Republic of Ireland facilitated a High-Level Event of the United Nations General Assembly which managed to anchor the negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda firmly within the United Nations intergovernmental process, where all nations will participate on an equal basis to craft the successor goals to the MDGs, and informed by Rio Principles, in particular the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities.
- Continue to fight for the Durban Legacy that came out of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism that we hosted in Durban.
- In the G20, South Africa - also a Co-chair of the G20 Development Working Group (DWG) - will continue to address development bottlenecks and help developing countries achieve growth.
- South Africa will continue to insist that as much as work is being done on non-proliferation, the issue of disarmament also requires progress and movement in the context of the alienable right of states to the peaceful uses of the atom.

Mrs Navi Pillay will soon complete her tenure (after six years) as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We pay her our solemn tribute and express our pride in the fact that after our transformation 20 years ago, our nationals are able to serve the international community with such distinction.

Honourable Members,

In the context of the second transition that President Zuma spoke about in his State of the Nation Address, our foreign policy work in the next five years must have four perspectives in mind.

Firstly, we must leverage the potential that foreign policy has to enable and support second transition interventions on the domestic front by creating a clearly defined relationship between our foreign policy, domestic priorities and, broadly, our national interests. Our bilateral relations with other countries, multilateral cooperation, and economic diplomacy are tools to be utilized in this regard.

Secondly, our country's foreign policy cannot be static. It must constantly change and adapt with time so that it remains relevant to the ever changing global socio-economic and political environment. As reflected in the National Development Plan, we must therefore take a medium to long term view of where our foreign policy must be in the future if our country is to remain relevant in global affairs.

It cannot be business as usual if our foreign policy is to undergo its own second transition. This change must happen at three levels - in policy development, policy implementation, and cadreship development.

Our draft White Paper calls for a foreign policy based on the philosophy of Ubuntu. It was submitted to the 4th Parliament and we trust it will be finalised by Honourable Members.

The launch of the South African Council on International Relations (SACOIR), which will be our civil society sounding board on foreign policy, will be expedited. The National Development Plan enjoins us to strengthen our policy research capacity. This will be done, building on our existing policy research unit (PRAU).

We must continue to reposition our Foreign Service for its alignment with the future we envisage for our foreign policy through capacity development and constant renewal of personnel. The Department's Branch: Diplomatic Training, Research and Development (DTRD), that is responsible for training our diplomats, will be turned into a fully-fledged diplomatic academy in the next five years.

Our existing internship and cadet programme will be consolidated into a Johnny Mkhathini Ubuntu Diplomatic Corps to improve its outcomes and impact.

We will be tabling a Foreign Service Bill to create a single foreign service for the country in order to end the current fragmented Foreign Service system, leading to improved efficiency, cost-effectiveness and enhanced service delivery.

DIRCO has obtained the required legal authority for the establishment of the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA). We will be tabling to this house a Bill to repeal the African Renaissance Fund (ARF). The creation of SADPA will ensure more efficiency in the deployment and disbursement of South Africa's development and humanitarian assistance.

Thirdly, as South Africa undergoes its second transition, Africa must also continue to rise. Africa's renaissance will in years ahead be defined by Africa Agenda 2063. Africa must truly rise and consummate its 50-year transition from the days of colonialism.

Fourthly, on the global front, ahead of us lies a great challenge of making sure that South Africa cements its voice and actions among the progressive forces working for an equitable, democratic world order. The transformation of the international system is long overdue. The world needs its own second transition, both politically and economically.

Honourable Speaker,

Our comprehensive public diplomacy strategy has, over the years, ensured that our foreign policy is known across all sectors of our society. The establishment of government's first online internet based radio station, Ubuntu Radio, by DIRCO has taken our public diplomacy to a higher level. In the next five years, we will work harder and utilise this platform as a source of Afro-centric foreign policy briefs. The public outreach that took us across many corners of our country during the previous administration will continue. It is important that our foreign policy is rooted among our people, enjoying the bipartisan support of all of us in Parliament.

In conclusion, Honourable Members, we hope that this 2014 budget proposal, which is aligned with the 5th Administration's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTEF), will receive your support and approval. Due to currency fluctuations, the department will require an additional R1.6 billion over the MTEF period in order to maintain the current level of operation.

South Africa is at the crossroad en route to the second phase of our transition to a national democratic society. Africa's Agenda 2063 is also a call to action for a continent on the rise. Our foreign policy must therefore move South Africa forward and make our vision of a better South Africa in a better Africa and a better world, a reality.

I thank you!

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