

**Budget Vote Speech by the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation,
Mr Luwellyn Landers MP, National Assembly, Cape Town**

22 Jul 2014

Honourable Speaker/House Chairperson

Honourable Chair and Members of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation;

Honourable Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Representatives of International Organisations;

Distinguished guests;

It is an honour and privilege to stand before this esteemed house to present my first budget vote speech as Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation.

Let me begin by paying tribute to my predecessors, former Deputy Ministers Hon. Ebrahim Ebrahim and Hon. Marius Fransman, for the formidable legacy that they have left behind. I am humbled to follow in their footsteps.

Honourable Speaker

Our international relations continue to be guided by the same foundations that we laid twenty years ago, led by Nelson Mandela. These are a firm commitment to a humane, just, democratic, free and equitable world. We have played a leading role in championing human rights, pan-Africanism, equality, peace, reconciliation and development, founding values that draw on the Freedom Charter and are deeply rooted in the long years of struggle for liberation.

Our activism has been inspired by our experience of international solidarity, the ideals and principles for which so many of our heroes made the ultimate sacrifice, and the visionary leadership that emerged from South Africans, led by Nelson Mandela, who were determined, against all odds, to build a nation that would be free from oppression, discrimination, inequality and poverty. We remain determined to contribute to building a better world through the diplomacy of Ubuntu, recognising that in an interdependent and interconnected world, it is in our national interest to assist others to also have what we want for ourselves.

In her eloquent speech today, Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane noted that our foreign policy has a crucial role to play in the interventions required to realise the goals of the second transition. As much as our domestic priorities have always been a central objective of our foreign policy, over the next five years the department will dramatically intensify its efforts to create new opportunities to achieve the goals of the National Development Plan.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Zuma made it clear that the economy takes centre stage in a radical programme to move South Africa forward to prosperity and success, because the creation of decent work is the most effective weapon in the campaign against poverty.

Economic diplomacy, concentrating on export and tourism promotion, skills development and attracting foreign direct investment to priority sectors of the economy to create sustainable jobs and place the country on a more competitive global path is now the main focus of our bilateral missions. During the coming year, we plan to aggressively expand our economic activities, which will include more than tripling the number of trade and investment seminars and engagements with Chambers of Commerce and high-level investors that we hold abroad. We also intend to significantly increase the number of tourism promotion events and other prosperity-related initiatives that we undertake.

Honourable Members

Economic diplomacy lies at the heart of what we do in Europe and the Americas, which remain our primary investment partners and the principal buyers of our value-added exports.

During 2014, we will strengthen relations with Europe, including working towards restoring bilateral trade levels to the pre-economic crisis period. Although still facing challenges, Europe is showing clear signs of economic recovery. Amongst other things, we plan to hold 97 trade and investment seminars and 82 tourism events in 2014/15 to achieve this.

We celebrate the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) which was initialled last week and look forward to much greater access to the European market at a practical level. We hope to finalise all issues relating to our relations with the European Union (EU), including resolution of the issues around the Citrus Black Spot, Purees, and other such matters. We also want to pursue and finalise a binding agreement with all EU members for a favourable 'visa free' regime for all our citizens to enable a balanced and free movement, a privilege that currently only favours EU citizens visiting South Africa.

Europe is a leading centre of excellence in Technology and Research. We intend to pursue exchanges, sharing and transfer of both technology and research to enhance our human resources and skills development in our quest for the industrialisation of our country and creating a knowledge based economy. We shall tap into both Western Europe and, more particularly, the East of Europe which up to now has been unexplored.

People to people contacts enhance and create long lasting impressions and relations. We will intensify our work around culture, tourism and student exchanges, so as to solidify the excellent relations that already exist. Tourist arrivals from Europe grew 7% to 1 494 978 in 2013 and our target for the next five years is to expand this three-fold, especially from new markets like Central and Eastern Europe.

The United Kingdom, Russia and France are three of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) who exert influence on how the United Nations Organisation (UNO) and its agencies function and are reformed. We want to intensify our engagement with these countries in order to accelerate the reform of the UNO in general and the United Nations Security Council in particular. It is unacceptable that we still have an undemocratic, unrepresentative body managing the affairs of the globe especially in the area of Peace and Security. The situation in Gaza where innocent civilians have been massacred is indicative of this.

Honourable Speaker

There is further potential for substantial growth in trade and investment with the Americas and the Caribbean. Our commercial diplomacy with this important region will be reinforced in the year ahead by high-level meetings with key strategic partners, including Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Argentina and the USA. As the Minister has indicated, in the case of the USA, a key project is ensuring that AGOA is extended beyond 2015.

In the next five years it is proposed to further extend South Africa's engagements and footprint in the region.

The Americas are showing increasing interest in Africa and are important partners for the realisation of the AU's Vision 2063. The development of ties with the African Diaspora is key in this regard, especially the further strengthening of AU-CARICOM relations.

Latin America and Africa share similar development trajectories, providing economic and political opportunities to pursue complementarities within the context of South-South cooperation, multilateralism, and closer bilateral strategic relations. South Africa's geo-strategic location between Latin America and Asia provides the opportunity to position itself as a trade and transport hub between these two regions.

The special relationship between South Africa and Cuba continues to provide the benchmark for mutually beneficial cooperation in areas such as health and education. The number of medical students studying in Cuba, currently 1 800 will increase.

Honourable Speaker

The President has pointed out that there is a strong need to improve the performance of the state if we are to achieve the key objectives of the NDP. In her speech today, the Minister emphasised that 'it cannot be business as usual if our foreign policy is to undergo its own second transition.' Over the next five years, we will implement far reaching interventions to ensure that our department becomes more effective and efficient.

During the 2013/14 financial year, DIRCO worked closely with the DPSA to conduct an Organisational Functionality Assessment (OFA). The aim of the assessment was to examine the appropriate fit between our strategy and structure so as to make the department more streamlined, cost-effective and responsive to our changing needs. After a thorough process of review, a proposed new organisational structure is in the advanced stages of being finalised for submission to the Minister for Public Service and Administration.

The establishment of a Planning, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Office of the Director-General (DGO) is beginning to bear positive results, with significant reduction in negative audit findings on pre-determined objectives. Significant strides have been made in the roll-out of a comprehensive planning and monitoring and evaluation system, also covering our 126 Missions abroad. During this year, the department will be facilitating interventions, both task and people oriented, to further strengthen the culture of performance and service delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen

In order for South Africa to achieve a second transition in its foreign policy, it is vital that we have a coordinated and coherent approach amongst the growing number of stakeholders across all spheres of government, public enterprises, the private sector, civil society and other non-state actors that conduct international relations. The department will continue to lead in this area, including international visits by all spheres of government. It is only by working closely together that we will be able to deliver tangible outcomes that will make a real difference in the lives of our people.

Honourable Members, as the Minister and Deputy Minister have outlined, we have managed to excel in delivering on our foreign policy imperatives, despite having very limited resources at our disposal. Against the odds, we have succeeded to do more with less. But, as I am sure you will appreciate, this approach remains unsustainable going forward, especially given the scale of the department's foreign currency commitments and recent developments in the rand exchange rate.

Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to Minister Nkoana-Mashabane for her valued leadership and encouragement, Deputy Minister Mfeketo for her leadership and collegial support, as well as all my colleagues in Cabinet and in Parliament, in particular the Portfolio Committee. I am proud to be part of our South African diplomatic service and I would like to sincerely thank all my

colleagues in the department for their warm welcome, hard work and selfless dedication to South Africa's cause. During his inauguration address in May, as he accepted the mandate given to the ANC by the electorate, President Zuma said:

"We do not take this confidence bestowed upon us lightly. We will do all in our power to build a South Africa in which citizens have a sense of belonging and hope for a brighter future."

As custodians of our international relations, working on the frontlines of South Africa's engagement with the global political economy, we have our own important part to play in the fulfilment of this hope for a brighter future, and in moving South Africa forward to prosperity and success.

I thank you.

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