

IT'S YOUR VOICE

Internal Newsletter of the Department of International
Relations and Cooperation

ubuntu diplomat



Issue 3, 30 April 2020

FREEDOM DAY

STAY 
HOME 

SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

27 April 2020



CREDITS

EDITOR'S

LETTER

Managing Editor	Mathapelo Monaisa
Guest Editor	Magdelaine Setumo
Copy Editor	Delien Burger
Graphic Designer	Reratilwe Aphane
Photographers	Jacoline Schoonees Yolande Snyman Katholo Maifadi Yandisa Monakali
Content coordination	Mmakgotso Chuene Mathapelo Monaisa
Publisher	The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO)

For the first time in the history of South Africa's democracy, the country is embroiled in a war with an enemy that requires the whole world to have all hands on deck. As we commemorate 26 years of freedom in South Africa during the month of April amid the COVID-19 pandemic, it is perhaps a time for us to celebrate the freedom that we have as a people. Before Coronavirus hit our shores, most South Africans might have taken for granted the fact that they are able to move from one destination to another without requiring written permission. South Africans might have enjoyed the freedom to schedule their weekend activities at multiple locations, with friends and the only consideration regarding the number of people being cost. South Africans might have planned vacations and mass events without a moment's thought about restrictions on cross-country travel.

In March 2020, Minister Naledi Pandor said, "As DIRCO we have to focus on many fronts. The most important one is ensuring that we play our part in curtailing the spread of the virus in our population, so as to protect the most vulnerable amongst us." DIRCO's role during this period, has escalated, particularly our missions abroad and Consular Services section. South African

citizens who had been abroad when President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the nationwide lockdown which included restrictions to travel, found themselves stranded in those countries as most of the world also instituted travel bans in an attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19. As a result, the department has been inundated with requests for assistance with repatriation. Officials at missions and those deployed at our Operations and Command Centres have worked tirelessly to respond to the numerous requests, which are coming through various communication platforms. Minister Naledi Pandor, anchored by the Director General and all heads of branch, has ensured that citizens both at home and abroad are informed on the complexity of the repatriation process through updates in the media, including social media.

Authorities the world over are alive to the fact that life as we knew has been brought to a conclusion by the onset of COVID-19. The global leadership is faced with the mammoth task of containing the virus while simultaneously attempting to plan for the future. The arrival of the Coronavirus has presented a variety of challenges, however, during this difficult time, a host of opportunities for South Africa could possibly come to the fore whether scientific or politically, economically amongst others. It is an occasion for leaders both in government and the private sector to reimagine industry.



This Freedom Month, as the world transcends into the new normal, it is time for us to be proudly South African and celebrate our hard-earned freedom. A time for us to remember and to enjoy and cherish when the moment comes for us to once again exercise our freedom. We can all play our part in this fight by complying with the nationwide lockdown regulations. In time, we will once again be able to shake each other's hands as we walk into a meeting room.

MM

CONTENTS



- 06 Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, on the Repatriation of South Africans Stranded Abroad
- 12 A plea from a frightened diplomat in Spain
- 14 Freedom Month: Valuing our Freedom in difficult times
- 18 Life amidst the Coronavirus in Brazil
- 24 How COVID-19 sealed my commitment to technology

26

Towards the 5th Anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Accelerating Implementation of Resolutions 2250 and 2419

30

Voices from DIRCO: The COVID-19 Command Centre

32

Meeting of the Bureau of the AU Executive Council discusses Africa's COVID-19 Strategy

36

The future of international cooperation in times of existentialist crises

40

Globe at a glimpse

42

A celebration of South Africa



MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, DR NALEDI PANDOR, ON THE REPATRIATION OF SOUTH AFRICANS STRANDED ABROAD – 16 APRIL 2020

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to many countries closing their borders and instituting lockdowns, has left many citizens stranded across the globe.

Understandably, our efforts to bring back South Africans stranded abroad have generated substantial public interest.

Repatriation process of South Africans stranded abroad

With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the declaration by President Cyril Ramaphosa of a State of Disaster, a total of 3 639 South Africans have indicated that they are stranded abroad and require assistance to return to South Africa.

To ensure the return of South Africans stranded abroad, we have entered into discussions with South African Airways (SAA) to use the return legs to bring back stranded South Africans across the globe.

To date, we are pleased that over 600 South Africans have returned home. In line with the regulations, they are under quarantine in various sites.

Repatriation on SAA flights chartered by Germany, Brazil and Canada:

- (a) On 8 April, 66 South Africans were repatriated from Brazil on a SAA flight
- (b) On the same day, SAA flew home 54 of our compatriots from Germany.

39 were from Germany, 14 from Portugal, 10 from Ireland, three from Nepal and one from Italy.

- (c) On 12 April, a SAA flight from Brussels to Johannesburg, with a stop-over in Lagos, repatriated 119 South Africans.
- (d) On the same day, another SAA flight from London to Cape Town repatriated 201 South Africans.
- (e) On 13 April, a SAA flight from Ghana to Johannesburg repatriated 62 of our nationals.

Repatriation on private chartered flights by individuals and companies

- (f) On 10 April, four South Africans arrived from Afghanistan.
- (g) On the same day, 49 more South Africans landed in Cape Town from Namibia.
- (h) On 11 April, 41 South Africans were repatriated from the Maldives.

We are aware of the 34 South Africans stranded in Lima. Through our Ambassador in Peru, we are in regular contact with the group and all efforts are being made to try to get them back home.

- From Asia:
 - (a) A further 307 citizens are stranded in Thailand as well as about 140 in Bali, Indonesia. Through our missions in these countries, we are trying to find solutions to bring them home.
 - (b) The private charter collecting stranded South Africans from Pakistan will depart South Africa as soon as the Pakistani Government grants approval for the flight to land and board the passengers.

The High Commission in Islamabad is in continuous contact with the Foreign Ministry to facilitate the approval processes.

We have also had to conduct emergency medical evacuations from Zimbabwe and Namibia. We assisted a family with the repatriation of the mortal remains of their loved one in Turkey.

REPATRIATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS

"We are working very closely with the Department of Health to advise us on all the correct procedures to follow." – Minister Naledi Pandor

- All South African citizens being repatriated must know that they have to be in quarantine upon arrival in South Africa, for a minimum of 14 days
- Quarantine for travellers is mandatory and there will be no deviation

Command Centre:
 • +27 12 351 1754
 • +27 12 351 1756
 • Cicc1@dirco.gov.za
 • Cicc2@dirco.gov.za

international relations & cooperation
 Department International Relations and Cooperation
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

STAY HOME
 SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

StayAtHomeSA
 08000029999

A total of 200 South Africans have crossed by land into South Africa and have been quarantined. A further 400 nationals are due to cross into South Africa in the coming days, as soon as their citizenship has been verified and other due processes are completed.

I wish to, once more, assure all South Africans that every effort is being made to repatriate as many South Africans, utilising the flights repatriating foreign nationals and other means that might be available as we discuss with other nations.

Once more, I make a special appeal to South Africans who are not necessarily distressed but would want to come back home to remain where they are, as these lockdowns

are meant to minimise the movement of the people to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lastly, it is essential to mention that the Government did not budget for this mission. Therefore, our repatriation efforts are mainly focussing on those who already have return tickets back to South Africa, the students who have been asked to vacate their residences, the elderly and the sick.

Allow me to also thank Sasol, which has availed over a million litres of jet fuel, enough to power an A340-600 aircraft for five long-haul trips. This will go a long way in assisting us to bring our citizens home and for the transportation of urgent medical supplies.

AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE FIGHT AGAINST THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS, NETWORK PROVIDERS ARE SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT BY SENDING OUT REGULAR SMSs ACROSS THEIR NETWORKS.

STAY


HOME

SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

WHATSAPP SUPPORT
0600 123 456
EMERGENCY NUMBER
0800 020 000



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



A plea from a frightened diplomat in Spain

- Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso



Dear colleagues,

I write this at 02:30 on 1 April, 2020 in Madrid, Spain where I am deployed as an Ambassador for our great country. I want to add my voice to that of our President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, and government authorities, at home and abroad, who have told us that the Coronavirus is real, is a killer of the worst kind as it is invisible. South Africa overcame apartheid. We are a disciplined people and have always led by example. For years, many across the world listened to and followed South Africa. We have to lead now.

I have been on lockdown for the past 31 days, from 14 March when the first State of Alarm was declared for 15 days, to end on 29 March. This period was extended to end on 11 April and then further extended to conclude on the April. These extensions were necessitated by the unfortunate and frightening situation unfolding on the ground. At the time of the first declaration of the State of Alarm, there were 5 753 reported cases of infection and 136 deaths.

By 14 April, there were 174 060 reported cases of infection and 18 255 deaths with 7 371 in intensive care. To repeat colleagues, one hundred and seventy four thousand infected, over eighteen thousand dead and over seven thousand in ICU - let that sink in. These are not just statistics but human beings. It is scary. One of the deceased was a security guard in our building. Another, a Consular Clerk, a member of Embassy staff, passed away just 10 days after the lockdown began. She was never diagnosed before death but her post mortem revealed her cause of death. She never even reached hospital because she never showed any serious signs till the night before her death. By the time the ambulance arrived, she had already passed on.

Her daughter who stays in another city could not come to bury her because of the lockdown. Her husband could not attend her cremation because he was also quarantined. We could not attend as no one was allowed. A very sad and painful way of parting with your loved ones by not bidding them farewell.

The city of Madrid had to convert its huge exposition centre IFEMA, that successfully hosted 25 000 participants at COP 25 in November 2019 into a field hospital. Madrid also had to convert its beautiful ice rink into a morgue. Even these are not enough for the demand for hospitals and mortuaries.

I went out only for a walk around my block on 2 April and I was stopped by the police and told to go back home. Thankfully, I was not arrested. I have never been out of the yard since then. It is very difficult to be locked down but it is absolutely necessary.

It is reported that according to its population of 46.9 million, Spain has the second-highest death rate after the United States at an average of 600 per day and an average of 390 per million. It is also reported that had Spain not enforced the lockdown at the time it did, the average deaths per day would be far higher. In the first days, the average was around 800 deaths per day, and thanks to the national lockdown, the numbers have gone down.

Every night in Spain, we stand on our porches, verandahs and/or balconies and clap our hands to show gratitude towards as well as in solidarity with the health workers who risk their lives for our safety. People play the National Anthem, a sign of unity against and commitment to fight this virus. That is the best we can do besides following the rules. People here are more disciplined. We can learn from them.

The World Health Organisation provides us with all the worldwide statistics, not to scare us but to make us understand the horror of this virus, to learn from others and to follow the safety rules - the most important of which is to stay at home.

This virus is invisible, it is silent, and it goes around with stealth. This is not just a crisis but a war against a faceless enemy.

No one knows his or her status until tested. One person could be going around, defying and ridiculing the lockdown and infecting many others who in turn infect yet many more innocent citizens. I am very afraid not just for myself, family and friends but for our country.

Spain is more advanced than South Africa with regard to social infrastructure and facilities, but they have found it very difficult to cope. Imagine if this hits our townships, our Mikhukhus, our villages and all our places that do not have the infrastructure. I know, as others have said, that for those living in these areas it is difficult to stay at home for many reasons, including just sheer survival. However, one may find food today for family but infect not only the family but the innocent neighbours tomorrow. Our government is doing everything possible to meet the basic needs of all those who are in need. Some of the people who are defying are not doing so for survival but for non-basic needs like looking for alcohol and the like. I am not anti-alcohol but I am pro-life.

Fortunately, the Spanish Government reports that the curve is flattening but the death rate is still around 500 per day. How many people do we want to die before we comply? As leaders, we are in these communities, we are among the people and perhaps we are even the people who do not have enough discipline to comply. I implore you to stay at home, follow the safety rules and save our country. For the sake of our future, please comply with the testing. Together, with discipline we can defeat this enemy. I repeat, to defeat this enemy our people must stay at home!

FREEDOM DAY



SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

SOLIDARITY AND TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES

27 APRIL 2020

#FreedomDay | #UnitedInOurFreedom |
| www.gov.za |

Freedom Month: Valuing our Freedom in difficult times

- Bafedile Ramatlhape

The whole world has been battling the common and invisible enemy – COVID-19 – since the beginning of 2020. Four months into the year and much has been done by government authorities across the world to reserve human life while each simultaneously attempts to identify the best way to manage its economy.

In South Africa, the Coronavirus lockdown is happening as the country commemorates the 26th anniversary of Freedom Month.

Precautionary measures, which include the call for citizens to stay home, have been implemented in an effort to slow the spread of the pandemic. This means that the general freedom that we enjoy is limited in some respects. There is less freedom of movement with only individuals and institutions offering essential services being permitted to operate. It is not business as usual, thus reminding us to value our freedom in difficult times.

Freedom Month celebrations at our missions abroad were certainly different in 2020 as officials dedicated the bulk of their time to further assisting South African citizens stranded abroad with the repatriation process.

To mark the day, Ms Bafedile Ramatlhape who is based at the South African Embassy in Libreville, Gabon, recorded a message, sharing her thoughts on “valuing our freedom in difficult times”.



“As South Africans, we are facing a paradox of celebrating freedom in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic.”
- Bafedile Ramatlhape,
Libreville

The message

“27th April 2020 is the anniversary of the 26th celebration of South Africa's freedom of oppression, freedom from apartheid, freedom from discrimination based on skin colour, race and language. It also marks the beginning of a new political dispensation, in which the population exercised their right to vote for the first time after years of Apartheid.

As South Africans, we are facing a paradox of celebrating freedom in the middle of a Coronavirus pandemic. Most of our missions are closed as governments try to contain the spread of the virus. South Africa has an important task, which is to remind the world of how our freedom was won through negotiations. This we achieved without bloodshed or loss of life. We shall miss the opportunity to celebrate because most governments, including South Africa, have restricted movement of people and banned gatherings. This mission in Libreville is supporting the call of the Gabonese government and adheres to restrictions that have been imposed in order to limit the spread of the Coronavirus.”



FREEDOM DAY

STAY HOME



SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

SOLIDARITY AND TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES

27 April 2020

#FreedomDay |
#UnitedInOurFreedom |
| www.gov.za |



international relations
& cooperation

Department:
International Relations and Cooperation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

WHATSAPP SUPPORT EMERGENCY NUMBER
0600 123 456 0800 029 999
sacoronavirus.co.za



Olá from Brasilia, the capital city of the Federative Republic of Brazil, where we are today (30 April 2020), in the 42nd day of a city-wide lockdown. Brazil currently has over 80 000 infections, over 5 550 deaths and some 34 100 recoveries. This is the second-highest rate of infections in the Americas and Caribbean region after the United States, and the highest in the Southern Hemisphere. Globally, Brazil has the 11th most infections and the ninth most deaths.

These are substantial figures, especially compared to the statistics in South Africa. Even more worrying is that most international and domestic experts agree that the real prevalence of cases in Brazil is considerably higher (10-12 times higher by most estimates), given the low levels of testing and high level of community transmissions. Some Brazilian states have warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse, and there are concerns on the spread of the disease in the informal housing areas and among the indigenous people of Brazil. The country has unfortunately emerged as a major hot spot in the spread of the pandemic, and infection rates and deaths continue to increase rapidly.

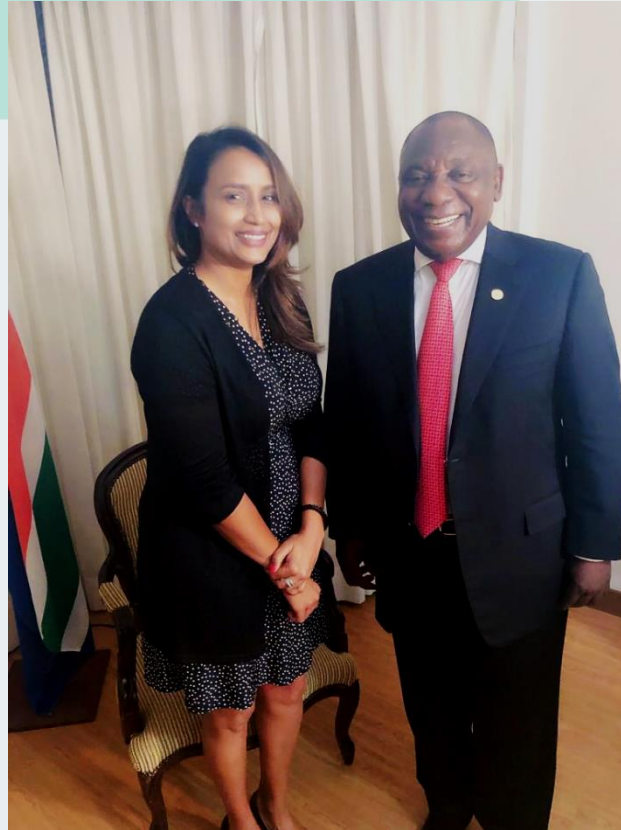
As a result of differing views on the impact of the severity of the virus at a national level, and in particular the value of social isolation, Brazil has not imposed a national lockdown. Fortunately, the vast majority of Brazil's 26 governors mobilised to enforce citywide lockdowns and other measures in their respective states.

São Paulo State remains Brazil's national epicentre in terms of both infections and deaths. The Governor has imposed a lockdown since with only essential services being allowed to continue operating. In Brasilia, on the other hand, while all schools, commercial ventures and social activities (save for grocery stores, bakeries, pet stores and medical facilities) have been suspended since 20 March 2020, no specific measures were imposed on corporates and diplomatic missions.

In an effort to prevent, contain and manage the potential spread of the Coronavirus, the

Life amidst the Coronavirus in Brazil

- Denisha Reddy



Ms Denisha Reddy with President Cyril Ramaphosa

Head of Mission in Brasilia, Ambassador Ntsiki Mashimbye, has since 18 March 2020, introduced reduced official working hours, implemented a roster for local staff and permitted time-off for vulnerable and high-risk persons. All personnel have also been provided with face masks, gloves and sanitising products for the decontamination of offices and public areas.

The work that we do at the Mission continues through meetings over digital platforms. The Mission has embraced this so-called "new normal" that is likely to be with us for some time, and which can, in many instances, allow for better and more efficient use of our resources. This does, however, require the appropriate hardware (officials without personal computers and tablets have limited functionality outside of the Mission) and also access to a stable and WiFi or Ethernet connection, with a decent speed.



The Embassy staff with President Cyril Ramaphosa after the BRICS Summit in Brasilia, November 2019



The streets of Brasilia are very quiet during this period

Consular and immigration assistance is also an important part of the work that all diplomatic missions undertake and this service continues to be provided to all South African citizens in Brazil, in person by appointment and through the Embassy's social media platforms.

The implementation of the lockdown in South Africa naturally gave rise to an increase in requests for assistance from South Africans in Brazil and the South American region. In addition to those South Africans who were in the region on holiday, many of our nationals work in the region in various industries, including mining, offshore energy and tourism (hotels and cruise liners).



The entrance to the premises of the South African Embassy in Brasilia, Brazil

South Africa's first repatriation flight, SAA 2225, left the city of São Paulo for Johannesburg on 7 April 2020. This was a challenging, but equally rewarding experience for officials at both missions in Brazil. These were truly uncharted waters for all stakeholders, with the added requirements of pre-flight screening and vetting, the need for on-flight personal protective equipment for crew and passengers, arrangements for procedures on arrival to limit contact and exposure and of course the compulsory quarantine period. Working under lockdown conditions further complicated this process. However, the messages of appreciation and the sincere gratitude expressed by many of the passengers on arrival in South African, and when reuniting with loved ones after the quarantine period, made the long hours worthwhile.

Like in most parts of the world, Brazil's governors are also grappling with when and how to begin to reopen its economy, with some already easing restrictions in their States. The Governor of Brasilia announced yesterday that the planned reopening of the city had been

moved back a week to 11 May 2020, this no doubt influenced by pressure from interested parties to maintain or even strengthen the lockdown.

Under the current lockdown, one cannot help but experience "cabin-fever", being limited to travelling between the Chancery, the grocery store and home. A key part of Mission life involves travelling across your host country, not only to engage stakeholders, but also to learn and appreciate that country's culture, history and landscape.

Brasilia is a relatively safe city and life here is centred around outdoor activities, particularly around the lake and city's many parks and communal spaces. The lockdown is unnatural and unwelcome, but the majority of the city's inhabitants have seemingly appreciated the gravity of the situation and for the most part, have complied with local government regulations.

The local media has taken a keen interest in the approach of President Cyril Ramaphosa in addressing the impact of



A group of South African citizens in a queue at the airport ahead of repatriation

the Coronavirus pandemic, and in particular to how South Africans have responded thereto. The consensus here, and in many countries around the world, that what sets President Ramaphosa and his administration apart in many ways was quick action, decisive leadership, a science-based response, and transparency in addressing the Coronavirus pandemic. Opting to pursue a path that first and foremost saves lives, while also protecting livelihoods, was indeed the "game-changer".

Having also monitored how other countries have approached the pandemic, and in particular how the divisive the issue is in Brazil, it is clear that South Africans should rightfully be appreciative for the consultative, coordinated and inclusive approach that our President has successfully implemented. In the many interviews that the Ambassador has participated in, he has conveyed that the response of South Africans to this crisis has really been remarkable, that South Africans have demonstrated solidarity in overcoming the pandemic, and most importantly, that South Africans are determined to ensure that the post-Coronavirus South Africa emerges stronger, more united, and more compassionate.



Flight SAA 2225 ahead of the first repatriation of South African citizens stranded in Brazil

EMPLOYEE HEALTH & WELLNESS

In need of psychosocial support/counselling? You may contact the EHW section on:

Ms Given Mashigo:	073 612 9623
Ms Rokaya Adonis:	060 560 3380
Ms Ncedisa Mayeko:	066 473 8810
Ms Edwina Fradie:	083 468 5630
Ms Mpheni Mulaudzi:	071 680 6697



international relations
& cooperation

Department:
International Relations and Cooperation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



@DIRCO_ZA



DIRCOza



DIRCO Flickr



DIRCOZA



thedircoza



How COVID-19 sealed my commitment to technology

– Tyrone Gunnie



Mr Tyrone Gunnie flirting with technology

I have only flirted with technology, never really wanting to commit. The exceptions are my mobile phone and WhatsApp. You know, just so that I could respond to my teenage daughter's emergency need for data.

This changed abruptly on 23 March 2020. United Kingdom (UK) Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced measures to combat the Coronavirus in an attempt to flatten the curve. This approach, the nation was told, was to protect the National Health System and save lives, and was based on "science". I suddenly had to make use of all the technological platforms to get the job done.

The primary measure announced was that everyone was instructed to stay and work from home, if possible. Restrictions were placed on travel. Public transport schedules were adjusted with the frequency being severely limited. Only essential workers were to travel.

As South Africa went into lockdown, commercial flights from Heathrow into South

Africa were summarily cancelled, leaving travellers stranded at the airport. This challenge was exacerbated by the matter of a large number of young South Africans, whose flight was cancelled while they were mid-air on a flight from Miami to Heathrow when the lockdown in South Africa went into effect.

There were also South Africans on holiday and those visiting family, students, those on business trips as well as those with work visas. As the situation in the UK worsened with the number of deaths rising exponentially on a daily basis, the number of enquiries sent to the Mission increased rapidly.

Technology became a crucial factor, ensuring that I could communicate with the High Commissioner, my colleagues, and with the South African public – i.e. those stranded and as well as family and friends of those who were stranded. Social Media platforms such as Facebook and the High Commission's website became critical tools for communication, messaging and awareness.

The frequent engagement with the Branch: Public Diplomacy (on occasion it went well into the early hours of the morning) ensured that messaging left no room for interpretation of the facts. However, there were instances when even the facts were insufficient to appease those desperate to go home.

The frustration and anxiety of the stranded manifested in robust and colourful commentary, and it was sometimes difficult to internalise why it was necessary to work this diligently for people who didn't seem to appreciate the efforts which were being undertaken on their behalf.

Nonetheless, there was a commitment to attempt to respond to 100 per cent of the emailed and telephonic enquiries and in so doing, alter the perception that, as government officials, we didn't care.

Working from home was not easy. At the office, there is predictability – the photocopier never changes location. At home, finding the space with the best WiFi signal was equivalent to completing an indoor triathlon, only to lose it to an 11-year-old listening to the theme song from "Black Panther" repeatedly.

At midnight on 11 April 2020, I went to Heathrow International Airport with my colleagues. Together with the High Commissioner, we facilitated the repatriation of 204 South Africans. Suddenly, everything in between did not matter, because we were primarily responsible for reuniting people with their families. Adding a face to a name was gratifying. In sum, it was a rewarding experience, especially when we came face to face with those who were vulnerable. Their relief was completely visible.

A small number of South Africans stranded in the UK were able to take advantage of an SAA flight out of Frankfurt. For my part, I would like to thank our colleagues at the Mission in Berlin who made every effort to assist us with facilitating this repatriation process. It is worth

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



Trafalgar Square before the Coronavirus



Trafalgar Square during the COVID-19 lockdown

mentioning that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK also lent excellent support with the exemption of transit visas.

The UK lockdown has been extended until 7 May 2020. COVID-19 related deaths now exceed 18 000. There is debate that the actual number of deaths is actually twice as much as the figure reported. On a daily basis, frontline health workers continue to advocate for the Government to do more to protect them, including testing, so that they can protect the nation. There is a growing crisis in care homes for the aged.

And we continue to work from home, no less diligently, in service to our people.

IT'S
YOUR VOICE

Statement by Ambassador Jerry Matjila, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, during the UNSC VTC Open Meeting entitled: "Towards the 5th Anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Accelerating Implementation of Resolution 2250 and 2419", 27 April 2020



"Mr President,

"At the outset, I would like to thank the United Nations Secretary-General, H.E. Antonio Guterres, and our excellent trio of youth activists and briefers for their comprehensive and enlightening briefing this morning. It is always encouraging to hear from the youth and their role in, and contribution to, peace processes in various conflict zones around the world.

"South Africa welcomes the initiative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, who during their tenure in the Security Council in 2015 ushered in the landmark Security Council Resolution 2250, the important role played by Peru in taking forward the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, especially with the adoption of Resolution 2419, and the current debate being initiated by the Dominican Republic in this uncertain environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the youth globally.

"Under its own Presidency, South Africa sought to prioritise the role of youth and their contribution on the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in the efforts to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020. This resulted in the adoption of a Council PRST containing six additional measures that can be taken to accelerate implementation in mobilising the youth towards Silencing the Guns in Africa that resonates well today, with the call this year by the Secretary-General on the Global Ceasefire.

"Mr President,

The role of youth in relation to peace and security is of particular importance to the African Continent where some estimates indicate that 60% of the population are under the age of 25.

"South Africa supports efforts to fully harness and support the innovation of young people's contribution to peace, through investment in young people's capacities; redressing the structural barriers that limit youth participation in peace and security; and emphasising partnerships and collaborative action, where young people are viewed as equal and essential partners for peace.

"These aspects have been highlighted in the 2018 Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. They are also reflected in the challenges highlighted in the Secretary-General's report with the additional challenge of the violation of the human rights of youth.

"In terms of the areas of the five key pillars of actions, we wish to reflect the following:

"First, on participation, we acknowledge the role played by the youth as agents of change as they were instrumental in advancing the goals of the broader struggle for the liberation and democracy in our country. Young people who were often at the frontlines of the battle for freedom are also now at the forefront of combating poverty, inequality and unemployment in South Africa. Therefore, the South African Government has made the empowerment of youth central to its development agenda and has set up programmes dedicated to their education, job creation and development.

"Today, as we celebrate the 26th Anniversary of our Freedom in South Africa – thanks to the heroic role played by our youth throughout the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles.

"Second, on protection and prevention, South Africa supports ensuring a safe and enabling environment for youth in conflict situations, particularly young refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. This will be vital in creating a post-conflict environment for youths' positive participation in the economy and society in general, and a preventative measure to address inequality, discrimination, exclusion and human rights violations as a driver of conflict, as identified by the Secretary-General. In this regard, investment in the meaningful participation of the youth in politics, as well as the socio-economic environment, is therefore vital. As the Security Council, we should also not forget the plight of millions of young migrants in various corners of the world.

"Third, in terms of partnerships, disengagement and reintegration, it is important to build on the active engagement of the youth and youth organisations in multilateral processes, in order to ensure long-term partnerships as well as that the youths' voice is reflected in all engagements. Most importantly, we need to mainstream and institutionalise youth participation and partnerships in all peace and security processes.

"In this regard, we would like to highlight the Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security, developed by the African Union's Peace and Security Council as part of the continent's Peace and Security Architecture as well as the Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth towards Peace and Security in Africa. These serve as good frameworks that can be replicated elsewhere. It remains essential that the youth be prioritised with regard to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration as they tend to be particularly vulnerable with regard to reintegration in society if their formative years are spent as participants in armed conflict and extremist groups.

"Fourth, the Security Council reform, society must pay particular attention to the Security Council reforms, as new Security Council organs are established in post-conflict situations.

"Fifth, with regard to the empowerment of young women, South Africa continues to be concerned about the trend that youth programmes tend to prioritise the roles of young men over young women in society. This is further exacerbated by the disproportionate targeting of young women with sexual and gender-based violence. Therefore, the outcomes of this meeting should reinforce the work in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted during Namibia's Presidency in the Security Council in 2000, the 20th Anniversary of which we celebrate today, its subsequent resolutions, including Resolution 2493 on Women, Peace and Security adopted in October 2019, during South Africa's Presidency of the Security Council.

"I would like to conclude by emphasising that South Africa believes that we must harness the dynamism and positivity of the youth and build resilience in order to counter sentiments aimed at resorting to violence as a means of securing any misguided interests.

"I thank you."

FREEDOM DAY

STAY HOME



SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

SOLIDARITY AND TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES

27 April 2020

#FreedomDay |
#UnitedInOurFreedom |
| www.gov.za |



If you love her
stay alive for her

WHATSAPP SUPPORT 0600 123 456 EMERGENCY NUMBER 0800 029 999
sacoronavirus.co.za

STAY HOME



SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

Voices from DIRCO

The DIRCO Command Centre and the Repatriation of South African Citizens

In late 2019 a new strain of Coronavirus called COVID-19 was detected in Wuhan, China. By January 2020, the virus had spread exponentially across China and the World Health Organisation (WHO) soon alerted the world of the seriousness and enormity of COVID-19.

On 11 March 2020 WHO declared COVID-19 are pandemic. By this time, the infections had escalated so far, that government authorities the world over moved to institute travel restrictions as one of the precautionary measures in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.

As a result, many people found themselves stranded abroad, including a large number of South African citizens, some of whom were outside the country on business travel, and others were on holiday abroad when the lockdown started.

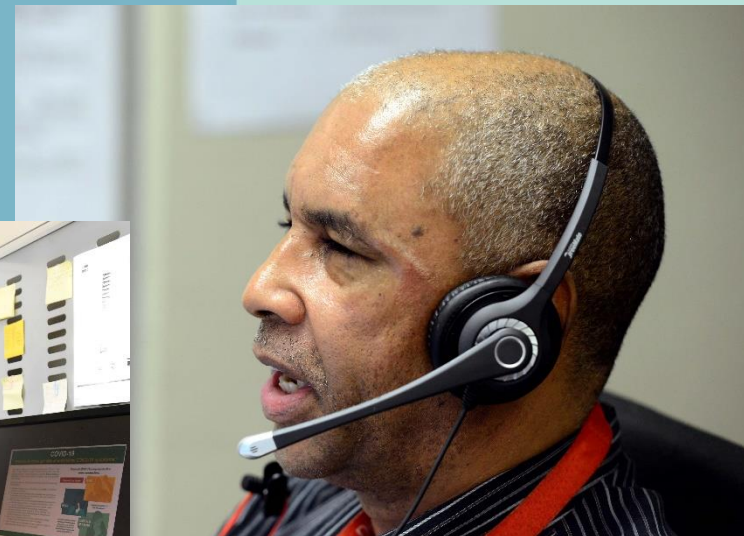
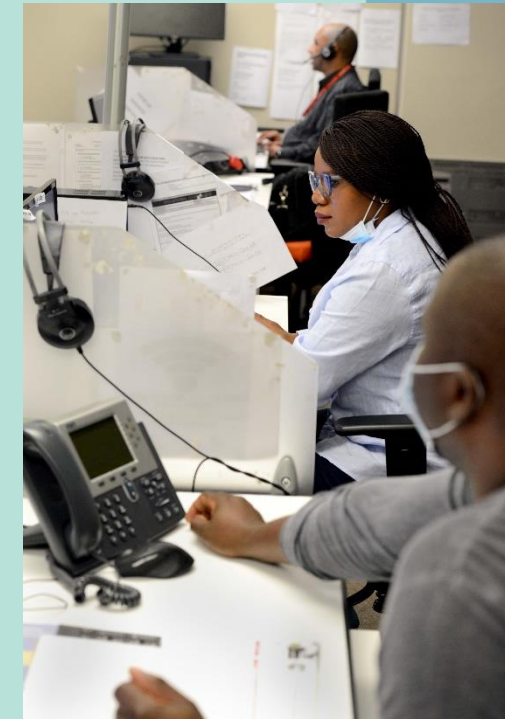
The work of our missions based in the various countries where South African citizens were in distress, became even more pressurised, seemingly overnight. Social media saw a prevalence of messages from people stuck all over the world pleading to repatriated.

In response, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) established a 24-hour Command Centre whose purpose is to support South African missions abroad, as well as be a conduit for families of citizens who are in distress abroad.

The officials at the Command Centre have been working tirelessly to assist our citizens, under a great amount of pressure, and they continue to do so.

The Command Centre team, which includes officials from the Operations Centre and Consular Services, has contributed significantly to the repatriation of South African citizens from all over the world. To date, more than 3 000 South Africans have been brought back home.

It is important to note the amount of positive messages shared on social media, thanking embassy officials and the team at DIRCO for the commendable support that they have given throughout the very complex and lengthy repatriation process.



Operations Centre and Consular Services officials working at the Command Centre

IT'S YOUR VOICE

MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE AU EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DISCUSSES AFRICA'S COVID-19 STRATEGY



On 9 April 2020, Minister Naledi Pandor participated in a Virtual Meeting of the Bureau of the African Union (AU) Executive Council to discuss the implementation of the Africa COVID-19 Strategy.

Also in attendance during the meeting conducted through a telephone conference, were fellow members of the Bureau, Mrs Marie Tumba Nzeza, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo; Mr Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt; Mrs Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya; and Mr Tiébilé Dramé, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

On this occasion, the ministers were joined by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Director of the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The meeting followed two successive meetings of the Bureau at Heads of State/Government level, which developed an overarching framework for Africa's response to COVID-19.

The ministers welcomed the report on the establishment of a Ministerial Task Force on Health, Finance and Transport, which is critical for the comprehensive implementation of the continental strategy to fight COVID-19.

Minister Pandor shared with the meeting that all the necessary legal requirements would be attended to and put in place for the AU COVID-19 Response Fund to be operational as soon as possible.

"South Africa will make its transfer of over a R180 million into the fund and the CDC during this month. Other members of the Bureau are finalising domestic requirements for releasing the funds, and have undertaken to make their contributions soon" said Minister Pandor.

The meeting called on all AU members to make a contribution to the fund, and also urged the African private sector, international financial institutions and regional and bilateral partners to contribute to the fund.

The Africa COVID-19 Fund is an African initiative that will mobilise financial resources for Africa's war against the Coronavirus, and ensure the equitable distribution of these funds to member states. "Our meeting underscored the importance of unity and coordination in order to effectively implement the continental anti-COVID-19 Strategy," Dr Pandor added.

Dr Pandor continued to thank the CDC for providing an invaluable platform for the exchange of real-time information and data about the spread of the virus.


The meeting further took note of the efforts of the AU's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of implementing the Africa anti-COVID19 Strategy, and encouraged the RECs to ensure synergy, complementarity and coherence in the fight against the Coronavirus.

The Bureau expressed its appreciation and unequivocal support for the statement of the AU Chairperson, and President of the Republic of South Africa, Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, affirming the AU's support for the World Health Organisation under the capable and inspiring leadership of Dr Tedros Adhonam Ghebreyesus.





Summary of alert levels

ALERT LEVEL 5	ALERT LEVEL 4	ALERT LEVEL 3	ALERT LEVEL 2	ALERT LEVEL 1
 OBJECTIVE				
<p>Drastic measures to contain the spread of the virus and save lives.</p>	<p>Extreme precautions to limit community transmission and outbreaks, while allowing some activity to resume.</p>	<p>Restrictions on many activities, including at workplaces and socially, to address a high risk of transmission.</p>	<p>Physical distancing and restrictions on leisure and social activities to prevent a resurgence of the virus.</p>	<p>Most normal activity can resume, with precautions and health guidelines followed at all times.</p> <p>Population prepared for an increase in alert levels if necessary.</p>



The future of international cooperation in times of existentialist crises

- Jaimal Anand

As the COVID-19 virus continues to spread globally, the news media and social media are flooded with the horrors the deadly pandemic has caused. We've seen mass graves in Europe, while China contained over 50 million people in a single province, India has put 1.3 billion people and South Africa 58 million under lockdown. With all the technology and predictive gadgets at our disposal, something as medieval as a virus, with symptoms resembling the common cold or seasonal influenza, has ravaged the world and forced humanity to its knees.

There was early praise for the exceptional Chinese system of governance at the outset of the lockdown. As a result, there were suggestions that only authoritarian states would survive the pandemic. Interestingly, what we have learned is that liberal, constitutional democracies like India and South Africa can effectively muster their populations to voluntarily surrender certain freedoms and liberties, without compromising their rights. The leadership of governments has been phenomenal in most cases; South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and his Cabinet prioritising human life over everything else was a bold and courageous move that may well prove successful.

World leaders and leading scientists are grappling with the realities that we confront. It is a dangerous time in the journey of COVID-19 where we may be tempted to question the severity of the virus or assume that the worst is over. The truth is that we still do not know the greatest threat that COVID-19 will present. It preys on the natural human instinct of social proximity, and this invariably turns strength into humankind's greatest weakness.



Diplomacy, front and centre

In the diplomatic arena, consular officers and experts in migration are auditing and exchanging notes on the impact of COVID-19 on their work. The nexus between public health and national (and international) security has never come so frighteningly close, at least in the last century. While all of this was going on, countries started to repatriate their citizens. These realities have since become the most glaring example of the centrality of a professional, crisis-ready consular corps for any foreign service in the 21st century. The consular officer is required to function in a global environment where people travel more frequently, in higher numbers, and with more risk across the globe.

In South Africa, the repatriation is being managed at the highest levels, where an inter-ministerial Command Council, chaired by the President, was convened to take charge of the decision-making process on the plight of South Africans abroad, among other things. This tells us that this area of diplomacy will be given more considerable attention and prominence in South Africa and many parts of the world.

Consular and political officers are increasingly expected to forge broader and more relevant networks to manage crises, but they are also expected to maximise opportunities. Traditional diplomacy is increasingly embracing non-traditional, non-state actors as part of its broader network of engagement. Large multinational cooperations, enterprises involved in niche areas, civil-society actors in different parts of the world, international fund managers, banks and mega foundations have significant amounts of global influence and reach. This may well be the ideal infrastructure that is incorporated into long-term consular operations.

However, the darker side cannot be ignored. Threats to the State are also incubated among other kinds of non-traditional actors. These are often sinister, opaque and include, but are not limited to, transnational crime, violent extremism and organisations representing radical anarchic ideologies.

These realities propel the consular official to the centre of multilateral and multinational operations ranging from refugees, stranded citizens, conflict areas and victims of transnational crime. It is at this level that the solidarity that we expect in international relations and interstate communication becomes part of our existence.

The Foreign Ministry becomes the space where cooperation and solidarity are needed to protect the State and advance its interests. This is the only, non-comparative way to organise the chaos of disruption in the global terrain.

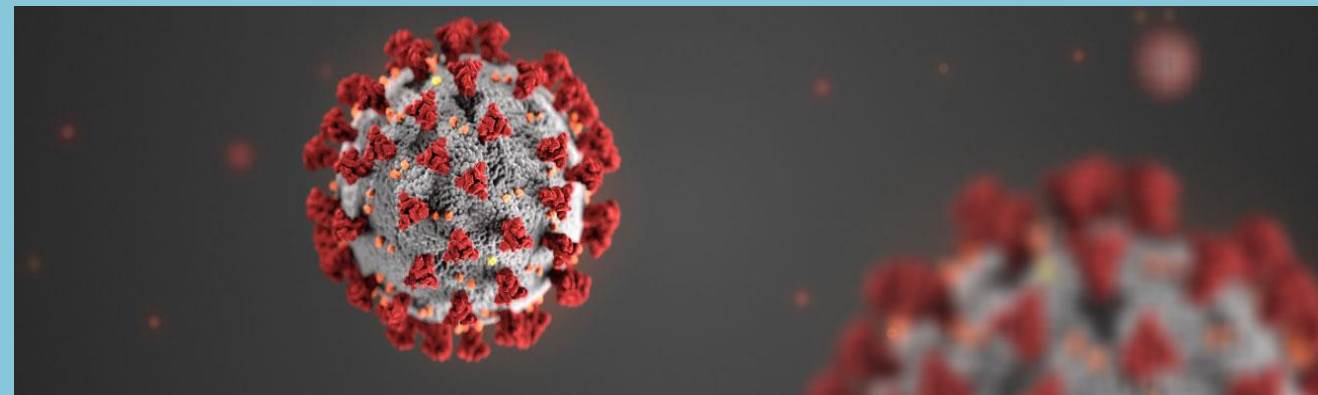
Human solidarity

History is crucial to navigate safely into the future. But the current situation is without precedent, and so we do not have the privilege of hindsight.

We have experienced mass pandemics through the centuries, but COVID-19 has emerged in a global scenario that is already challenged by new realities, fractured institutions, complex disruptions and unpredictability. The ongoing human solidarity initiatives that are being led by our governments, civil society and citizens in general, is critical to protect the most vulnerable in our communities from the virus, hunger, grinding poverty, and in the end contain, its potential to damage.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us that we are incredibly vulnerable as a species.

The relatively sudden disruption of travel, communication and individual lifestyles have brought to the fore the challenges that humanity has grappled with since the end of the Second World War. The need for reform in the global governance architecture has never been so clear, while the global balance of forces has become more dynamic and increasingly unstable and unpredictable. For the last decade, our multilateral and global governance institutions have been under considerable strain. The United States' decision to withdraw funding to the



World Health Organisation (WHO) has demonstrated the vulnerability of our international institutions.

South Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic — declaring a disaster, enforcing a strict lockdown, stopping all domestic and international travel, halting all non-essential commercial activity, and mass testing and screening — is in line with WHO guidelines.

The WHO has done well to coordinate and guide South Africa and other countries on the science-backed do's and don'ts to deal with the crisis. This capacity must be strengthened and protected for now and in the future.

On 16 April, members of the Alliance for Multilateralism, convened in September 2019, signed a statement that called for “enhanced international cooperation and worldwide solidarity” while stressing that COVID-19 was a wakeup call for multilateralism. The alliance highlighted five challenges that the pandemic poses for the international community: health, information (including misinformation and fake news), financial, economic, and prevention. The increasing shift in favour of ‘network diplomacy’ within the United Nations system may prove to be a necessary method to reignite cooperation, solidarity and multilateralism to ensure its relevance in the 21st century.

Cooperation is crucial

It is at times like these that our need for multilateral and international cooperation becomes critical to our survival. Some might argue that the advance of the COVID-19 virus might negatively impact globalisation. But recent acts demonstrate the inherent will among most states to cooperate and collaborate.

Solidarity and cooperation, when confronting an existentialist threat, are crucial to the survival of humankind. How foreign ministries organise their departments will be central to shaping the international agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic is teaching us that the narrow corridor between self-interest and altruism lies in our will to work together.

We can define that work either in terms of solidarity or cooperation, or our narrow self-interest. Either way, our very survival and existence may well depend on our approach to reform and protect the global architecture.



World Health Organization

**CLOTH MASKS
MUST BE WORN
IN PUBLIC AT
ALL TIMES**

**STAY
HOME**

SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

CORONAVIRUS IS REAL

WHATSAPP SUPPORT
0600 123 456
EMERGENCY NUMBER
0800 029 999
sacoronavirus.co.za



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



GLOBE AT A GLIMPSE



Operation Repatriation from Brazil to South Africa



South African citizens with Ambassador Nomaindia Mfeketo before departing the United States

Below: Arrival at the quarantine site



Above: The SAA crew on the flight from Brazil to South Africa



The pilots of the flight that was repatriating South African citizens from Germany

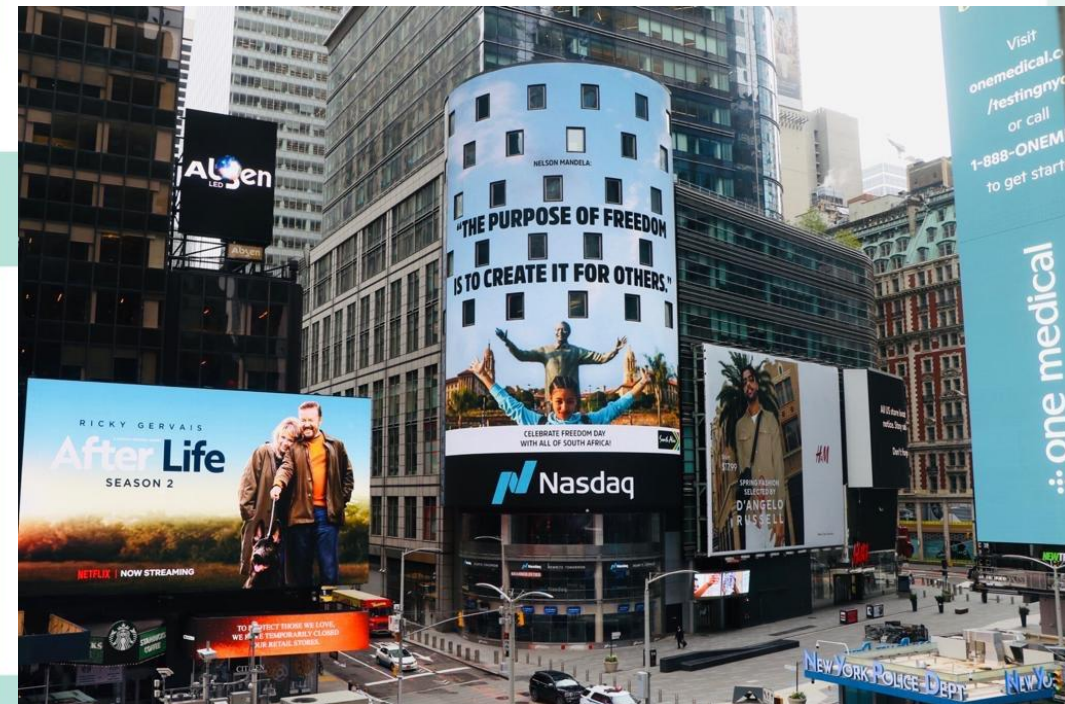




The South African flag on the Matterhorn. The Zermatt has been projecting the flags of the world on the Matterhorn, Alps. The aim of the light projection is to give people a sign of hope and solidarity in these difficult COVID-19 times



In a show of solidarity, the Government of Cuba has sent a multidisciplinary team of experts and health professionals to work alongside the South African health professionals in response to COVID-19



Above: New York celebrated Freedom Day 2020, by displaying this wrap in all its glory at Times Square, 27 April 2020



Below: In the spirit of hope, solidarity and friendship, the Turkish Government donated medical/personal protection supplies to South Africa to help fight the Coronavirus



Right: To observe South Africa's Freedom Day, the United Arab Emirates Government displayed a digital image of the South African flag on the Burj Khalifa Building, 27 April 2020

IT'S YOUR VOICE



Internal Newsletter of the Department of International
Relations and Cooperation

ubuntu diplomat

To contribute to It's Your Voice, please submit your
article/s to internalcomms@dirco.gov.za on or before
the 22nd day of the month.