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Internal Newsletter of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation

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 **2020**

SILENCING THE GUNS:

Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development and Intensifying the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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LETTER

"I am not African because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me"

– Kwame Nkrumah

The origins of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), can be dated back to the first Conference of Independent African States held on 15 April 1958, under the leadership of the late Mr Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of the newly independent Republic of Ghana. This congregation of leaders was the first Pan-African Conference held in Africa, bringing together some of the continent's leaders to give rise to a platform for collaboration and unity. It was at this conference where the observation of Africa Day was initiated with a view to reaffirm the commitment to African independence. As the number of independent African countries grew, so did the need for a formation that would focus on the aspirations of the African people, and to this end, on 25 May 1963, leaders of 32 African countries convened a conference that saw the formation of the OAU.

The 57th anniversary of Africa Day coincided with the worldwide war against

the COVID-19 pandemic. The onslaught of the Coronavirus has necessitated African leaders to collectively work towards identifying solutions to not only managing its spread, but further seeking measures for economic recovery post-COVID-19. This called for a different commemoration of the day this year. In his capacity as Chair of the AU for 2020, South Africa's President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, participated in a virtual celebration under the theme, "Silencing The Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development and Intensifying the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic", on 25 May 2020. President Ramaphosa was joined by the only surviving founding father of the OAU, Zambia's former President, Dr Kenneth Kaunda; the AU Commission Chair, Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat; Madame Eunice Ipinge, President of the Pan-African Women's Organisation; and the AU Youth Envoy, Ms Aya Chebbi.

Continuing in the vein of the new virtual reality, DIRCO celebrated Africa Month by hosting the first of many webinar series during which the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, led a discussion panel of experts on Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This event demonstrated that DIRCO is firmly placed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The Coronavirus has also stimulated the diplomatic sphere to ensure that in the absence of the customary conferences



and meetings in physical venues, there is continued cooperation during the era of COVID-19 and beyond. Ambassador Anil Sooklal looks at Africa and Asia solidarity in this regard. One aspect that is often taken for granted in the diplomatic world is psychosocial health, and during this difficult time, the benefits of having a unit like the Employee Health and Wellness Centre are far-reaching as accounted by diplomats in two different parts of the world – Ambassador Ntsiki Mashimbye in São Paulo, Brazil, and Mr Bobby Moroe, based in Abuja, Nigeria.

What has become apparent these past few months, is that only through cooperation and awareness can COVID-19 be conquered.

MEM

CONTENTS



05

Webinar on Africa's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

09

Africa Day Virtual Celebration:
Silencing The Guns: Creating Conducive
Conditions for Africa's Development and
Intensifying the Fight against the COVID-19
Pandemic

17

Shaping the Global Agenda
Through Partnerships: Africa and
Asia Solidarity in the era of
COVID-19

21

Minister Pandor Co-Chairs a Virtual
Meeting of Africa's Women Foreign
Ministers on Enhancing Women's
Leadership in COVID-19 Responses

25

Reflections in Isolation

29

A3+1 Statement on Somalia

35

COVID-19: Chronicles of a South
African Diplomat in Nigeria

37

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic
Triggered a Return of Human
Solidarity and Progressive
Internationalism?

WEBINAR ON AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Minister Naledi Pandor making remarks during the webinar

On 28 May 2020, DIRCO in collaboration with the SA Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), hosted a discussion panel of experts from across the African continent on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on Africa and the continent's response to the pandemic.

Joining the keynote speaker, Minister Naledi Pandor, on the panel, were the Deputy Director for the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr Ahmed Ogwel Ouma; Dr Philani Mthembu, Executive Director of the IGD; Mr Abdoulaye Janneh, former Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Prof. Eddy Maloka, Chief Executive Officer of the African Peer Review Mechanism; and Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive of SAIIA.

In her remarks during the webinar, Dr Pandor highlighted to African leaders that

in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic it was imperative to ensure and uphold the commitment to the aspirations of the African Union (AU) to create conducive conditions for Africa's development and silencing the guns.

Minister Pandor also highlighted the AU's development of a comprehensive COVID-19 strategy, which includes the establishment of an AU COVID-19 Response Bond and further working on strengthening the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Our engagement is a unique opportunity for us as the Department of International Relations and Cooperation to draw on the ingenuity and strength of the broader South African society and thinkers to enrich our thought processes as we keep evolving the strategy that is truly responsive to the crisis we face today", added Minister Pandor.

Dr Pandor's statement was further reinforced by Dr Ahmed Ouma who outlined the work that was being implemented across the continent around COVID-19, and confirmed the Africa Centres of Disease Control and Prevention's commitment to overcoming the pandemic. Dr Ouma said that the Africa Task Team on COVID-19 was meeting regularly to assess and advise member countries. He said that: "The aim is to test 10 million African people over the next few months, and one million community workers are to be deployed to conduct contact tracing."

Mr Abdoulaye Janneh pointed out that it was evident that COVID-19 was ongoing and the response was to save lives, and further said that Africa had to remain open for business. Mr Janneh added that the preventive measures being taken by



A DIRCO WEBINAR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
 Date: Thursday, 28 May 2020 Time: 09:00 – 10:00

					
Dr Philani Mthembu The Executive Director of the Institute for Global Dialogue	Mr Abdoulaye Janneh The former Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa	Dr Ahmed E Ogwel Ouma The Deputy Director for the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention	Dr Naledi Pandor The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation	Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos The Chief Executive of the South African Institute of International Affairs	Prof Eddie Maloka The Chief Executive Officer of the African Peer Review Mechanism

Follow the event live on Twitter @DIRCO_ZA or Facebook DIRCOza from 09:00. #TheAfricaWeWant #AfricaMonth



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AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
 Date: Thursday, 28 May 2020 Time: 09:00 – 10:00

“ Africa has resilience and can indeed effectively respond. What we must not do is act as though the pandemic is the only challenge confronting Africa that we must respond to effectively. There are other challenges, as has been pointed out, such as developing regional supply chains, such as acting on our industrialisation strategies, such as ensuring we have the human resources to address all our challenges. ”

Dr Naledi Pandor
The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

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Ambassador Mathu Joyini, panel moderator with some members of the panel, Dr Ahmed Ogwel Ouma, Mr Abdoulaye Janneh, Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Dr Philani Mthembu,



Prof. Eddy Maloka, Chair of the APRM



Minister Pandor participates in the webinar on Africa's response during the COVID-19 pandemic



Members of the webinar panel on screen

countries had socio-economic implications that would linger for many years. However, Africa does have an advantage with regard to tackling a pandemic as various countries have been able to use previous experience to address the current COVID-19 pandemic as the IGD's Dr Philani Mthembu reminded the panel that: "The African continent, despite the limited resources that it has, has actually been able to draw from its experience of addressing previous pandemics and epidemics. So, the idea of hacking pandemics on the continent is not something that is new."

This statement was duly acknowledged and welcomed by other panel members with Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos stressing that there were opportunities to be identified during this pandemic as the continent could take this time to reinforce existing structures on the continent. "We should never let a good crisis go to waste. We have a fairly well-developed governance architecture continent of which the Africa Peer Review Mechanism is a key instrument for domestic accountability."

Perhaps one of the most salient points raised during the webinar was by Minister Pandor who emphasised although Africa had resilience and could effectively respond to challenges, we must be mindful of other challenges facing the continent. "There are other challenges, as has been pointed out, such as developing regional supply chains, acting on our industrialisation strategies, and ensuring that we have human resources to address all our challenges."

"We have a vision of South Africa in which black and white shall live and work together as equals in conditions of peace and prosperity."

- Oliver Tambo -

Tambo (1917 – 1993), also known as O. R., was a South African anti-apartheid politician and revolutionary who served as President of the African National Congress from 1967 to 1991, and worked towards achieving a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it.

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AFRICA DAY VIRTUAL CELEBRATION

Silencing The Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development and Intensifying the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic

On 25 May 2020, Africa celebrated the 57th anniversary of the birth of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). From the beginning, it was dedicated to the idea that only through unity could Africa safeguard its independence and unlock its potential.

The President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, in his capacity as Chair of the African Union (AU) delivered the keynote address during the virtual broadcast of the Africa Day 2020 commemoration, which was held under the theme: "Silencing The Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development and Intensifying the Fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic".

The President was joined by:

- Dr Kenneth Kaunda, former President of the Republic of Zambia and the only living founding father of the OAU
- Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, the current AU Commission Chair
- Madame Eunice Ipinge, President of the Pan-African Women's Organisation (PAWO)
- Ms Aya Chebbi, the first-ever AU Special Envoy on Youth and the youngest diplomat in the AU Commission Chairperson's Cabinet

The first speaker of the event was the Chair of the AU Commission, Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, who shared his immense hope for

Africa's future and the ability to collectively achieve the aspired prosperity. "There is hope for a renaissance in Africa, both in the considerable human and material potential she possesses, and in her fierce will to overcome and break the chains of dependence and poverty."

It was a true message of hope that should invoke a lot of pride from the African population at large.

The virtual celebration was anchored by broadcaster and business journalist, Ms Gugulethu Mfuphi, who has travelled extensively across the continent, sharing her knowledge of business in Africa, particularly as it relates to the inclusion of women and their empowerment. This is a passion that Ms Eunice Ipinge, President of PAWO shares.

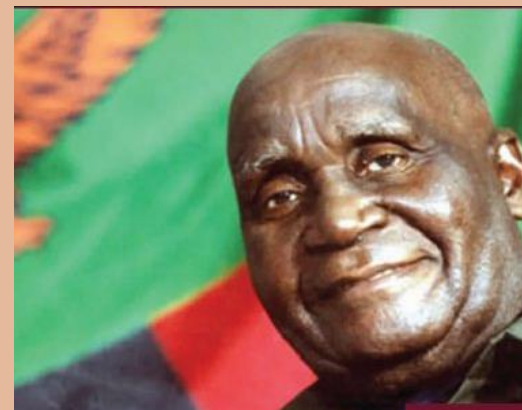
In her remarks, Ms Ipinge remembered the forebears of the continent and praised them for the hard work they put in and sacrifice that they made for the future of Africa. "We pay tribute and homage to our African forefathers and mothers who have sacrificed their lives for Africa and for the legacy left behind."

Ms Ipinge's message was followed by a powerful poetry performance by Ms Jessica Mbangeni, the daughter of the amaXhosa tribe and the pride of Africa. "My upbringing was privileged by the rich culture and authentic traditions that were



and are still practised by my community". She graced the screen with her beautiful traditional attire against the backdrop of former President Nelson Mandela's statue at the Union Buildings.

The AU's Youth Envoy, Ms Aya Chebbi, who is an award-winning Pan-African feminist, made a salient point about the whole continent taking responsibility at realising the AU's Agenda 2063 aspirations. "The Africa we want is a collective responsibility", said Ms Chebbi.



The long-awaited moment finally arrived as Dr Kaunda shared his vision for the Africa that we all want. He said "A truly united Africa should rise! An Africa that is free from poverty, hunger and diseases."

Along with being a founding father of the OAU, Dr Kaunda also made a staunch contribution to the freedom struggle not only in South Africa, but in the entire Southern African Development Community region. Zambia gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1964, making it one of the first countries on the continent to decolonise. His stance was always that Zambia will not be free until all of Africa is free.

The Chair of the AU and the event's keynote speaker, President Ramaphosa, echoed the sentiments of Dr Kaunda. President Ramaphosa said that Africa

*"The world is not ours to keep.
We hold it in trust for future
generations."*

- Kofi Annan -

Annan (1938 – 2018) was a Ghanaian diplomat who served as the 70th Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) from January 1997 to December 2006. He was co-recipient with the UN, of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.

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united could overcome even the greatest of challenges. He added that: "Today, we pay tribute to our forebears, the founders of the OAU, whose dream of greater African integration and unity has endured. We also honour the legions of revolutionary leaders of Africa who took up the mantle of Pan-Africanism and who fought for the economic and political integration of Africa".

The President paid tribute to Africa's heroes who have left a formidable legacy for the continent and all its peoples. "They continue to inspire us and the generations that will come after us." It was the mission of the founders of the OAU to liberate the continent from the clutches of colonial oppression, to restore Africa's fortunes and to restore the dignity of every African man, woman and child. We are reminded of the difficulties they had to overcome and the resistance they encountered from foreign powers that had much to gain from exploiting divisions on the continent." said the AU Chair.

This year's Africa Day was commemorated in the shadow of the Coronavirus pandemic, which has swept across the world and left no part of our continent untouched. President Ramaphosa highlighted the extent of the effect of the virus on Africa as he shared some of the statistics, "Thus far, almost 96 000 people have been infected with almost 3 000 having lost their lives".

"This COVID-19 pandemic will have a lasting impact on our ability to meet the aspiration of the AU's Agenda 2063 of a peaceful, united and prosperous continent." added the President and continued to explain that the virus had exposed the deep inequalities that continue to exist on our continent and across the world. It has shown how far we are from realising our developmental goals and our responsibilities to the citizens of our continent.

However, it is perhaps time to adopt an opportunistic view to this pandemic. This global crisis should enable a new Africa to come to the fore. "It should be an Africa of heroic acts of solidarity, an Africa of cross-border collaboration and sharing of knowledge and resources, an Africa that is united by a common goal," said the President.

Furthermore, President Ramphosa spoke about how the challenge of this pandemic had shown how Africa was able to work together to solve its own problems. "Day by day, across our continent, we are seeing the unity that is our strength being put to the service of saving lives and supporting the vulnerable."

With regard to the frontline workers across the continent, the AU Chair said, "We salute the latter-day standard-bearers of Pan-African unity; the healthcare workers and

medical personnel, the scientists and epidemiologists. We salute the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention for leading our continent's response to the pandemic. We also pay tribute to the community workers and NGOs, and the leaders of government and business who have lent their full support to Africa's Coronavirus response"

The AU and its various organs have shown leadership and acted with speed to address this crisis. Under the guidance of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the continent has been able to steadily manage this particular virus, despite its dynamism. President Ramaphosa also paid tribute Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the WHO, for demonstrating strong and foresightful leadership to the world during this crisis.

"We know that no country can overcome this challenge alone. We call on developed countries, multilateral institutions and the donor community to provide vulnerable countries across the world, especially on our continent, with the necessary support in the form of diagnostic and therapeutic medical supplies as well as the necessary financial support to sustain the livelihoods of vulnerable people."

Key to Africa's ability to weather the economic storm, is to have a comprehensive

robust economic stimulus package that includes debt relief and other support measures for the continent's immediate humanitarian needs and necessary economic recovery. The President also conveyed the support of the AU for those countries that are experiencing even greater difficulty during this time, namely Zimbabwe and Sudan, "As we deal with the impact of this pandemic, we repeat our call for the unconditional lifting of sanctions that have been imposed on Zimbabwe and Sudan."



South African poet, Jessica Mbangeni, performs during the virtual event



"As Africans, we have taken firm charge of managing this pandemic. President Ramaphosa said about the AU's management of COVID-19, "We have a comprehensive strategy formulated by the AU, and have appointed special envoys to mobilise the financial and other resources necessary for its implementation" and continued to add that, "COVID-19 knows no borders, nationality or skin colour. To address the escalating humanitarian crisis, we need to deepen our solidarity."

We must ensure the pandemic does not reverse our developmental gains. We must forge ahead with meeting the aspirations of Agenda 2063."

At this stage, Africa must move ahead with the most ambitious step towards Pan-African integration to date, the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and ensure that it is operational soon. President Ramaphosa reiterated that the organisation must not let up on efforts to drive the African Agenda of security, peace and stability, of democracy and human rights, of women's emancipation and the protection of the environment. With regard to peace and security matters, it is imperative that the AU not allow this global health emergency to derail our efforts to Silence the Guns on the continent. The AU Chair went on to say, "The tragic conflicts that are breeding instability in a number of countries on our continent are exacting a heavy toll on human life and must end. We must continue to affirm the supremacy of dialogue over military intervention."

President Ramaphosa reaffirmed the AU's commitment to supporting the people of Western Sahara in their quest for self-determination. He said, "As Africans, we will continue to stand on the side of justice and support the people of the Western Sahara in their enduring struggle for freedom and self-determination. We also call for the end of the oppression of the Palestinian people and the occupation of their homeland.

"Africa has known much turmoil and hardship throughout history. We have endured the worst excesses of humankind, from slavery to colonialism, to apartheid, and to prolonged military conflict. But just as our ancestors were able to overcome the horrors of their time, so too will our faith, courage and resilience as Africans see us through this time of difficulty. " added the AU Chair, and remembered the late struggle stalwart and the first Nobel Peace Laureate,

Chief Albert Luthuli, recalling his words, "Let us cast our eyes beyond the past. Let us fix our eyes firmly to the future that burns bright on the horizon."

In closing, the President said that if we remained united, we would overcome this pandemic. "We will recover and restore our economies. We will uplift the conditions of our people and we will be worthy inheritors of the legacy of the great Africans who met in Addis Ababa in 1963 to form the OAU. If we draw from the deepest depths of African unity and solidarity, we shall prevail. May God Bless Africa and protect her people".



Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat – Chair of the African Union Commission



Ms Aya Chebbi – AU Youth Envoy



Ms Eunice Ipinge – President of PAWO

"Education is a means of sharpening the mind of man both spiritually and intellectually. It is a two-edged sword that can be used either for the progress of mankind or for its destruction. That is why it has been Our constant desire and endeavor to develop our education for the benefit of mankind".

- Haile Selassie -

Selassie (1892 – 1975) was an Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974. Prior his coronation in 1930, he had been Regent Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia from 1916. He is a defining figure in modern Ethiopian history, and helped establish the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

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African heads of states at the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), May 1963.
Photo: OPAU

Founding Fathers

The **Organisation of African Unity (OAU)** was established on **25 May 1963** in **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia** with **32 signatory governments**.

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SILENCING THE GUNS BY 2020:
Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development
and Intensifying the Fight against Covid-19 Pandemic



SHAPING THE GLOBAL AGENDA THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS:

Africa and Asia Solidarity in the Era of COVID-19

- Ambassador Anil Sooklal

We are passing through a stage in human history that will be remembered as among the most challenging periods that humanity has endured. COVID-19 has globalised the oldest and most significant threat to human existence. The threat has been so severe that we have taken to committing ourselves to isolation. Living without social contact goes against the grain of the basic human need for social interaction and human contact, and as the virus becomes globalised, human interaction is becoming insular. It is at this point that we are experiencing an increasing need for cooperation and solidarity.

The painful short-term scenarios will be marked by illness and loss of life. Along with these age-old enemies to humankind, we are seeing a renewed upsurge in our dearest friend, human solidarity. There is no disputing that we are at a historic crossroad and the decisions we take now will have lasting implications. Notably, having learned difficult and tragic lessons from countries in Asia, Africa and other parts of the world, most nations have prioritised human life and health. World economies have been decimated, security threats in vulnerable regions are present and continue to creep in while public health systems worldwide are facing incredible strain with many on the verge of collapse.

Despite these realities, our leaders chose to ensure that the health, well-being and survival of their populations are prioritised. These are humane decisions that come at a huge cost and we have accepted them. We are confident that we will survive this, and that humanity will emerge transformed, stronger and even more resilient than ever.

Our patience, trust and faith and proactive and shared actions will lead us in that direction.

Africa and the future of cooperation

On 9 February 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa accepted South Africa's Chair of the African Union (AU). In his opening statement, he drew on the collective strength of Africa's leadership, when he stated: "Our collective work to ensure political and economic unity, good governance and peace should be strengthened by supporting integration, industrialisation, economic development, trade and investment".

The notion of a new reality and the fractured world that the World Economic Forum has used to describe 21st century events are now moving from projections to becoming part of our history. South Africa as Chair of the AU has prioritised the strengthening of intra-African trade through the African Continental Free Trade Area. This will unleash a market of almost US\$3 trillion.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report on Economic Development in Africa in June 2019, intra-African trade totalled about 2% of total continental trade during the period 2015 to 2017, while comparative figures for the Americas were at approximately 40%, Asia at 61%, Europe at 67% and Oceania at 7%. Despite the weak numbers, since 2008, Africa along with Asia, have been the only regions with a growing trend in intra-regional trade. This is a massive investment opportunity and Africa looks forward to working with global partners, as we collectively strive to rejuvenate and diversify our key economic sectors.

The AU, under South Africa's Chair, has reprioritised "Silencing of the Guns". One of



the main obstructions to economic development and intra-regional trade is the absence of a peaceful, secure and stable environment. Investment in infrastructure is critical, but if conflict persists, the investments will yield little or no results. The AU's prioritisation of "Silencing of the Guns" by 2020 is necessary to ensure that investors feel secure and South Africa remains fully committed to ensuring that Africa is successful in securing peace mechanisms and agreements that lead to sustainable growth and development, Libya, South Sudan and Somalia on the African continent endure some of the most violent, bloody and vicious conflicts, as well as Yemen and Syria in Western Asia, and the continued surges in violence and conflict in different parts of the world are fuelled by the easy availability of illicit weapons together with poverty, underdevelopment and inequality. These historic fault lines must be addressed comprehensively to ensure a secure and stable environment conducive to growth and prosperity.

Apart from our regular public health issues, the COVID-19 pandemic presents the worst case scenarios on the impact of climate change in Africa's development. Africa only contributes 2% to 3% of the world's carbon emissions, yet Africa in all likelihood will bear the brunt of climate change trends

on agriculture, water, agrarian development, food insecurity, peace and security and social stability, to name a few. However, Africa has the largest percentage of the world's arable land and burgeoning natural resources that some have described as being both a "blessing and a curse". A further advantage of both Africa and Asia is its youthful populations. This most important asset must be maximised for the benefit and development of Africa and Asia.

Cooperation and solidarity for development

The historical Africa-Asia solidarity must guide us at a time of the global crisis. The ideals of solidarity, peace, prosperity and development are widely touted and we must ensure that the post-COVID-19 era drives and deepens our cooperation as we are called upon to rebuild our economies and societies.

In 2015, Indonesia co-hosted the 60th anniversary of the Africa-Asia Conference in Jakarta with South Africa. President Joko Widodo and his co-host, then Deputy President Ramaphosa, hosted 33 heads of state and representatives from 77 countries.

The summit produced three documents: the Bandung Messages, the Declaration on Strengthening the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) and the Declaration on Palestine. The summit reaffirmed the Bandung Spirit and the need to energise Africa-Asia solidarity and cooperation.

Our significant, albeit ongoing, achievements are conceptualised through our multilateralism and our collective commitment to formations such as the Non-Alignment (NAM), the G77 plus China, the India-Brazil-South-Africa (IBSA), the BASIC climate change coalition, consisting of Brazil, South Africa, India and China, and the G20 group of the world's most influential economies.

Our ocean space binds us as humanity. South Africa has been working assiduously to build the apex Indian Ocean grouping, namely the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which links Africa, Asia and Oceania. IORA, through its membership, is actively seeking to create linkages through the Indo Pacific and Atlantic oceans in forging the concept of "one ocean" for the benefit of all humanity.

According to the UN Development Programme, the current models of South-South cooperation offer a multitude of benefits when we consider the advantages accrued from national and regional science, technology and innovation plans; economic and social planning; linkage of research and development with economic growth; modern management and administration; technical, scientific and administrative human resources; and accelerated professional training at different levels. The global landscape and our vision of socio-economic cooperation and inclusive development must be realised without compromise in the post- COVID era.

Among the most significant outcomes of this shift in the balance of global economic power has been the formation of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). The New Development Bank and the Africa Regional Centre have already had a positive impact on

the global financial architecture. We believe that when history is written, it will describe this moment as one that contributed significantly to the reform and creation of an inclusive global financial architecture working in the interests of all the peoples of the world.

One could argue that the 21st century context stifled the space for anything short of discourse outside of real politik and survivalist approaches to international relations. We as nations of the South forged centuries-old bonds, both before, during and after the yolk of colonialism and the associated slave trade. In the last two decades, Africa has forged notable partnerships with China, Japan, India, Russia, the Arab world and the European Union to name a few. The challenges of a post-COVID-19 era re-examine, redefine and re-energise these formations as mutual conduits of our collective development agenda. We are required to re-energise these formations as further conduits of our collective developmental agenda.

The COVID-inspired landscape

The COVID era is marked by online, virtual interaction. This demands secure and more efficient (cost and speed) cyber and ICT services. Virtual platforms are proliferated with "intelligent and disruptive technologies" and these have now converged to significantly reconfigure global economics, geopolitics and security. It is not insignificant that these ongoing processes are gaining ground while global trade and investment trends are threatened by what seems to be a reversal of globalisation.

Leading global powers have a meaningful level of economic interdependence, which remains central to their relations. This interdependence has traditionally played a significant role in containing possible military skirmishes through a balance of power that is dynamic. However, the trade wars and 5G

tensions have created both political, technological and commercial complexities, exposing the weaknesses and contradictions inherent within the current global architecture. Travel and tourism is an example of a strategic and emerging sector in Africa and Asia that we expect to change substantially. We need to ensure the free flow of people but not the flow of the virus to continue albeit under a new paradigm.

This challenge will keep us busy for years to come and will also impact on the nature of travel in the future. COVID-19 has provided us with an opportunity to bring to the fore cooperation in the global health sector in order to create a global health architecture that leaves no one behind. As the President of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, noted at the virtual summit of the NAM, held on 4 May 2020, that: "We must organise another chain, the chain of solidarity to help, with equipment and pharmaceutical products, (to) the poorest". As Africa, we need to utilise this opportunity for joint ventures, for capacity-building, for a renewed focus on developing pharmaceutical and medical supply industries, while deepening collaboration with global partners.

Several leaders have categorised the 21st century as the Asian Century and in recent times, several leaders from Africa and Asia and scholars have categorised the 21st century as the African-Asian Century. We have seen momentous growth and development both in Africa and Asia in the first two decades of the century and this solid partnership has forged in the history of a common struggle, which must serve as the beacon for navigating a new win-win partnership for the benefit of all countries and its people as well as humanity at large.

We need to remind ourselves that the African and Asian centuries have enjoyed increased momentum in the last decade of the century. This momentum arguably started with the end of the Cold War and has been phenomenal. As we navigate this terrain, we will learn with, and from each other, as each country and region will continue to deal with its own issues. The current global security situation is worrying, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. The fact that we are worried suggests that we are taking steps toward solutions.



MINISTER PANDOR CO-CHAIRS A VIRTUAL MEETING OF AFRICA'S WOMEN FOREIGN MINISTERS ON ENHANCING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN COVID-19 RESPONSES

- Laoura Lazouras

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, and the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Ambassador Raychelle Awour Omamo, co-chaired a virtual meeting of Africa's women ministers of foreign affairs and international relations and cooperation, under the auspices of the African Union (AU), on 7 May 2020 under the theme: "Enhancing Women Leadership in COVID-19 Responses".

In addition to the co-chairs, 12 female foreign and international relations and cooperation ministers from Botswana, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, eSwatini, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia, São Tomé et Príncipe, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Sudan were invited to participate in the virtual meeting, as well as high-level guests from the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organisation.

The meeting came at a time when the world is faced with an unprecedented crisis, impacting on health systems, economies and the lives, livelihood and well-being of all, particularly women and girls. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, international and regional organisations, such as the UN and the AU, have called for collective action and solidarity in the fight against this pandemic. Given the complexity of the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on all societies around the world, there is a strong case for solidarity and enhanced multilateral responses, including partnerships with female leaders and women-led organisations around the continent of Africa.

This virtual meeting provided an opportunity for Africa's women foreign ministers to consider mitigation strategies that specifically target the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on women and girls. The meeting also reflected on supporting and strengthening women's participation and leadership in the political, economic and social spheres in order to build women's resilience in a meaningful way, including in a post-COVID-19 world.

During crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, women make essential contributions as frontline responders in all sectors, but are disproportionately affected by the health, economic, social and security impacts of the outbreak. Women's leadership in the fight against COVID-19 was therefore a central theme of the virtual meeting, as Africa's female foreign ministers and other participants deliberated on how women could play a leading role in COVID-19 responses, without placing themselves and their communities at risk, in Africa and around the world.

In her opening remarks as Co-chair, Minister Pandor reflected on Africa's coordinated response to COVID-19 and how the decisions of the meetings of the Bureau of the Assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government on COVID-19 could have a positive impact on the lives of women and girls. Furthermore, the Minister also provided recommendations on mitigation strategies to address the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, in line with international and regional commitments such as the Beijing Platform of Action for Women; UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; the UN's 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development; and the AU's Agenda 2063 on the "Africa we Want".



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



REFLECTIONS IN ISOLATION

- by Ambassador Ntsiki Mashimbye

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a wonderful thing happened to me recently: I received a call from a colleague in the Employment Health and Wellness Centre (EHW) at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO).

The purpose of the call was to inquire as to my well-being under the difficult circumstances brought about by the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown in Brasilia, the capital city of Brazil. I was more than elated to receive this call, the first of its kind in my 10 years of service at DIRCO.

During my first posting as Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes, I visited the most dangerous and far-flung battlegrounds and war zones for meetings in pursuance of South Africa's foreign policy. Perhaps the most traumatising of my experiences in the DRC was waking up to the deadly projectiles that landed on the property of the Chancery, which also housed the official residence and residences of all officials at the Mission in Kinshasa.

The trauma affected my family and colleagues in ways we will never fully be able to articulate. I had to counsel several of the embassy officials (and their families) who were determined to resign immediately and return home to safety. Fortunately, I managed to convince all to stay and to complete their postings.

And now, 10 years later, I finally received the call: cometh the hour, cometh the wellness unit!

My colleagues will be aware that in the past, I have questioned the role and purpose of the EHW. However, after the experience of one simple call, I am now more convinced than ever that this unit should be better equipped and adequately resourced to assist our diplomats to cope with the challenges of serving in foreign lands, away from family structures and from the familiarity and comforts of our beautiful country. Most, if not all, foreign ministries have such a unit, and some countries even have health professionals deployed at their larger embassies and covering several countries.

After the call from EWHC, I decided to engage officials at the Embassy, starting with video calls to each of the officials in our Consulate-General in São Paulo, which happens to be the epicentre of the pandemic in Brazil. As a result, the Consulate has been closed for months. My intention was to hear how each of the officials and their families were coping with this most unnatural situation and to reassure them that this too would pass. After all, separating from others goes against the basic human need for companionship and connection that we all feel.

I thought I was ready to place this call given all my training over the years as a political commissar to hundreds of soldiers in the most unspeakable conditions of a people's war against apartheid tyranny. Then, the enemy was clear and victory was in sight, but now, I had to speak to soldiers fighting an invisible and insidious enemy with no end in sight.

Speaking to my colleagues, left me overwhelmed with a lump in my throat. I saw fatigue and worry, but also bravery and defiance. I heard fear and anxiety, but also resilience and endurance. I felt pain and melancholy, but also incredible patriotism and an indomitable spirit to survive and continue to serve the republic.

Officials conveyed the helplessness of being unable to respond to queries from their young children on even the simplest of activities: seeing their friends, watching a movie at a cinema or riding their bicycles in a park.

Children are generally visual creatures, and an abstract and obscure virus may as well be an imaginary and distant friend. Teenagers of officials are not necessarily better placed to handle the virus, many delving even further into the virtual world that already consumed most of their days in pre-COVID-19 times.

Spending long days indoors and even more time in front of television screens, mobile phone



and laptops can only be harmful to their mental and physical well-being. For some of our children, the impact will be lifelong. As an April 2020 United Nations report stated: "Children are not the face of this pandemic. But they risk being among its biggest victims." For those of us who are parents, this is indeed a difficult pill to swallow.

The greatest causes of angst among officials, both in Brasilia and São Paulo, is the health of family and friends in South Africa, especially those with elderly and vulnerable parents, and siblings. The utter devastation of losing a loved one while abroad is only surpassed by the absolute injustice and heartbreak one feels at not being able to travel home to say a final goodbye.

Speaking to my colleagues left me overwhelmed with a lump in my throat. I saw fatigue and worry, but also bravery and defiance. I heard fear and anxiety, but also resilience and endurance. I felt pain and melancholy, but also incredible patriotism and an indomitable spirit to survive and continue to serve the republic.

I am indeed privileged to work with diplomats of this calibre. Listening to my staff and attempting to play the strong leader has only taught me that, like them, I too am just a mere mortal that always needs to know that someone out there cares.

If nothing else, this pandemic has taught governments and companies across the world the importance of investing in the health and wellness of its citizens and employees. Healthy citizens and employees are productive citizens and employees. The nexus between health and economic productivity has been written about extensively. DIRCO – and indeed the rest of government – needs to continue showing that it is a caring employer.

COPING WITH THE LOCKDOWN

1. Have a structured daily schedule and stick to it e.g. work, exercise, supervising schoolwork, playtime (especially parents with small children), etc.
2. Maintain some established routine for yourself and the children e.g. bed time, meal times, and TV times. This will bring a sense of control.
3. Strengthen your immune system by adopting a healthy lifestyle e.g. good nutrition, exercise for at least 30 minutes daily, limit alcohol and sugary drinks, have adequate sleep and don't oversleep.
4. If you work from home, make sure you don't sit in the same place for a long time. Take breaks after every 30 minutes, walk around and hydrate.
5. Practice self-care such as meditation, journaling, virtual wellness workshops. This will alleviate psychological distress.
6. Keep regular contact with family, friends and colleagues. It will assist to alleviate feelings of loneliness, stress and anxiety. You can skype or use video call if possible.
7. Support and check other people in the community. Compassion is a medicine for the soul.
8. Keep regular contact with your health practitioner especially if you previously suffered from anxiety or depression.
9. Try not to watch too much COVID-19 related news if it makes you anxious. Rather get information from reliable sources once or twice a day.
10. Listen and dance to music that uplifts your mood.

"Consider it good that you are not in denial, and that you are allowing yourself to work through the anxiety. No sane person feels good during a global disaster, so be grateful for the discomfort of your sanity."

- Aisha S. Ahmad, March 27, 2020

Please note that EHW is available for telephonic individual counselling. Our virtual group counselling date shall be announced in due course. Feel free to call us.

We care about you!



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



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TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

**STAY
HOME**
SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

A3+1 STATEMENT ON SOMALIA 21 May 2020

- Ambassador Jerry Matjila

Mr President,

I would like to thank you for convening this important and timely meeting on Somalia. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the A3+1, namely Niger, South Africa, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Somalia. We also would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Mr James Swan; Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Ambassador Francisco Madeira; and Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Ms Agnes Marcaillou, for their briefing.

The A3+1 wishes to address the situation in Somalia, the role of the United Nations through UNSOM and USOS as well as the role of AMISOM.

On the **political front**, we agree with the Secretary-General's observation that this year marks a critical period for the advancement of national priorities in Somalia. It is a year that a number of targets and benchmarks set in various policy documents such as the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF) and Somali Transition Plan were set to be achieved. Concerted effort by all Somalis is required for the realisation of these national priorities. However, this requires constructive dialogue between the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States to resolve their differences putting at the top of their concern the challenge posed by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in an already fragile situation.

The A3+1 echoes the sentiments of the Secretary-General that political differences must not be addressed through violence.

We are therefore concerned at the unfortunate armed clashes that erupted in Gedo region (Jubbaland) and Galmudug during the period under review. We urge the Somali parties to use dialogue as a peaceful means to settle disputes as well as cooperation that is critical to achieve national priorities, including the holding of general elections in 2020/21. In this regard, we welcome the positive developments of the meeting between President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo and Somaliland President, Muse Bihi Abdi Bihi.

We also welcome the announcement by President Said Mohamed Deni of Puntland of his intention to travel to Mogadishu and to other federal member states to advance dialogue. We view these overtures as positive steps towards addressing the lingering tensions between the FGS and some FMS and an indication of the will of Somali parties to address their differences.

One of the critical priorities confronting Somalia is the preparation and holding of "one-person, one vote" elections. The A3+1 underlines the importance of dialogue, inclusive political participation and resolution of political differences between FGS and FMS is critical to the success of these elections and national cohesion.

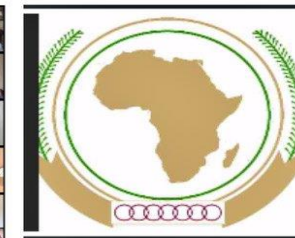
Furthermore, we commend the enactment of the Electoral Law and encourage the expeditious formulation of regulations necessary to ensure the implementation and broad support by all federal member states.

It is also important to ensure the participation and representation of women, youth and all members of the Somali population, as well as the need to prepare and secure the electoral process. We encourage the international community to continue to mobilise resources to supplement the FGS' financing of the elections.

On the **security situation**, we remain deeply concerned by the volatile security situation as demonstrated by the persistent terrorist threat posed by Al Shabaab and the elements of the pro-Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Somalia who continue to carry out terrorist attacks targeted at the Somali National Army (SNA), AMISOM, local security forces, civilians and the UN.

Despite the commendable progress and success of joint operations by SNA and AMISOM to recapture towns from Al Shabaab in southern parts of Somalia, the terrorist group continues to launch attacks and assassinations using mortar and improvised explosive devices (IED).

More has to be done to improve security in Somalia, particularly to mitigate mortar and IED attacks.



We agree with the calls for the strengthening of the IED threat mitigation capabilities of Somali Security Forces in order to protect themselves and better prevent harm to civilians and critical infrastructure against the increased deployment of IED attacks.

We strongly appreciate the close cooperation and support between the Somali National Army (SNA), AMISOM, and UN, in particular UNSOM, UNSOS, UNMAS, as well as international partners in support of the National Security Architecture and National Transitional Plan.

Since its deployment in 2007, AMISOM has been playing an important role in supporting the SNA towards the restoration of security and stability in Somalia. Recent successes of recovering territory by the joint AMISOM and SNA operations in Lower Shebelle bear testimony to the valuable role of AMISOM. There is, however, a need for stabilisation efforts in the recovered territories with further generation in numbers and capacities in both the SNA and police to secure recovered areas, facilitate stabilisation activities and consolidate gains and void relapse.

We urge the Federal Government of Somalia, with the support of the UN, AMISOM and international partners, to continue the generation, training and resourcing of capable and effective Somali National Forces that will ultimately take over the security responsibilities in line with the Transitional

Plan in line with the Transitional Plan and the National Security Architecture.

To this end, we reiterate our previous calls for the international community and partners to mobilise the necessary resources, including the replenishment of the Trust Fund for AMISOM to support the Somali security forces, as they continue to make commendable progress to degrade Al Shabaab and secure and stabilise liberated areas.

On the **humanitarian situation**, Somalia continues to experience grave humanitarian crisis. Somalia is facing a triple shock of floods, desert locust infestation in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic. The threat to food insecurity remains high, despite the favourable seasonal rains. In some parts, unpredictable rainfall due to climate change has resulted in flash flooding, impacting not only on food security but also resulting in death, displacement and the risk of water-borne diseases. The rains have further created conducive conditions and heightened the locust infestation that has affected the whole of Horn of Africa.

We are concerned that the security situation continues to be an impediment to humanitarian operations and assistance to people in need in

Somalia. We call upon the international community and humanitarian organisations to continue supporting the FGS and the Somali people providing prompt and adequate funding as well as contributing to the Somalia 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan.

Somalia. We call upon the international community and humanitarian organisations to continue supporting the FGS and the Somali people in their quest for a peaceful and stable Somalia including providing prompt and adequate funding as well as contributing to the Somalia 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan.

The year 2020 will be remembered in history for the greatest challenge of our generation, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As with all of us around the globe, Somalia has not been spared from the COVID-19 pandemic. It has recorded over 1 400 cases of COVID-19 as of the middle of May. This pandemic presents specific risks to the country given its numerous challenges and vulnerabilities.

It is necessary that measures are taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in support for the continuity of peacebuilding and state-building activities in Somalia. We commend the efforts of the Somalia Government, United Nations agencies and partners for launching the Somalia COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan. We note that COVID-19 may exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation, socio-economic, development coordination and security challenges facing Somalia. Additionally, it is important to safe-guard the well-being of those under the employ of AMISOM, SNA and other partners as they continue to provide security, including of facilitating support for the humanitarian assistance critically needed by vulnerable Somalis.

With respect to **economic developments**, we note that Somalia has made significant strides in the past few years in improving its economic prospects. All interventions that were undertaken by the Federal Government of Somalia have yielded positive results. We thus commend the Federal Government of Somalia for reaching the decision point under the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. This has facilitated the clearing of Somalia's arrears. It is also a matter of great satisfaction that the World Bank and IMF have issued a Joint Staff Advisory Note on the 9th Plan 2020-24, noting that the plan exceeded standards of a typical interim poverty reduction strategy. This is a positive and welcomed development given the humanitarian socio-economic, resources and other related changes that are facing Somalia in the period ahead.

It is critical now more than ever that the international community join hands in support of Somalia, including through cooperation, coordination and resource mobilisation to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but also to ensure that Somalia continues on a positive trajectory of state building and peacebuilding.

We wish to underline the importance of fostering strong and effective regional cooperation in the Horn of Africa, particularly between Somalia and its neighbours. This is necessary to bring peace, stability and development in Somalia and across the region.

In this regard, we call on IGAD, the African Union, the UN and international community to continue to support efforts towards fostering a strong and effective regional cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

We commend the efforts and commitment of the United Nations, AMISOM, Federal Government of Somalia and the international partners for the continuous efforts and progress to bring stabilisation, deepening federalism and state-building in Somalia.

In view of the **mandate of AMISOM** ending on 31 May 2020, the A3+1 would like to reaffirm our support to AMISOM presence in Somalia as a stabilising force in support of the SNA. We look forward to fruitful engagements on a new resolution that will continue to illustrate the Council's commitment to supporting the activities of AMISOM by maintaining its current capabilities and authorising the deployment of AMISOM for another 12 months. It is our considered view that the 12 months extension will provide the necessary space for Somalia, AMISOM, UN and other partners to assess and deal with the impact of COVID-19, the security situation on the ground, the upcoming elections, the comprehensive review of the Somalia Transition Plan, effective force generation and the need to preserve the gains made thus far.



South Africa United Nations Security Council 2019 – 2020



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



COVID-19: CHRONICLES OF A SOUTH AFRICAN DIPLOMAT IN NIGERIA

- Bobby J Moroe



The emergence of COVID-19, without sight and notice, can by far be chronicled as one of humanity's greatest mysteries. Indeed, many of us would be forgiven to believe that the COVID-19 pandemic is a mystery because it is difficult to understand or explain. Its puzzling manifestation has flattened the world, and not the curve. Today, the world is flat because humanity suffers the same fate, under the hardships of a common, yet invisible enemy. The global effects of this pandemic reminds me of a book titled: "The World is Flat" by Thomas Friedman. In this book, Friedman analyses globalisation in the 21st century. The title of the book is a metaphor for viewing the world as a level playing field in terms of commerce, wherein all competitors have an equal opportunity. This book must remind us that, COVID-19, just like competitors, has identified an opportunity to compete with our personal and collective health by spreading its tentacles throughout the length and breadth of the world. Its prevalence assets Friedman's metaphor of "viewing the world as a level playing field" – it sees no boundaries.

As a result of some breakthroughs in scientific research, we now know that finding ourselves in the streets, outside our homes and in large crowds are some of the best avenues through this pandemic is able to advance its selfish agenda. It has moved from the Far East, in the City of Wuhan, China, to the dusty streets of my home town, Soweto, with the speed of lightning.

Media reports suggest that the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. On 5 March 2020, South Africa's Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, confirmed that the virus had spread to our

shores, with the first known patient being a South African returning from Italy. Before we knew it, the number of cases increased in leaps and bounds throughout the world. During its spread, no country was spared, including my country of accreditation, Nigeria.

For the better part of this year, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a household name for the rich, poor and famous. It sees no colour, religion and gender and subscribes to no particular geographic location. For some time, it will sadly remain a guest in many homes, if we dare not follow the necessary protocols. There is no "diplomatic immunity" for diplomats in the victimhood of this narcissistic virus. It does not observe any protocols, knows no note verbale and recognises no Vienna Convention. But its presence during diplomatic engagements remains prevalent, yet invisible. It uses all of us, alike, to thrive, multiply and spread its tentacles and find temporary refuge in diplomatic missions, diplomatic vehicles, diplomatic bags, diplomatic homes, diplomatic food consignments and everything tangible that we ever come in contact with. Just like a worm, it is parasitic in

nature and very familiar with human weaknesses and temptations. It always avails itself whenever we are unable to resist the temptation of restraining ourselves. It knows too well that we are social beings and that we are accustomed to certain lifestyle patterns that we cannot resist.

My own home country has been hailed by the World Health Organisation, more than once, for strides made by government to tackle this invisible enemy. Due to its strategy, which lies in prevention, detection, tracing and treatment, South Africa remains a model on the continent and elsewhere in the world. It gives me a sense of pride not only to be a South African, but a South African diplomat in Nigeria.

I write this article from my apartment in Abuja, where, like many, I am on lockdown. This is the same spot where I have been sitting for the past 60 days, following developments in my home country, and also observing lockdown protocols in Nigeria. As a diplomat, mine is an inescapable double-edged sword. In the past 60 days, I have been reflecting on what is happening at home, and continue to agonise about the exponential increase in cases of infections, number of deaths, but pleasantly elated by the increasing rate and number of recoveries. Similarly, I agonise about what is happening in my immediate environment in Nigeria. This is a natural reaction for a diplomat, whose life is two-pronged – a life in South Africa and a life in Nigeria. My absence from home during this period leaves an even bigger void.

In his article, published in the *Daily Maverick* on 25 May 2020, South Africa's Ambassador to Brazil, Ambassador Ntsiki Mashimbye, articulated aptly the agony of being away from loved ones during this period of COVID-19. "The greatest cause of

anxiety among diplomatic officials, both in Brasilia and São Paulo, is the health of family and friends in South Africa, especially those with elderly and vulnerable parents and siblings". We in Abuja and Lagos are also feeling this sense of anxiety. I also have no doubt, whatsoever, that my committed colleagues from the length and breadth of the world will share the same sentiments.

When the Nigerian Government announced its first 14-days lockdown at the end of March 2020, many South Africans could not return back to South Africa. As days passed, anxiety grew, and many were overcome by a sense of anxiety, panic, confusion and uncertainty. South African missions in Nigeria started in earnest to work towards securing an evacuation flight by SAA, through the commendable support of DIRCO's Command Centre in Pretoria. On 12 April 2020, 119 South Africans took off from Lagos to South Africa, where they were reunited with their families, but all subjected to a 14-days mandatory quarantine. We subsequently received messages of appreciation through a WhatsApp group established for South Africans in Nigeria. This was a reminder that, as diplomats, ours is a task of serving, and putting our right foot forward – even during the toughest of times. At this point, I thank my government sincerely for the opportunity to serve. I will cherish that for years to come. It has become apparent that the life of a diplomat during the era of COVID-19 requires faith, strength and hope that this too shall pass.

"Nothing in life that's worth anything is easy" – Former US President Barack Obama

HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TRIGGERED A RETURN OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY AND PROGRESSIVE INTERNATIONALISM?

- by Jaimal Anand and Nicholas Wolpe

As Ahmed Kathrada remarked, "it would be a wrong interpretation of history if we ignored the role of the international community in our struggle". This quote by the late struggle icon vividly captures the important role played by the international community in the struggle against apartheid and the pursuit to attain democracy and human rights in South Africa.

The momentum produced by the struggle against apartheid stimulated and harnessed international support that transcended geo-political fault lines, which at the time were pronounced and rigid. As the world rose in unison against apartheid, we witnessed what could be achieved when the world came together as one voice, bound together by a common bond and purpose.

The essence of international solidarity lays in the singularity of purpose of countries. The fight against the injustices of apartheid was a clear articulation of this singularity of purpose. It was much more than just unified political beliefs, ideals, purpose and opposition to a repugnant ideology. It transcended politics and went into the realm of friendship, which was most vividly exemplified by the relationship between ANC President OR Tambo and Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. The latter remarked, "there exists no *they* and we, only *us*. Solidarity is and has to be indivisible". This notion has unfortunately faded with a resurgence of *realpolitik* in our discourse. The political discourse now is increasingly about a return to preserving borders and keeping the "other" out.

The geopolitical order is characterised not by the bonds that define and shape solidarity, but by an inward-looking, protectionist view, defined by "I", not "us". Today, the world is an increasingly unsafe place, starkly illustrated by major flashpoints such as those in Libya, Syria and Palestine, to name a few. Anxieties around the ongoing tensions between the United States, Iran and China remain high.

The reality is that, in recent years, our responses to global conflicts, challenges, threats and opportunities have not been shaped and defined by a common focus and purpose, but by self-interest and self-preservation.

The shift in sentiment away from "us" has seen a rise in global strife, which has manifested in various forms, exacerbated by an inherent unwillingness to collectively address and solve the growing conflicts that have come to shape global relations. Now, in 2020, we seem to be on the verge of a new story as we are battling to manage the effects of the COVID-19 virus ravaging the planet.

Africa Day represents a history that is bound to the values of progressive internationalism and human solidarity. The global discourse on the history of the post-colonial era is a mixed bag of praise, cynical commentary and criticism. On an individual basis, many of us share views that straddle optimism and pessimism, depending on the issue at hand. Internationalism demands that we express our views and formulate our analysis in order to strengthen and build Africa, the world's wealthiest continent, to enjoy its endowments through development, peace, stability and importantly, an environment in which her sons and daughters will flourish and make maximum use of our inherent talent and strength.

South Africa has assumed Chairship of the African Union during this COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when the world has to confront this devastating public health threat. We have seen how COVID-19 has led to the development of a duopoly; a contradictory and controversial global approach.



The COVID-19 pandemic is pushing nations to recognise and acknowledge the need for solidarity in tackling global pandemics, but simultaneously it is driving many to become more inward-looking, insular, fearful and intolerant. The rise of traditional nationalist politics, anti-immigrant sentiments and the rising tide of self-preservation has seen unprecedented attacks on our multilateral institution. The recent attack on the World Health Organisation in the midst of a global pandemic is disturbing, yet conversely Africa's austere defence of the institution has demonstrated the resilience of our internationalism when we act as a collective.

Encouragingly, this crisis has brought to the fore our traditional approach to dealing with crises, international solidarity and cooperation. We understand very well that our sense of Ubuntu will always come to the fore in times of crisis and once again it has. Solidarity is reflected in our level of concern of the plight of our fellow man. Under normal circumstances, millions in the world are hungry, poor, victims of conflict and violence, homeless, displaced and without hope. COVID-19 has brought this shameful situation into stark relief – might the world pay attention?

At this moment of significant change, surely it is time to rekindle old notions of solidarity between people and, importantly, between countries in southern Africa? How can we control the "virus that knows no boundaries" to break down barriers and establish a new, progressive order based on social justice and equal opportunity? We are undoubtedly in a time of severe crisis. Climate change is threatening the most vulnerable and the future of youth, social inequality is on the rise, and right-wing movements are framing a political agenda predicated on "I" and intolerance. The crises confronting us also offer us an opportunity to address and change the way we do things. In this regard, we cannot escape the reality that a post-COVID-19 world will be different not only in how we interact with each other but how we go about doing business.

As Rudi Muhammad, in a 2010 report to the United Nations Human Rights Council stated, "international solidarity is a precondition to human dignity, the basis of all human rights, and a human-centred approach to development, and has a bridge-building function across all divides and distinctions. It encompasses the values

of social justice and equity; goodwill among peoples and nations, and integrity of the international community; sovereignty and sovereign equality of all states, and friendly relations among them."

The 20th century was marked by two devastating world wars and the long and protracted Cold War, which threatened a superpower fall-out that would have left the planet in pieces. Creating a better life for all humanity was set to be a complex and daunting task for the new millennium, and indeed, the 21st century started on a somewhat surreal note with the attack on the Twin Towers in New York. The events of September 11, 2001, were to launch a new, more sinister global trajectory. Suddenly, extremism, terrorism, fundamentalism – concepts which had existed for decades – were now set to occupy and dominate the global discourse of the 2000s.

The 20th century was also marked by a period of decolonisation, but it did not take long for liberated states, especially in resource-rich Africa, to experience elements of recolonisation. Neo-colonialism did not necessarily take the traditional form of invading armies; this time it was a process of seizing control through proxy mechanisms that included global corporations with vested interests in Africa's resource base. The global power elites were compelled to ensure that governments and governance systems reflected and also served such interests.

With the Asian African Conference in Bandung in 1955, and the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961, it was clear that the newly liberated states understood the need to organise themselves and prevent the emerging threat of neo-imperialist forces, especially given the dynamics of the Cold War.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were to represent the core values of the Non-Aligned Movement: *Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.*

On 25 May 1963, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed, and the 32 liberated African states took a clear position on colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. These developments reflected the need to understand the implications of the 1884-5 Berlin Conference that created an Africa that was to serve the interests and needs of the colonial powers, not the continent or her people.

African leaders (increasingly world leaders) understood very well that the Berlin Conference was the product of demigods who took it upon themselves to displace Africa's centuries' old indigenous histories, territories, and most of all dignity. With that, the OAU was determined to ensure that sovereignty, territorial integrity and dignity of Africa and her people would be restored.

Will the post COVID-19 era reaffirm our noble virtues? As our former President Nelson Mandela would remind us, *it is in our hands*, on this affirmation we dare not falter.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PREVENTION

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TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

Social distance

Always wear your mask

Facts not fake news

Educate yourself



international relations
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Department:
International Relations and Cooperation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



*"Only with unity can we be sure
that Africa really governs Africa."*

- Julius Nyerere -

Nyerere (1922-1999) was political leader in East Africa who led the former British colonies of Tanganyika Territory and Zanzibar to independence and later to unification as modern Tanzania. Nyerere was also the major force behind the Organization of African Unity (OAU; now the African Union).



**AFRICA
DAY** 2020

Join us for a special broadcast to
commemorate **Africa Day 2020**.
Monday 25 May 2020, 13h00 CAT

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Minister Naledi Pandor participating in the SADC Council of Ministers Video-Conference Meeting



Right: President Cyril Ramaphosa during the virtual 73rd Session of the World Health Assembly



Repatriates from Gabon, 23 May 2020



Left: The group of South Africans stranded in Malawi is repatriated.



Thank you video from a family member who is grateful to DIRCO for the safe return of their sick loved one



Officials at the 24-hr Command Centre



The young artists who were stranded in Turkey returned home to South Africa, 24 May 2020

IT'S
YOUR VOICE

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PREVENTION



My mask protects you.

Your mask protects me.



international relations
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

STAY
SAFE

PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS



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 24th day of the month.

"As long as many of our people still live in utter poverty, as long as children still live under plastic covers, as long as many of our people are still without jobs, no South African should rest and wallow in the joy of freedom."

- Nelson Mandela -

Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013) was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, political leader, and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He was the country's first black head of state and the first elected in a fully representative democratic election.

THE
**AFRICA
WE WANT**



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