

IT'S YOUR VOICE



Internal Newsletter of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation

ubuntu diplomat

YOUTH POWER:
GROWING SOUTH AFRICA
TOGETHER IN THE PERIOD
OF COVID-19



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EDITOR'S

LETTER

Being young is arguably the most carefree stage of human life. It is the phase where one is able to throw caution to the wind and take risks – a time for experience, experiment and perhaps adventure and with that, it is hoped, comes wisdom. Youth is not a phase for hardship.

At least, these are some of the assumptions. Indeed, if this is imagery from an ideal world. However, if the lives of the majority of youth in our world, particularly in Africa, are anything to go by, it could possibly be described as a debilitating journey. Certainly, the youth of 1976 did not have even a smidgen of that idealistic opportunity. At a time when their single most demanding responsibility should be outperforming their peers at multiple spheres of school, their days were spent considering whether the education that they were forced to contend with would provide them with a better future than their parents' present. A concern that privilege could easily save many people from the injustices of apartheid.

To achieve this privilege, Hector Pieteron, Tsietso Mashinini, Murphy Morobe, Khotso Seatlholo, Murphy Morobe, Billy Masetlha, Antoinette Sithole, Seth Mazibuko, Elias Masinga, Peter Lengene and so many more used their leadership skills for a cause that they truly believed in. Something that invoked a passion in them so deep, it gave them the strength and courage to go forth and fight for what any young person deserves – an education that will arm them with myriad opportunities for a comfortable if not better life than the one they were born into.

Ambassador Johnny Sexwale remembers some of the heroes of 16 June 1976 as he recounts events of that day, which also served as one of a number of catalysts for the mobilisation of international solidarity in the struggle against the apartheid laws that ensured the incapacitation of the life of those young people before they could even live it.

While the youth of '76 faced their enemy head on because they knew where it existed and were even able to devise strategies for how to realise the ideal of equal education for all of South Africa's children, the youth of 2020 are tackling a faceless enemy. Not only is it invisible, but it is also stealth, attacking with a ruthless rapidity that has the entire planet in a flat spin. COVID-19 is a slippery eel that has kept world leaders heavily occupied. It continues to dominate international news cycles and has forced mankind to adapt, innovate and evolve as quickly as the callous virus arrived.

In his Youth Day address, which was hosted virtually, President Cyril Ramaphosa said that: "Young people must rise to the challenge of leading our recovery after the Coronavirus. We have young entrepreneurs and business owners who, through their innovative ideas, have been able to change their communities for the better and create new employment opportunities". Yes, the enemy is invisible but as the President states, there are opportunities in this new challenge that today's youth can use to turn the tide for the good of the country. Lindi Dube gives perspectives on the struggle of today's youth in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During June, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) hosted a panel discussion with players in the youth arena



through a webinar, led by the Branch: Public Diplomacy and the Gender Unit in the Office of the COO, on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the youth. Through such dialogue, DIRCO can be pivotal in helping to shape an economically robust post-COVID-19 South Africa.

Essentially, in the midst of the Coronavirus despair, there is certainly room for hope among the youth. As South Africa's foremost diplomat, Mr OR Tambo, said about the uprisings of 1976: "This uprising of 1976-77 was, of course, the historic watershed ... Within a short period of time, it propelled into the forefront of our struggle millions of young people, the youth of today will rise."

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Globe at a Glimpse

Statement by HE Mr Alvin Botes, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, during the United Nations (UN) Security Council Open Video Teleconference Meeting on the Question of Palestine, Wednesday, 24 June 2020

Mr President,

Allow me to express my gratitude to you for calling this session today. Our deliberations should by no means be seen as business as usual. In this regard, I would like to thank Mr Nickolay Mladenov for his insightful, yet perturbing account on the situation in the Middle East more specifically, the question of Palestine.

Seventy-two years ago, we spoke of a “catastrophe”, a period in Palestinian history known as the “Al-Naqba” when more than 700 000 Palestinians were forced to abandon their homeland and seek refuge in neighbouring countries and abroad as a Jewish state came into being on Palestinian soil.

Today, 72 years later, it would seem Palestinians are facing another imminent “catastrophe” as Israel is set to advance legislation to annex parts of the West Bank and Jordan Valley from as early as the 1st of July. These threats and pronouncements of annexation are in stark violation of international law, disregard international humanitarian law, UN Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 446 (1979) and 2334 (2016), agreed-upon parameters for peace, and further undermine any prospect of peace between the parties.

For more than half a century the world has

stood by and watched as Palestinian land, olive grove by olive grove, village by village, town by town, have been lost. We have witnessed the daily suffering of Palestinians as they are being subjected to the continued construction and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on their rightful land. We have watched as Palestinians have endured systematic discrimination as opposed to settlers who are provided services and allowed civil liberties such as freedom of movement and the issuance of building permits, a right denied to Palestinians living in the occupied territories. Moreover, we have observed as Palestinian land and property were seized and livelihoods snatched away and destroyed, despite being on the right-side of the law, as determined by international law and numerous UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

We have borne witness as violence, riots and civil disobedience campaigns have swept across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as Palestinians have engaged in their struggle for their inalienable right to freedom and self-determination. We have looked on as men, women, the elderly and children have been victimised, assaulted and detained.

We have looked on as the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate in the Gaza Strip with Palestinians continuing to live in unacceptable, precarious circumstances, where their movement has



been restricted, where they have been given limited access to water and electricity, and deprived of the basic human rights you and I take for granted on a daily basis. We have also witnessed the occupying power restricting access to educational and economic opportunities. Additionally, at a time when the world is facing a global pandemic with the spread of COVID-19, the Palestinians have to contend with a severely overburdened and fragile healthcare system. We have also unfortunately seen the reduction of contributions to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which for decades have been providing basic social and humanitarian services to Palestinians.

It is said that history has a way of repeating itself, yet it would appear that we do not learn from these turbulent and painfully unjust historical events, which continue to shape our present. My own country has in its past not been spared these injustices, where one people is assigned a higher value above another. This unfortunately runs at the core of the occupation of Palestine and it threatens peace, stability and security, a collective value that is it at the very core of the UN, which is commemorating its 75th anniversary this year.

Yet, we ask ourselves, what is the *raison d'être* of the Security Council if we continue to look the other way, adopt hollow resolutions, ignore current resolutions and fail to act against those that so arrogantly defy the very principles that this organisation has been founded on?

Israel, the occupying power in Palestine, has consistently illustrated through its actions a total disrespect for legality and justice. This is, once again, evident in the Secretary-General's 14th quarterly report on the implementation of Resolution 2334 of 2016 in which there are detailed accounts of continuous settlement activity by the occupying power, despite the intentions set-out by adopted Security Council resolutions, such as Resolution 2334. In this regard, South Africa concurs with the observation by the Secretary-General that “the establishment and expansion of settlements fuel resentment, hopelessness and disillusionment among Palestinians and are key drivers of human rights violations, and significantly heighten Israeli-Palestinian tensions”.

Therefore, the intention to annex more Palestinian land should be regarded as the

proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. It is time that Israel, as the occupying power, be held accountable for its illegal actions and consistent violations of international law and resolutions of this council.

To date, this council has taken no action to stop the building of settlements on illegally occupied land; to stop the confiscation and destruction of Palestinian land and property; and to stop the illegal blockade of Gaza. This council's inaction has carried on for far too long and in so doing has failed the people of Palestine. How can we expect to remain credible and call on parties in other conflicts on the Council's agenda to abide by and implement resolutions or face further council action, when we seemingly condone the actions of the Israeli Government by failing to act against its violations.

We should be ashamed of ourselves.

We should be ashamed that on our watch we have ignored and denied Palestinians their basic human rights and aspirations. We should be ashamed that by our silence, we have protected the oppressor instead of the oppressed. We should be ashamed that decades later a lasting and just, peaceful resolution of the continued occupation remains as elusive as it did in 1948 when this matter was first brought to this council. We should ask ourselves what message is sent to those that are fighting for their inalienable rights to freedom, self-determination and sovereignty and to those that oppress and deny these rights?

Allow me to reiterate that South Africa will continue to support all efforts aimed at the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state, existing side-by-side and in peace with Israel, within internationally recognised borders, based on those of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line

with all relevant UN resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters.

In this regard, peace can only prevail once both parties engage in inclusive dialogue and constructive negotiations without preconditions as this is the only means to ensure lasting peace, security and stability.

Additionally, there must be an accountability mechanism in place to ensure that commitments made are implemented. To this end, a viable and sustainable peace plan for the Middle East must ensure that Palestine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic viability are guaranteed, with sovereign equality between Palestine and Israel.

I thank you.



CHARTER *of* THE UNITED NATIONS

AND STATUTE *of* THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

DIRCO'S Webinar on Diplomacy and the Youth Under the COVID-19 Pandemic

- by Golden Neswiswi

June is observed as Youth Month on our national calendar. It is a period to reflect on the challenges faced by our young people and what measures are put in place to uplift our young people.

On 16 June, 1976, more than 10 000 young people were brutally massacred by the apartheid regime. The young people of our country demonstrated their aspiration for a new South Africa, protesting in their thousands against the hated system of Bantu Education. They were met by heavily armed police who fired teargas and later live ammunition on demonstrating students. This resulted in a widespread revolt that turned into an uprising against the government. While the uprising began in Soweto, it spread across the country and carried on until the following year.

The aftermath of the events of 16 June 1976 had dire consequences for the apartheid government. Images of the police firing on peacefully demonstrating students led an international revulsion against South Africa as its brutality was exposed.

After the establishment of the democratic dispensation in 1994, 16 June was declared as the commemoration of National Youth Day in South Africa. This is the day the country annually reflects on the massacre of school children during the Soweto Uprising of 1976. The South African Government has put forward the dreams of the young people at the forefront of its priorities.

Youth Month 2020 was celebrated amid the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having

a disastrous impact on society and the economy. Government continues to seek effective strategies to work together with the youth towards advancing their socio-economic freedoms. These strategies include examining ways in which government could align its perspectives and actions to those of the youth.

In his State of the Nation Address in February 2020, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, expressed concern over the growing challenges faced by our young people and called for action to address these, especially the crisis of youth unemployment. Government continues to seek effective strategies to work together with the youth towards advancing their socio-economic freedoms. These strategies include examining ways in which government could align its perspectives and actions to those of the youth.

In this regard, the Branch: Public Diplomacy in collaboration with the Office of the COO, hosted an online symposium/webinar on 11 June 2020, led by Acting COO, Ms Charlotte Lobe, focussing on "Diplomacy and the Youth under the COVID-19 Pandemic".

The objectives of the webinar were to:

- persuade young people to participate in debates and strategies on the fight against the COVID-19 novel Coronavirus pandemic
- highlight achievements of the youth sector and government programmes for youth development and how youth can access these to advance their livelihoods
- encourage dialogue and discussions among invited stakeholders and participants to policy and practice
- provide a platform for government, national and international organisations involved in



DIRCO YOUTH MONTH WEBINAR ON "DIPLOMACY & YOUTH IN THE AGE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation invites you to join Deputy Minister, Alvin Botes and representatives from stakeholder organisations, for a webinar in commemoration of June 16.

Thursday
11 JUNE 2020
10:00 – 11:00am
Microsoft Teams



#YouthMonth2020 #YouthPower

youth developmental programmes to reflect on work being done to address the challenges our young people face in the age of COVID-19.

The following organisations participated in the webinar:

- Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD)
- National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)
- United Nations Population Fund Agency (UNFPA)
- South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA).

The webinar was run as a panel discussion composed of five representatives from the aforementioned organisations.

The panel members were as follows:

- Dr Bernice Hlagala - DWYPD
- Mr Waseem Carrim - CEO of the NYDA
- Ms Ditebogo Lebea - SAIIA
- Ms Tlangelani Shilubane - UNFPA.

The Youth Month webinar was streamed live on DIRCO's social media platform, namely Facebook and Twitter, and questions were welcomed from registered attendees as well as from social media.

During the event, the panellists made very poignant observations and recommendations. Ms Lebea shared that groups such as the Youth Policy Committee, a convening group that brings together youth organisations and young individuals to understand and participate in policy processes that affect young people, had to identify ways to continue their work during COVID-19.

The NYDA's Mr Waseem Carrim said that "by depriving our young people and leaving them on the sidelines, we are wasting their energy and talent. As a country, this is something we need to still look at during and beyond COVID-19", highlighting the benefits of being gainfully employed, which include having dignity and being able to eke out a living for oneself.

Perhaps one of the most memorable statements were made by the DWYPD's Dr Bernice Hlagala: "Youth Diplomacy gives young people a voice in policy-making". Indeed, this is an opportunity that DIRCO affords youth through the various entry point programmes offered by the department, as highlighted by the DTRD's Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Mathu Joyini.

DIRCO YOUTH MONTH WEBINAR ON "DIPLOMACY & YOUTH IN THE AGE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"
11 JUNE 2020



Ms Ditebogo Lebea
Youth Programmes Associate at the South African Institute of International Affairs

" Globally we continue to witness the youth-led climate action which has seen global partnerships between young people from different countries emerge to call for a global transition to a sustainable world. These partnerships include the *We Are the Tomorrow Global Partnership*, the *Future for Fridays Movement* and many others. "



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SAIA 30th ANNIVERSARY AND THE LEGACY OF NELSON MANDELA NDP STRAY SAFE nyda

DIRCO YOUTH MONTH WEBINAR ON "DIPLOMACY & YOUTH IN THE AGE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"
11 JUNE 2020



Mr Waseem Carrim
Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Development Agency

" Employment gives people many things. It gives them dignity, it gives them life security, and access to income "



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SAIA 30th ANNIVERSARY AND THE LEGACY OF NELSON MANDELA NDP STRAY SAFE nyda

16 JUNE
Youth Day Virtual Commemoration

YOUTH POWER: GROWING SOUTH AFRICA TOGETHER IN THE PERIOD OF COVID-19

#YouthDay2020 #YouthMonth2020 #YouthPower

30th ANNIVERSARY AND THE LEGACY OF NELSON MANDELA NDP STRAY SAFE nyda

#YouthDay2020 #YouthPower



"This uprising of 1976-77 was, of course, the historic watershed... Within a short period of time, it propelled into the forefront of our struggle millions of young people."

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CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PREVENTION

**STAY
SAFE**

PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

Social distance

Always wear your mask

Facts not fake news

Educate yourself



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Sustainable Development Goals, the Ocean Space and Youth Development

- by Prof. Anil Sooklal and Mr Jaimal Anand

The month of June is significant for South Africa and the international community. The 16 June 1976 Student Uprisings in Soweto became the catalyst, which resulted in the final push that toppled the apartheid government. 5 June is World Environment Day, which brings international focus worldwide on our actions and responsibilities for the protection of the environment. 8 June is World Oceans Day that recognises the ocean as a provider of our human needs and sustenance.

The role of the youth throughout history has been central in bringing about social change. During the current challenging period that humanity is experiencing, it is increasingly apparent that the key to our future well-being rests with the youth. It is now important to fuse the ideas of a sustainable environment, a shared ocean space with youth development to ignite what will be a dynamic combination that will unleash development, cooperation, prosperity and peace.

The realities that the world will confront post-COVID are yet to be conceptualised. The world we are going to encounter post the pandemic will be quite different from our current reality. Our actions now must relate to a radical review and overhaul of global systems at an unprecedented scale.

We must therefore draw on our shared histories, where traditionally the youth have been a catalyst for change and reformation.

It is important to place our global development strategies into perspective with an accelerated focus on its full implementation. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were conceptualised at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, and adopted on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the UN in 2015. The SDGs were envisaged to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our planet. The faultlines exposed by the COVID pandemic, demonstrates that our need is urgent and we must ensure the vigorous implementation of our commitments.

The idea of a World Oceans Day was proposed in 1992 and formally recognised by the UN in 2008. It is a celebration of our shared ocean space, with emphasis on our dependence on the ocean for much of our basic sustenance and needs.

The theme for this year was “Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean”, which brought to the fore

WORLD OCEANS DAY 2020

UNWORLD OCEANS DAY.ORG

SDG 14, life below water, creating the opportunity to link with SDGs 1-10, which range from education, to gender, to eradicating the indignity of poverty and hunger that has come to negatively impact on the global community in general, and women and youth in particular. This is most evident among the regions of the global South, particularly Africa.

The Youth, Oceans and Sustainable Development

The youth can be a positive force for development when provided with the enabling environment to grow and the opportunity to prosper. Young people should be provided with the necessary education and skills to contribute meaningfully to a productive economy, thereby generating sustainable livelihoods. Among the greatest challenges facing our planet today are inadequate human capital investments and high unemployment rates among the youth.

According to the UN, there were 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 years globally in 2015, representing one out of every six people worldwide.

This number is significant in that by 2030, the year in which we are expected to conduct a final SDG analysis, the youth would either be the beneficiaries of successful SDG implementation or the victims of our failures. The same UN report projected that by 2030, the number of youth would have grown by 7%, adding hundreds of millions of youth to the world population to a staggering 1.3 billion youth between 15 and 24 years old.

This will be most evident in Africa and Asia, which are experiencing interesting changes in terms of their demographic layout. In percentage terms, Asia has seen a steady drop in the growth rate of young people aged 15-24. In terms of numbers, Asia is expected to drop from 718 million in 2015 to 711 million in 2030 and 619 million in 2060. In terms of sheer numbers, Asia will have more youth than any other region until around 2080 when Africa is projected to peak its population growth rate.

In Africa, the percentage of young people is growing rapidly. In 2015, the UN counted 226 million youth aged 15-24, representing 19% of the global youth population.

In Africa, the percentage of young people is growing rapidly. In 2015, the UN counted 226 million youth aged 15-24, representing 19% of the global youth population. By 2030, it is projected that the number of youth in Africa will have increased by 42%. Africa's youth population will grow throughout the 21st century, more than doubling from its current levels by 2055.

Based on the aforementioned realities, it is necessary to expedite the development of the oceans and seas as a frontier for inclusive human development and sustainability by ensuring the full implementation of all SDGs. In particular, SDG Goal 14 requires the preservation and substance of our "blue spaces", which include ecosystems, protecting food security, mainly by preventing overfishing, eradicating marine pollution, and conserving marine and coastal areas that are the basis of food security and livelihoods for billions. Goal 14 further focusses our attention on the ocean's impact on human life, by increasing economic access for the world's poorest communities through the use of marine resources, incubating small-scale fishers, and providing access to the global value chains, logistics chains and markets.

SDG 2, zero hunger, is directly linked to the above and plays a fundamental role in providing human nutrition and food security. It is further connected with SDG 8, focussing on decent work and economic growth. The tourism sector in particular becomes crucial in creating livelihoods and opportunities for inclusive growth and development for millions of people worldwide. Also, related to this is SDG 4, focussing on quality education. The field of ocean management and marine sciences will continue to require new skills and competencies, which will create opportunities for youth development in particular.

The 21st Century IORA and the Youth Collaboration for success

South Africa is a founding member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and has been diligent in supporting the growth and development of the association since inception in 1997. The basis of the organisation emerged out of former President Nelson Mandela's State Visit to India in 1995 and his vision has guided our collective energies that continue to propel the IORA in the 21st century.

On 25 January 1995, during the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation Lecture, in New Delhi, President Mandela stated:

"The 'natural urge of the facts of history and geography' that Nehru spoke of, should broaden itself to include exploring the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim of socio-economic cooperation and other peaceful endeavours; of a special relationship that should help improve the lot of the developing nations in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, Commonwealth and Non-Aligned Movement."

The IORA, in many respects, brings Africa and Asia closer geographically, in terms of our shared histories and development goals. In the spirit of cooperation, IORA's member states and dialogue partners extend our cooperation and partnerships, which span the Arabian Sea, the Mediterranean sea, the Indian, Pacific and the Atlantic oceans.

The Indian Ocean is the third-largest ocean through which most of the world's major sea-lanes pass and it maintains the lion's share of the world's merchant vessels and two-thirds of the world's crude oil shipments. The Indian Ocean is critical to the

the global logistics network. The region has a population of approximately three billion people, almost half the world's population, creating a market that is potentially worth trillions of dollars.

The association has identified the following priorities: Maritime Safety and Security, Fisheries Management, Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation, Trade and Investment Facilitation, Disaster Risk Management, and Tourism and Cultural Exchanges, with two cross-cutting focus areas of cooperation, namely the Blue Economy and Women's Economic Empowerment.

These priorities reflect the socio-economic opportunities and challenges within the region. The priorities have been carefully and collectively formulated to respond to the multidimensional challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. In many ways, the focus areas identified summarise and reflect the UN SDGs.

Renewed Cooperation and the Way Forward

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) will commence in 2021. This complements the African Decade of the Seas and Oceans 2015-2025. We believe that cooperation in the Indian Ocean through IORA is well poised to become a potential model for this crucial decade. In an era of disruptions, perpetual risks to human livelihoods and sustainable development amidst real threats posed by climate change, conflict, transnational crime, extremism and disease, we are called upon to strengthen our joint efforts and cooperation in conventional science and technology as well as research, innovation and ideas.

The youth are well placed to act as catalysts in expediting the opportunities that the ocean space provides to humanity. The concept of a shared space, and One Ocean will increasingly gain momentum as a means to ensure collective human development. Despite the challenges and risks of maritime security, the IORA has pronounced the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and holds firm to the view that our futures will remain dependant on cooperation and partnerships rather than territorial hegemony and campaigns.

It is imperative that we leave behind, for generations to come, a world at peace with itself and prosperous wherein human potential can be fully developed and realised. When we link the World Environment Day and the World Oceans Day with South Africa's Youth Month and the UN SDGs 2030, we have the dynamics necessary for shaping a post-COVID society that is inclusive and serves as a catalyst for positive change to the benefit of all of humanity.

Voices from DIRCO

COVID-19: An Opportunity in Crisis - by Lindelwe Dube

The year 2020 began with the international community on the edge of its seat wondering how the escalating tensions and military stand-off between the United States and Iran would impact the world and how multilateral institutions designed to resolve conflicts would respond to the stand off. Within a few weeks, the World Health Organisation (WHO) made an announcement that there was a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, named the Coronavirus (COVID-19), which was shortly thereafter declared a global pandemic. This led many countries to implement lockdown strategies while others issued stay-at-home orders. These strategies included ensuring citizens remained self-isolated, and closing off the borders and air routes from international travel.

The impact of COVID-19 has been felt throughout the world and has impacted both private and public sectors. With the global economy shrinking by 5,2% and economic activities of advanced economies to shrink by 7% according to World Bank projections, this will trigger a mid-year recession. Countries have been forced to look inward and provide disaster management plans and relief funds to:

- help companies and citizens who have been left vulnerable
- prevent loss of life
- prevent economies from crashing.

Although COVID-19 has spread at a slower pace in Africa, the continent still introduced measures ensuring that the spread of the disease was contained. South Africa has been praised for its early response to the virus and

introducing lockdown regulations to flatten the curve. While there has been praise, South Africa's economy has been hard hit. On 24 June 2020, some three months after the first South African COVID-19 case was reported and four months after the main Budget Speech, Minister Tito Mboweni presented the Supplementary Budget Speech. This, he said, was aimed at:

- informing the nation how COVID-19 had impacted the country
- introducing National Treasury's plan to assist the nation through the tough economic climate
- getting the country back on track in its effort to grow an inclusive economy and ensure job creation.

Despite expectations that South Africa's economy will contract by 7.2%, the Government has been able to provide R30 billion in relief funds available through commercial banks. In addition, R23 billion has been made available to the Unemployment Insurance Fund for people who have lost their jobs and R4.7 million for the Special Relief Distress Grant through the Department of Social Development. Despite comprehensive briefings on the disaster management plan, what has been intriguing is the launch of The Presidency's Sustainable Infrastructure Development Symposium (SIDSSA) aimed at stimulating economic growth through an infrastructure development agenda. The launch of SIDSSA builds on President Cyril Ramaphosa's commitment for South Africa to attract over US\$100 billion in investments. The SIDSSA provides a mechanism for attracting investment through a number of infrastructure



development projects with some of those projects already at the post-feasibility stage. The SIDSSA provides an opportunity for improved public-private partnerships.

For initiatives like SIDSSA to work, they must be inclusive of smaller businesses, which can benefit from working on the wide range of infrastructure projects. To build on this new momentum brought by SIDSSA and related initiatives, government will have to ensure policy consistency to ensure transparency. This would also enable the public to be aware of progress on SIDSSA. There have been regular briefings by departments to the nation during the COVID-19 lockdown. That type of communication, if sustained in general, will provide an opportunity for citizens to understand government's plans and how they impact them.

The economy is not the only sector that has been hard hit by COVID-19; the pandemic has amplified social disparities. The case can be made that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women and girls. The lockdown regulations have had unintended consequences of victims being in lockdown with their abusers. Within the first week of lockdown, there were 2 300 cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) reported to the police. This crisis has not been exclusive to South Africa but the rise of GBV during COVID-19 has been prevalent in many countries. The South African Government has been able to provide an Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP) on domestic violence and femicide. The ERAP has created an Interim Steering Committee, which is inclusive of both government and civil-society organisations with the intention to address GBV and systematic inefficiencies that fail women and

children on a daily basis. The Interim Steering Committee has mobilised resources to be directed at sexual offenses courts, care centres and family violence and child protection services within police units. Government has been commended on its efforts.

COVID-19 has highlighted inequities that exist within society, affecting mainly poor people. A post-COVID-19 South Africa needs to draw on the momentum gained during this pandemic that has forced ministries to work on disaster management plans to avoid a total collapse of society. The State has shown that the capacity exists but now needs consistent will to maintain the gains made during this pandemic.

South Africa has not been without its own challenges in battling the COVID-19 global pandemic. However, it has overwhelmingly stood out in the international community for managing the spread of the pandemic and its impact on the country. The first African vaccine development programme has started at the University of the Witwatersrand, and it is an opportunity to showcase our skills and institutions. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for South Africa to strengthen regional and continental health institutions that will support the WHO so that Africa can play a meaningful role in international public health matters. It also provides an opportunity to emphasise that international institutions are beneficial and could be stronger if all countries collaborate instead of fighting over influence.

COVID-19 has shown that almost all countries, whether developed or developing, are experiencing the same structural inequities that are causing a number of protests, perhaps named differently, but nonetheless speaking to structural injustices that have become the norm in our societies.

It becomes important to advocate for change and to argue that it is possible because COVID-19 showed us that governments can rise to the occasion when the need requires.

However, in a post-COVID-19 world, we do not need more disasters to encourage leaders to have the political will to tackle structural and systematic disparities. If not, then emerging young leaders will have to tackle these issues head on and use multilateral institutions to promote change. The world cannot afford to rely on pandemics and disasters to trigger systemic change.



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keeping my colleagues
safe by wearing my mask.
**Play your part and stay
safe.**



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Soweto June 16, 1976 - Tribute to the Youth of South Africa

- by Ambassador Johnny Sexwale

It is Sunday morning, and I am working from the study in the official residence of the South African Embassy in Congo Brazzaville. President Cyril Ramaphosa has appointed me as Ambassador to the Republic of Congo since December 2019.

Congo Brazzaville is the Sub-Saharan Africa's third-largest oil producer. A tropical country in central Africa near the Equator. With its population of just over four million, Congo did not escape the scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country is under lockdown with various restrictions, and measures are in place to stop the spread of the virus.

Reading the *Sunday Independent* electronic newspaper of 14 June 2020, my eye was caught by an article, titled: *Soweto's Forgotten Heroes* by journalists Zingisa Mkhuma and Siphon Mabaso.

The news article was about two gallant warriors of our liberation struggle, Barney Molokoane and Sibusiso Mashinini, who died fearlessly fighting the enemy, during the liberation struggle of South Africa.

Barney and Sibusiso fled into exile in 1976. What came to mind while reading the story, was the many other struggle heroes, who sacrificed their youth and those who gave their lives to the struggle. Those heroes will never be forgotten. Their names and their heroic deeds should be etched in monuments across South Africa for the future generations to learn about them.

16 June 2020 will be the 44th anniversary of the Soweto Uprisings, (Youth Day). Those who

were present on that chilly day can still hear the staccato of the police machine guns and the smell of tear gas.

This is the day that changed the history of South Africa, and it is also a day that ignited the fire that led to our freedom. The murder and arrests of students in Soweto did not stop the momentum and the determination of the students to fight the racial system of the apartheid government in South Africa.

Barney, together with more than 500 Soweto students, underwent military training in Angola, where Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) established its first military camps in Africa, under the instruction of the Cuban military personnel.

On 26 October 1976, the President of the African National Congress (ANC), Oliver Reginald Tambo, addressed the United Nations in Washington in the United States of America, on the topic of the ongoing uprisings and the killings of black people and children in South Africa. He said:

"Shall we say the black people of South Africa have performed a heroic deed and leave it at that? Or shall we coin new words to describe the temper of the young man of 10 years who marched undaunted on a French-built armoured car in the streets of Soweto, stone in hand, until he was cut down by a torrent of machine-gun bullets?"

"We say no. No words are necessary at all. The blood that our people have shed calls for action, not for more words. It calls for action to destroy the fascist regime that continues to massacre the innocent."

The liberation struggle produced many heroes



who started the countdown to the fall of the apartheid regime.

Many liberation struggle heroes were killed while confronting the enemy, during cross-border raids in neighbouring countries, ambushed by rebel forces in Angola, kidnapped, arrested and hanged.

Among the many, some of the names that will always be remembered are those heroes of the struggle such as:

- Montsho Mogabudi
- Sello Motau
- Cassius Maake
- Lesetja Sexwale
- Jerry Mosolodi
- Solomon Mahlangu
- Zweli Nyanda
- Dulcie September
- Vernon Nkadimeng
- Mary Mini.

The list is endless. These gallant fighters of our liberation will never be forgotten.

The ongoing government programme of erecting monuments across South Africa for the heroes of the struggle is commendable. South African citizens, the global population and the future generations should know and honour the men and women who dedicated their lives towards the freedom of South Africa.

The training received from the international community, the moral and material support received from the governments of Angola, Soviet Union, Cuba and many progressive forces around the world, made it possible for the liberation movement to sustain the momentum of the offensive for the destruction of the system and the creation of a new order in our country.

Long live the spirit of the youth of 16 June 1976.

Inter-Generational Dialogue: Sharing Stories on Youth Agency, Race & Inequality

- by Zama Ngwane

On 30 June 2020, the Embassy of South Africa in Washington, DC hosted an *Inter-Generational Dialogue: Sharing Stories on Youth Agency, Race & Inequality*. The dialogue formed part of the Embassy's commemoration of Youth Month and civic engagement on the current socio-economic challenges faced by youth globally.

Guest speakers participating in the dialogue, which was open for participation to both South African and American youth through various streams, included:

- Ambassador Nomaindiya Mfeketo, South African Ambassador to the United States (US)
- Ambassador Patrick Gaspard, President of the Open Society Foundations
- Destiny Hodges, Youth Leader at Howard University and member of the Youth@SAIIA
- Celiwe Shivambu, Youth Leader at the University of the Witwatersrand and member of the Youth@SAIIA
- Meisha Robinson, Chief Executive of Hope, I Am, We Are.

The dialogue specifically addressed youth activism from several perspectives, including the historical, recent international movements and under the magnifying scope of COVID-19. Throughout the discussions, participants acknowledged the energy of youth to mobilise together for social justice, address systemic inequalities and to be the impetus for change.

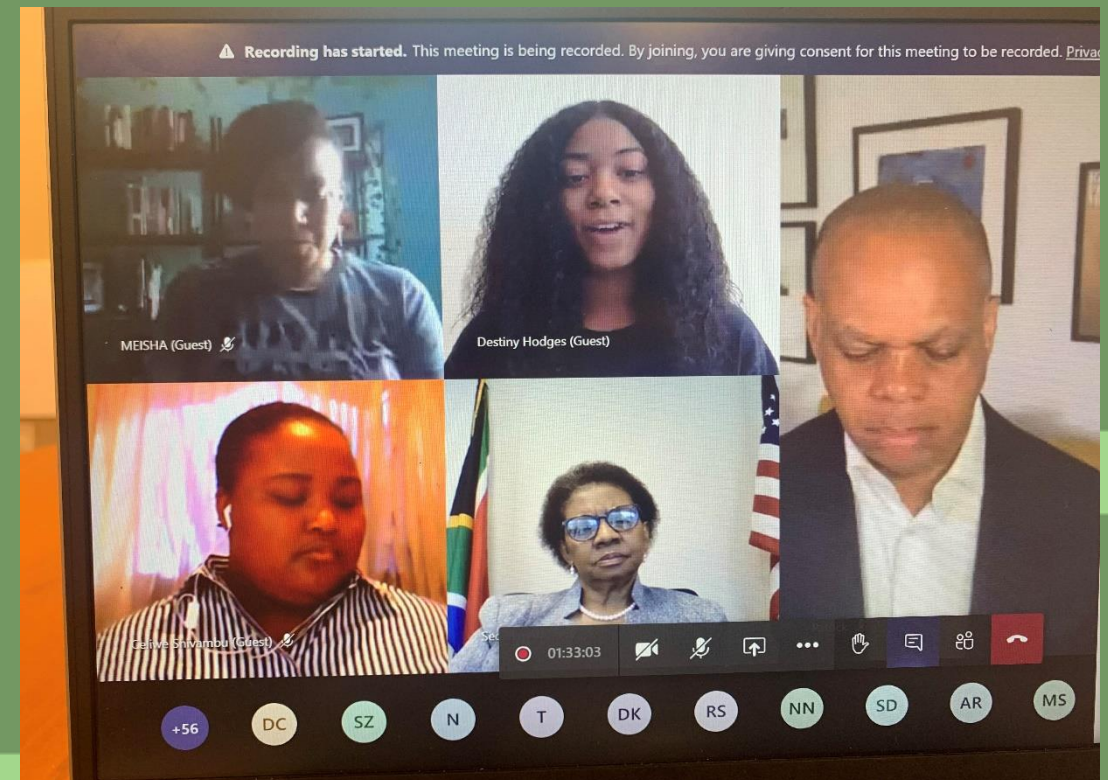
It was also emphasised that in addressing our global socio-economic challenges and systemic inequalities, we (as global citizens) would need to leverage off collective strategies. On the issue of addressing the deep inequalities, which are a consequence of structural racism, black youth across the Diaspora were all equally affected and stated that to move forward, an acknowledgement of the collective struggle was an important and unifying factor. Further to this,

speaker Ambassador Gaspard highlighted that it would be important to, "... lean into each other's history and literature, and put into place scaffolding [for] our understanding of the [current] situation".

the COVID-19 health pandemic was also raised as an element which further exposed the disparities within our societies. In the US, it is largely the African American community which has been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and in South Africa, the poorer margins of society are most feeling its economic consequences.

In highlighting some of the strategies to support youth activism, participants called on the need for "real" and meaningful engagement of young people within policy-making spaces; opportunities for mentorship with leaders in the public and private sector; and investment of both financial resources and time into structures that would support the development of young people and the movements that they are leading. One such area could be in social and economic entrepreneurship support.

Our speakers concluded by emphasising that the future had arrived now and that the work in building sustainable and inclusive societies was far from over.



Inter-Generational Dialogue: Sharing Stories on Youth Agency, Race & Inequality

JUNE 30, 2020 | 9AM (ET)/ 3PM (SAST)
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AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED
STATES

AMBASSADOR PATRICK
GASPARD, PRESIDENT OF THE
OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS &
FORMER UNITED STATES
AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH AFRICA

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LEADER, HOWARD UNIVERSITY

CELIWE SHIVAMBU, YOUTH
LEADER, UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND

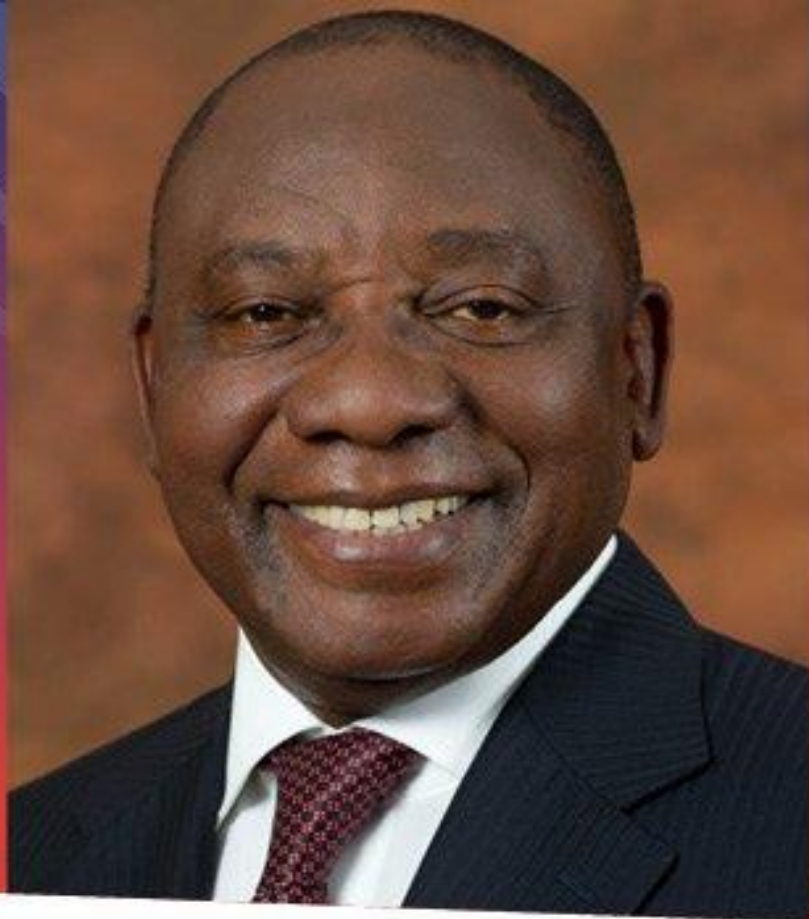
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In the long run, infrastructure investment increases the capacity of the economy, reducing the cost of transport and the capacity and reliability of key services like electricity and municipal services.

— President Cyril Ramaphosa

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The Impact of COVID-19 on Youth Diplomacy

- by Karabo Mokgonyana

When I was officially appointed as the African Youth Ambassador for Peace by the African Union (AU) in February 2020, I had no idea that COVID-19 would heavily slow down my work and change its narrative. The main purpose of my role is to advance and represent the peace and security interests of youth across the continent and within southern Africa. This involves directly working with youth across the continent and working with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) as the relevant regional mechanisms for southern Africa.

COVID-19 began to take its toll on my work as a youth diplomat upon the cancellation of my travel to Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, for our induction, a technical meeting on Silencing the Guns in Africa and to be formally introduced to the AU Commissioner of Peace and Security and focal points of SADC and COMESA. This meeting was meant to set the foundation for my work, but it was scheduled during the initial 21-day lockdown of South Africa and during a period in which the AU was adopting safety procedures advised by the World Health Organisation. Thereafter, every other meeting and activities of rolling out peace and security projects were either cancelled or postponed.

There were three major impacts that COVID-19 has had on my work. Firstly, most of the work moved to digital spaces, which impacts on how we as African youth deliver our peace efforts. Digitalising a lot of the work affects reach and access because of the existing digital divide in Africa and it has further perpetuated inequality because only those with the necessary technology will get the capacity-building or the necessary information to advance their peace efforts.

Secondly, the social distancing and prohibitions on movement mean reach cannot



be maximised to access youth in remote communities. Projects are limited to what one can do at home or within the bounds of regulations on movement. This has impacted on my missions to visit any of the southern African countries, including movement within South Africa.

Thirdly, funding is being diverted to health-related COVID-19 activities, thus making it challenging to advance holistic work plans and receive any form of economic remuneration in the form of stipends for travel-related work.

Despite all these challenges, COVID-19 has given me the opportunity to fully prepare to take on this mission. I believe that I am more ready to serve than I was before. But this does not mean that nothing has been unfolding during COVID-19. During COVID-19, there was a lot of training; we finally got introduced to the AU Commissioner of Peace and Security and focal points of SADC and COMESA, signed our terms of reference, finalised our work plans and spoke at some of the prominent digital webinars like the Africa Day Silencing the Guns Virtual Conference.

The journey has been challenging but I am slowly seeing the breakthrough. With or without COVID-19, our work in service will proceed.



Left: Karabo Mokgonyana with her fellow African Youth Peace Ambassadors at the African Union, February 2020



Dr Naledi Pandor participating in the #SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ Meeting video conference at the CSIR



The SADC Senior Officials Meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ video conference at OR Tambo Building



Deputy Minister Alvin Botes receives a courtesy call from the United Nations Regional Coordinator, Ms Nardos Bekele-Thomas



A SAA repatriation flight leaves Moscow with 96 stranded South African citizens, including 37 Mpumalanga students



33 South Africans who were stranded in the Maldives ahead of their repatriation flight

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16 JUNE
Youth Day Virtual Commemoration

**YOUTH POWER:
GROWING SOUTH AFRICA TOGETHER
IN THE PERIOD OF COVID-19**

YOUTH MONTH

President Cyril Ramaphosa

#YouthDay2020 #YouthMonth2020 #YouthPower

