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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to August's edition of *the diplomat*. The month of August is dedicated and is marked by the commemoration of Women's Day (09 August). The celebration of National Women's Day took place in East London, Eastern Cape.

The focus of this issue is on a number of international engagements and it includes the state visits to Lesotho, China and the Russian Federation. It also includes Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe's visit to Austria and Vienna, Deputy Minister Sue van der Merwe receiving a donation for Haiti and Pan African Women's Day.

We have also included profiles of some of the new interns, annual winter games activities from our missions and many more.

the diplomat is an internal newsletter of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation published by the Branch: Public Diplomacy

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The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of *the dirco* or the editors.

The deadline for the next *diplomat* contributions is 23 September 2010. Contributions may be sent to thediplomat@dirco.gov.za

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Cover picture: Ngamntwini

By Nthabiseng Ramatshela
Pictures: Unathi Ngamntwini



Left: President Jacob Zuma and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili wave during the tour of the Katse Dam.

Above: President Zuma is led by senior officer as he observes the guard during the welcoming ceremony at Moshoeshe International Airport

STATE VISIT TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

President Jacob Zuma and Mrs Sizakele Getrude Zuma paid a State Visit to the Kingdom of Lesotho from 12 to 13 August, 2010.

The President and delegation arrived at Moshoeshe International Airport on the morning of 12 August 2010 and were welcomed by Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, Lesotho government Ministers and our South African High Commissioner to Lesotho Mr Happy Mahlangu. There was a Welcoming Ceremony of 21 gun salute at the airport. Immediately following the Welcoming Ceremony President Zuma paid a courtesy call on King Letsie III at the royal palace where the King presented the President with an Ox. Thereafter, official talks were held at the Qhobosheaneng Government Complex, with Prime Minister Mosisili. The President also addressed a Joint

Sitting of Parliament and together with the Prime Minister launched a dialogue between Lesotho and South African business persons.

During the talks it was highlighted that the economies of South Africa and Lesotho are interdependent with Lesotho providing a strategic resource to South Africa in the form of labour and skills. More than 30 percent of its economically active population are employed in South African mines and approximately 50 percent of Lesotho's rural households income comes from family members employed in South Africa. This constitutes approximately 30 percent of the country's per capita GNP.

During an interview with SABC President Zuma addressed a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest between the two countries. In particular, the

discussions focused on issues that touch the lives of ordinary people in both countries, such as facilitation of free movement of people and goods along the common borders; cooperation in the fields of tourism, transport and water sectors; implementation of all Bilateral Agreements; as well as other issues that form the agenda of the Joint Bilateral Commission of Cooperation between the two countries.

On the last day of the visit the President toured the Katse Dam and flew over the Mohale Dam - both being covered by the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) which constitutes one of the finest examples of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. President Zuma also flew over the site of the Polihali Dam which will form part of Phase II of the LHWP.

While President Zuma emphasised the need for



Above: President Zuma is taken on a tour of the waterways in the Katse Dam.



Signing of various agreements

democracy and good governance, he justified the tightened border controls between the countries saying they had been imposed after Pretoria got credible information that criminals wanted to use Lesotho as a springboard to disrupt the World Cup. "Even under normal circumstances, we don't want people to abuse the system (exemptions). We have arrested a lot of people who have come to South Africa illegally (from Lesotho)," he said.

President Zuma concluded the visit by extending an invitation to King Letsie III to visit South Africa, and the King accepted the invitation. The President was accompanied by eight government Ministers, the Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly Mr Max Sisulu, a strong business delegation and senior government officials. ■



President Zuma and Prime Minister Mosisili observe Minister of Justice, Jeff Radebe, signing MOU



President Zuma and Prime Minister Mosisili observe Minister of Trade and Industry, Rob Davies, signing MOU



President Zuma observe Minister of Water Affairs, Buyelwa Sonjica, signing MOU



Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane seen during a Joint Bilateral Commission at the Qhobosheaneng Complex

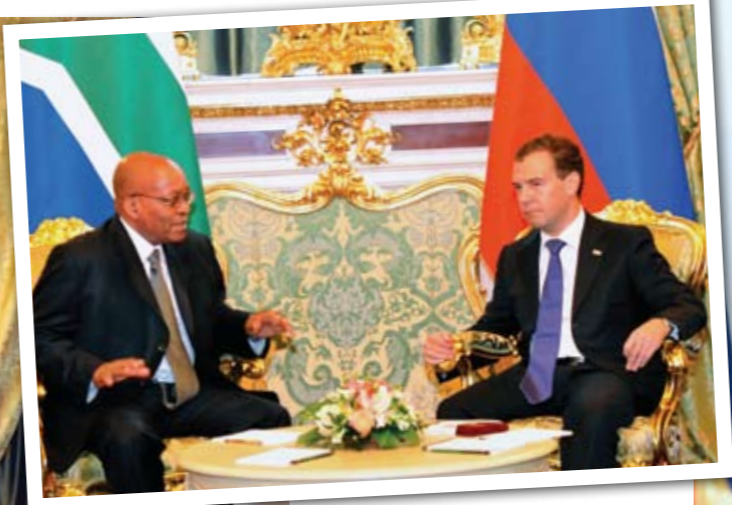


President Zuma listens as Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane reads the official plaque during the opening ceremony of the South African Chancery in Maseru, Lesotho



Minister of Public Works, Geoffrey Doidge gives remarks at the ceremony in Maseru





Above: left to right: President Jacob Zuma in discussions with the Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev



President Zuma arrives at Vnukova Airport and is received by Deputy Minister Borodavkin of the Russian Federation in Moscow



President Zuma accompanied by Ms Tobeka Zuma arrives at Vnukova Airport and is received by Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Ms Lindiwe Sisulu and Minister of Science and Technology Mr Naledi Pandor

THE PRESIDENT'S STATE VISIT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

President Jacob Zuma's State Visit to the Russian Federation is guided by the Treaty of Friendship and Partnership (2006) which affirms the South Africa-Russia strategic partnership for mutually beneficial bilateral, continental and multilateral cooperation. The visit was the first by President Zuma to Russia, following the State Visit to South Africa of former Russian Federation's President Vladimir Putin in 2006.

The visit took place within the context of strengthening North-South cooperation with the aim of consolidating, strengthening and enhancing political relations (bilateral and multilateral); economic and commercial relations; and cooperation and partnership on culture, education and skills development.

President Zuma had a bilateral meeting with President Dmitry Medvedev and the following issues among others were discussed: Setting up a Bi-National Commission (BNC) or an appropriate Mechanism for regular Presidential Summit level meetings; advancing the national innovation and economic competitiveness priorities of Russia's modernisation strategy with particular emphasis on minerals (especially Platinum



Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane signing an agreement next to President Jacob Zuma

Group of Metals), energy (uranium access and nuclear power investments), science and technology (especially nanotechnology, biotechnology, space technology), defence and aerospace, recent Ministerial Political Consultations which confirmed good political relations and political solidarity; and also continued partnership in the Intergovernmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), the Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Military Technological Cooperation; Joint Commission

on Science and Technical Cooperation and a Working Group on Cooperation in the Field of Outer Space as well as The Joint Coordinating Committee.

THE TWO PRESIDENTS SIGNED, AMONGST OTHERS, THE FOLLOWING AGREEMENTS:

- MOU between the South African Space Agency and the Russian Federal Space Agency on Cooperation in the Field of Earth Observation;

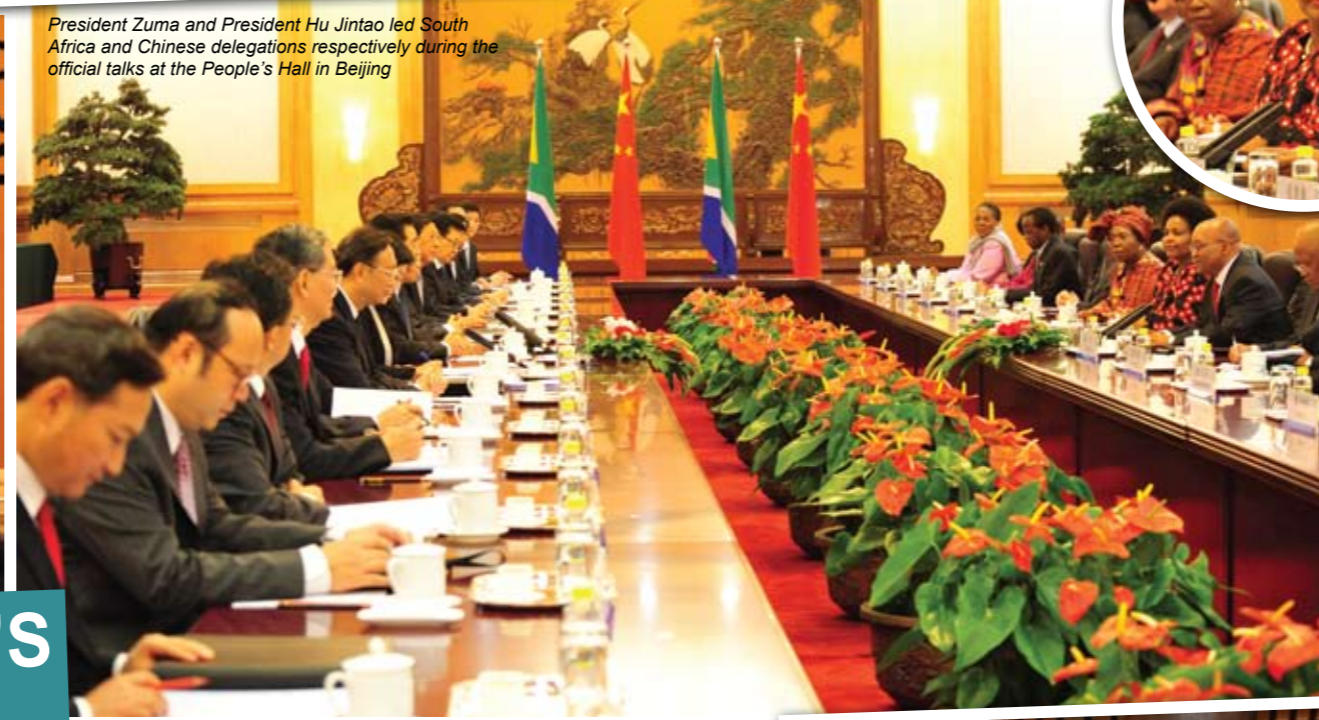


- An Agreement on the visa exemption for diplomatic, official and service passports;

President Zuma was accompanied by eleven ministers namely the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation; Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Minister of Defence and Military Veterans; Minister of Higher Education and Training; Minister of Energy; Minister of Mineral Resources; Minister of Science and Technology; Minister of State Security; Minister of Trade and Industry; Minister of Transport and Minister of Tourism. The President was also accompanied by a strong business delegation covering the following sectors: agro-processing, aviation, banking and finance, defence and aerospace, energy, engineering, ICT, infrastructure (construction), logistics, medical and health services, machinery and tourism. ■



South African delegation led by President Jacob Zuma in discussions with the Russian Federation delegation



President Zuma and President Hu Jintao led South Africa and Chinese delegations respectively during the official talks at the People's Hall in Beijing

Above: Minister of Trade and Industry, Rob Davies addresses the China-SA Business Forum

Below: President Zuma and President Jintao shake hands upon signing and exchanging agreements at the signing ceremony in the People's Hall, China

STATE VISIT TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

President Zuma's visit to China came within the context of South Africa's priority to consolidate South-South relations and strengthening political, economic and trade relations with the People's Republic of China.

one agreement and six memoranda of understanding, aimed at further strengthening bilateral ties and to implement areas of cooperation.

Accordingly, the visit came at a time when South Africa is marking their 12 years of China-South Africa relations since the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1998 and also participating in the Shanghai Expo, where President Zuma visited and toured the African, South African and China Pavilions, respectively.

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership declaration covers many facets of the South Africa-China bilateral relationship. A key element of this expanded partnership is the Partnership for Growth and Development, focusing on key issues such as beneficiation and value addition to resources, infrastructure, market access and trade to the SADC region and Africa as a whole.

During the visit, the two countries signed

The comprehensive Strategic Partnership Declaration will guide South Africa's overall interaction with China over the next ten to



President Zuma signs the visitors book at the Chinese Pavilion during the tour of the Shanghai Expo



Director-General, Ayanda Ntsaluba interacts with participants of the China-SA Business Forum in Beijing

fifteen years. President Zuma also gave address the Renmin University in Beijing where he highlighted the importance of global governance. ■





Deputy President of South African Kgalema Motlanthe, at the Austria, Vienna. XVIII International AIDS Conference 2010. Session 6, SUSA 2010



Main picture from left to right: Annie Lennox IAS President Julio Montaner, Michel Sidibe and Deputy President of South Africa Kgalema Motlanthe

Far above right: Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, Minister of Health at the Austria, Vienna. XVIII International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2010)



“SOUTH AFRICA IS TAKING RESPONSIBILITY”

Deputy President Motlanthe led a high level government delegation to the 18th International Aids Conference in Austria, Vienna. He was supported, on the Vienna leg by Health Minister Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi and Public Works Deputy Minister Ms Henrietta Bogopane-Zulu.

been recorded over the past few years in “many key aspects of our collective national response” SANAC includes amongst other social partners, people living with HIV and AIDS, traditional leaders, performing artists, medical practitioners, researchers and scientists, women, children and youth.

Deputy President Montlathe cited, as some of the noteworthy progress; the dramatic improvement in the Prevention-of-Mother-to-Child-Transmission (PMTCT) programme, the provision of Anti-Retroviral Treatment to well over 80% of diagnosed mothers and the reduction of mother-to-child-transmission to below 6% in some of “our priority districts”. “Working with our social partners, we have striven to ensure that our response to the pandemic is evidence-based, properly resourced and effective”, he said. Deputy President Motlanthe also participated in a panel discussion with the theme “Towards Paradigm shift in HIV prevention and treatment”; and paid a courtesy call on the Austrian President.

He also officially opened the South African Exhibition where he took the opportunity to also celebrate the 92nd birthday of South Africa’s icon former President Nelson Mandela.

While in Spain, addressing the African Progress

Conference the Deputy President said that the South African government believes that “progressive politics is not only about restoring the humanity of Africans by freeing them from colonialism and neo-colonialism, but is also about empowering them as a people, through consciously creating conditions that enable them to define their destiny”.

He commended the understanding of the African Progress Conference that states that “today there is agreement within the progressive community that the policy agenda is to be set from an African perspective, while international partners’ engagement must focus on potential coordinated responses and the role of the international community in pursuing the objectives defined by Africans themselves”.

Deputy President Motlanthe said that progressive politics speaks to empowering programmes targeted at ending conflict in Africa. However, he acknowledged that there are still challenges that stifle progress and attributed them to amongst others “inter-state conflicts, civil wars and so-called ethnic conflicts”.

“We do well to remember the optimism and expectation of our people when they unshackled themselves in the 1950s and 60s from the clutches of colonialism and imperialism”, he said. He further said that “the collapse of the colonial system on our continent

Demanding Accountability

Moderators: Elisabet Fadul and Caitlin Padgett

Youth Leaders:

- Ricardo Baruch – Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights Mexico
- Nikhil Gurung – Youth RISE, Nepal
- Nkonzo Khanyile – Linko Social Investments, South Africa
- Stephanie Raper – Positive Woman Victoria, Australia

Adult Leaders:

- Michel Kazatchkine – Global Fund Executive Director
- Anthony Lake – UNICEF Executive Director
- Hendrietta Bogopane Zulu – Deputy Minister of Public Works, South Africa



Above from left to right: Nkonzo Khanyile, Linko Social Investments, South Africa; Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director; Ricardo Baruch, Youth Coalition for sexual & Reproductive Right, Mexico; Elisabet Fadul, Co-Chair; Caitlin Padgett, Co-Chair; Michel Kazatchkine, Global Fund Executive Director; Nikhil Gurung, Youth RISE, Nepal; Stephanie Raper, Positive Woman Victoria, Australia.; Hendrietta Bogopane Zulu Deputy Minister of Public Works of South Africa



Protesters at the International AIDS Conference



General view from events happening in Austria, Vienna. XVIII International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2010)

generated hope among the African masses to exercise their right to self-determination so that they build a new Africa based on principles of liberty, peace and prosperity”. Unfortunately, in many cases, the few decades following the liberation of the majority of the African countries painfully betrayed this vision of hope and progress”. Deputy President Motlanthe reminded the conference of the Constitutive Act of the African Union that emphasises paying attention to the rights of member states that may require intervention, as a result of grave circumstances that they may find themselves in, such as war crimes and crime against humanity.

“It is for this reason that the Constitutive Act of the African Union emphasises that in situations where there are “grave circumstances, namely; war crimes and crime against humanity, the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to ensure peace and security should be heeded”, the Deputy President said. ■

Pan African Women's Organisation Day



By: Siphokazi Mgodlwa

The Pan African Women's Organisation's Day marked its 48-year anniversary and was celebrated for the first time in South Africa. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation hosted its own Pan African Women's Day event themed: "Working together for equal opportunities and progress for all women: Forward to the African Women's Decade 2010-2020". The event was attended by women and men from various sectors, including a few female scholars from Clapham High School.

The event was jointly hosted by dirco, the Pan African Woman's Organisation (PAWO); the Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa (PWMSA); and the South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID). Pan African Women's Day is celebrated throughout the African continent and is an expression of the trials and tribulations that women in Africa have previously endured. It is aimed at highlighting the history of the struggle against women oppression and discrimination, inequality and a lack of independence. PAWO was established in 1962 and has played a significant role in building African unity and solidarity among women during a crucial period in the struggle for political emancipation.

The African Decade for Women, which will span the years 2010-2020, is also mechanism to accelerate the implementation and attainment of the goals stated in the various declarations, protocols and conventions the AU has adopted. Among them, four key documents – Section 4/L of the AU Constitutive Act; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and



Above left: Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane singing during the celebration

Above right: scholars from Clapham High school also attended the celebration



the African Union Gender Policy, said Minister Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane during her opening remarks. Ms Litha Musyimii-Ogan, African Union: Head of Women, Gender and Development Directorate, said that each year a theme will be selected and the focus will be on that theme for that particular year.

The theme for next year will be "maternal paternity". Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane encouraged the participants to start an enriching conversation between government

and civil society on achievements and challenges that the organisation is faced with in making the excellent gender commitments regionally, continentally and internationally.

The day had a number of activities which included a panel discussion, presentations by various speakers: Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, Minister Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya and Ambassador designate Dr. Mohau Pheko. The activities for this day were concluded by an arts and crafts sale. ■

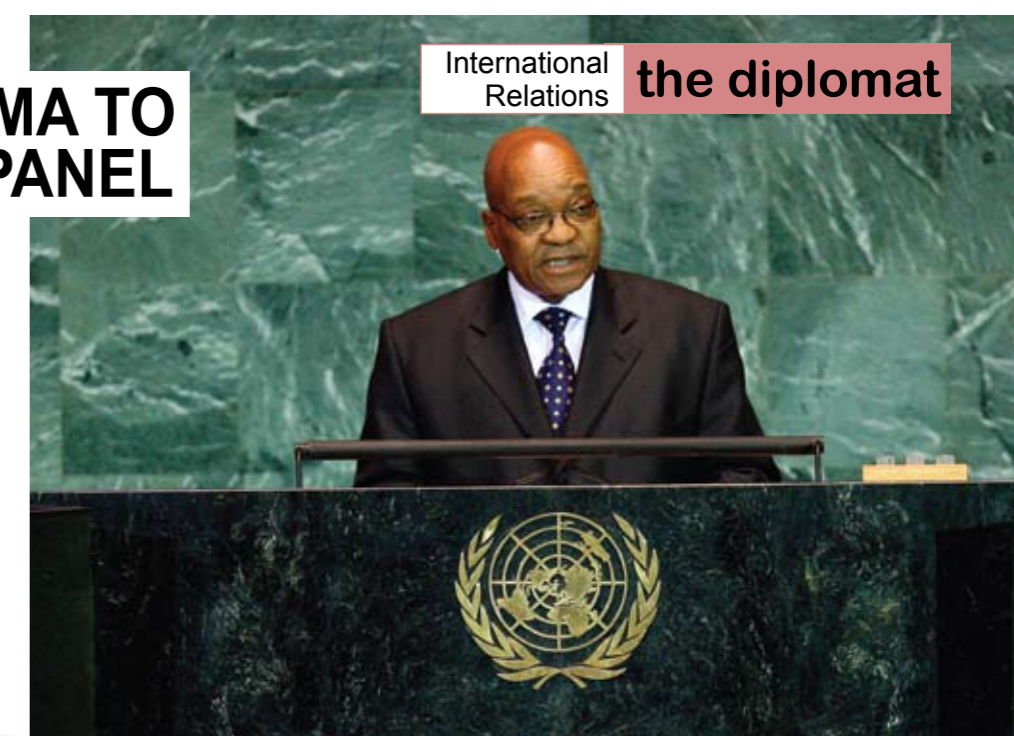


Right: Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane posing for a photograph with scholars from Clapham High school



PRESIDENT ZUMA TO SERVE ON UN PANEL

President Jacob Zuma has been requested to serve as co-chair of the United Nations Second Panel on Climate Change Sustainability. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon made the request to President Zuma to co-chair the panel which will have a special focus on climate change as a sustainable development challenge. The Presidency confirmed that the three pillars of climate change namely economic, social and environmental, will be addressed during the first meeting, which will be held between 19 and 25 September in New York, City. President Zuma will chair the panel, together with Tarja Kaarina Halonen, the



International Relations **the diplomat**



Above: President Jacob Zuma, addresses the General Debate of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly

Left: President Jacob Zuma meeting United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon

President of Finland. The panel is also expected to focus on related issues of food security, energy and poverty eradication. "We are honoured to serve, and view this assignment by the United Nations as recognition of the key role that the African continent should play in key international interventions and processes," said President Zuma. He added that South Africa's hosting of the Conference of the Parties 17 (COP17 Summit) in 2011, and the presence of the Minister in the Presidency, Trevor Manuel in the High Level Advisory Group on Climate Finance, among others, showed South Africa's commitment to the goal of achieving sustainable development in the world. Source: BuaNews

SADC SUMMIT ENDS ON A HIGH NOTE

Regional leaders ended their 30th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) with a pledge to continue with its peace and security efforts in the region. The leaders, which form the SADC, used the summit to reflect on progress and challenges that continue to hamper regional integration since its formation 30 years ago. They also dealt with various issues including the regional "hotspots", which include Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Lesotho and the DRC. In terms of Zimbabwe, SADC put pressure on Zimbabwean leaders to agree on a roadmap leading to a free and fair election, by fully implementing the GPA. SADC mediator in the Zimbabwe crisis President Jacob Zuma tabled his report to the summit which touched on various issues. In a nutshell, the summit of regional leaders wanted order to be restored among Zimbabwean leaders who remained deadlock on the swearing-in of Roy Bennett and the appointment of Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono and Attorney-General Johannes Tomanato. The leaders reiterated their call on the international community to lift all forms of sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe in view of the negative impact it has on the region in general. In terms of Madagascar, according to the communique, the Heads of State and Government decided to set up a liaison office

for a more closely follow-up of the situation in that country. They agreed that sanctions should continue until the country returns to constitutional normalcy.

With regards to Lesotho, which made new headlines after its Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili survived an assassination attempt by attackers who planned to seize power, the region urged leaders to work together towards the finalisation of the Bill amending the electoral law as a matter of urgency.

Generally the Summit noted that other parts of the region remained peaceful. The Summit also approved a recommendation by Ministers of Justice in the region to review the SADC Tribunal's mandate and jurisdiction. The Tribunal has been receiving cases on disputes between natural and legal persons and their countries in the region. This means that the review of its role, functions and terms of reference of the Tribunal should be undertaken and concluded within six months.

With regards to the food security situation in the region, the Summit noted that the region recorded overall increased food production, but noted that the access to food and malnutrition of households' level remained a challenge. To address this, the Summit urged member states to support the African Food Basket Initiative which is aimed

at transforming food sufficiency. The Summit also endorsed the council's decision on the establishment of the Regional Poverty Observatory which will facilitate the implementation of the SADC Declaration on Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development. The hunger situation, which stems from the lack of rainfall and drought, is a genuine problem in Southern Africa. UNICEF claims that almost 16 000 children die from hunger-related causes in the region.

In terms of child mortality, which was the theme of the summit, Member States were urged to support safe motherhood programmes in order to reduce maternal, infant and child mortality in line with the Millennium Development Goal commitments. Economically, the leaders agreed that the region was still recovering from the global economic crisis and outlined policy measures to enable the region to cushion itself from any future economic crisis.

The Summit noted that the region needed to apply science and technology for infrastructure development, climate change management and for energy development, adding that these were essential for sustainable growth and development. The Summit also appointed Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba as chairman of the bloc. ■

Source: BuaNews



The Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Sue van der Merwe received a cheque of R40 000 from Cape Town's Fishhoek Primary School.

Deputy Minister Sue van der Merwe with some of the pupils from Fishhoek Primary with the donation cheque for Haiti

DONATION FOR HAITI

The cheque is intended as part of the relief and reconstruction programme for Haiti which suffered a devastating earthquake earlier this year. Deputy Minister van der Merwe leads the South African Government effort in coordinating search and rescue, relief and reconstruction support programmes to Haiti. Fishhoek Primary is the first school to undertake such an initiative as it has been largely private, public sector companies and civil society institutions such as Rescue SA and Gift of the Givers who have joined forces with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation in making a contribution to the Haitian effort following the havoc wreaked by a catastrophic earthquake that left thousands of people dead and millions injured and homeless.

Seeing images of devastation beamed on television stations across the world, the school management not only felt the pain of the Haitians, but decided to do something to help.

They embarked on a fundraising campaign that included school children, their parents and the surrounding communities. Their effort paid off by raising R40 000 which they are ready to hand over to Haiti through the Department. "The management, teachers and learners at the school are extremely elated that they

have met the target they set for themselves," said Mr G Williams, the school's principal. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation appreciates the sense of humanity shown by the school, the values of selflessness and universal ubuntu instilled in

the young learners, the spirit of internationalism encouraged among the young learners and also calls upon those who wish to emulate the likes of Fishhoek Primary in helping the Haitians not to be hesitant to contact the Office of the Deputy Minister. ■



Deputy Minister Sue van der Merwe addressing pupils at Fishhoek Primary during her visit to the school



South Africa's commemoration of August as Women's Month is marked by the commemoration of Women's Day (9 August), when, in 1956, women from all races and walks of life marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in protest against oppressive laws. This year marks the 54th anniversary of the women's anti-pass march and serves to remind South Africans about women's rights. The commemoration of National Women's Day took place in the Eastern Cape, Buffalo City Municipality, at the ABSA Stadium in East London under the theme Working Together for Equal Opportunities and Progress for all Women. Forward to the Decade of African Women. The year 2010 marks the commencement of the Decade of African Women (2010 – 2020) as declared by the Heads of State of the African Union (AU).

Commemorating Women's Day and month



Women's Day celebration in East London, Eastern Cape had various activities

Government recognises that the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment are central to all efforts aimed at combating poverty and stimulating sustainable development. The dedicated Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities gives emphasis to Government's initiatives to protect and promote the interests of women and other targeted groups.

Female representation in 2009 in Parliament as well as in provincial legislatures put South Africa among the leading countries in the world in terms of the number of women in important leadership positions. Government continues to pursue the advancement of education, including the elimination of gender disparities, to increase the participation of women and girls. Since 2000, there has been a steady increase in the number of graduating female science, engineering and technology students. Good practices such as safety nets for abused women and children (victim empowerment

shelters and Thuthuzela care centres) to protect women and children were established. Income support structures and programmes such as Women in Construction, South African Women in Mining and Energy and Women in Farming are among a number of economic empowerment programmes in place to enhance female development. The advancement of women's emancipation calls for a reflection on the attainment of regional and global milestones, which mature in 2010 Commitments from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (30 years since adoption by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly) and the Beijing Platform of Action (15 years since adoption) are being fulfilled in the form of adopted gender-sensitive laws and constitutional provisions.

The need to address gender inequality was emphasised as an explicit goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women

in the Millennium Development Goals, thus providing another valuable opportunity for the advancement of CEDAW and the Beijing commitments.

The launch of the African Decade of Women 2010–2020 provides an opportunity to leverage on global and regional political goodwill for the advancement of African women. The AU adopted the Africa Gender Policy in 2009, which guides the process of gender mainstreaming at regional and sub-regional levels, and makes provisions on technical support the AU can provide to member states for mainstreaming gender in their policies and programmes.

In accelerating our initiatives towards the realised emancipation of all women, there will be a conference report outlining the Plan of Action towards Beijing +20, a report on discussions around Bills in Parliament, the National Plan of Action on Women in Informal Cross-Border Trade and a report on women's empowerment beyond the 2010 World Cup. ■

PROFILE: new Dirco interns

Pictures: Jacoline Schoonees
By Siphokazi Mgodlwa

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation through Branch: DTRD take interns annually for training with the intention of absorbing those who would have excelled in different Branches.

Below are some of the profiles of the interns who have just joined the Department.



NAME & SURNAME: Ninize Elizabeth Sinoamadi
BRANCH, DIRECTORATE & POSITION: Public Diplomacy: Marketing and Strategic Communication, Intern
CAREER INFORMATION/QUALIFICATIONS: A BA degree in International Relations from University of Venda (UNIVEN).
WHERE WERE YOU WORKING PRIOR TO JOINING the dirco?

This is my first working experience as I've just graduated from university, and so far it is great.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK FOR THE DEPARTMENT?

My field of study made me realise that this (the dirco) is where I want to

be. I feel that I can learn and give back something. I chose to be in the department because it deals with all international issues.

NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE, WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS, ARE THEY IN LINE WITH WHAT YOU ENVISAGED WHEN YOU JOINED?

Yes, for now I'm enjoying everything including the colleagues and the friendly environment.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

To grow and learn more in the dirco and see myself as a diplomat.

DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE CORRECTLY PLACED? IF YES, WHY AND IF NOT, WHY NOT?

Yes, I enjoy working for marketing at the moment and it is quite a good challenge.



NAME & SURNAME: Mooketsi Reneilwe Mookeletsi
BRANCH, DIRECTORATE & POSITION: Public Diplomacy, Marketing and Strategic Communication, Intern
CAREER INFORMATION/QUALIFICATIONS: B.A Honours in International Relations, from Witwatersrand University.
WHERE WERE YOU WORKING PRIOR JOINING

DIRCO?

I am fresh out of university and I do not have any previous work experience.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK FOR DIRCO?

DIRCO has always been my first choice of employment. It was just a natural progression of events as I am an International Relations major. Like many students in this field, I too dreamt of ending up here and serving my country one day.

NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE, WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE THEY IN LINE WITH WHAT YOU ENVISAGED WHEN YOU

JOINED?

The experience has been much better than what I had envisioned. I have been granted the perfect opportunity to work with people who have given me a great first impression of the department. My colleagues are awesome people who are always willing to help a youngster like myself.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

I look forward to learning more and giving the internship and my directorate the best of myself. I would like to grow in the department, develop myself and hopefully, ultimately be in one of those prestigious offices (one day).

DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE CORRECTLY PLACED? IF YES, WHY AND IF NOT, WHY NOT?

I am where I want to be. Marketing is new and exciting world for me and "I will grow where I am planted". Marketing definitely compliments my personality. I am really enjoying working in the department, this far.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS:

I am honoured to be here. I really hope that more new graduates get this opportunity too.



NAME & SURNAME: Thulani Phiri
BRANCH, DIRECTORATE & POSITION: DTRD, intern (cadet programme)
CAREER INFORMATION/QUALIFICATIONS: Grade 12 and management of training
WHERE WERE YOU WORKING PRIOR JOINING THE DIRCO?

I was unemployed

DIRCO?

It is a challenging department especially in the services they offer. To work at the dirco requires you to be a hard worker, and that's what I look

for in a job

NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE, WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE THEY IN LINE WITH WHAT YOU ENVISAGED WHEN YOU JOINED?

Yes

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

To be employed permanently here at the dirco and to learn further to have more knowledge to contribute more effectively.

DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE CORRECTLY PLACED? IF YES, WHY AND IF NOT, WHY NOT?

Yes, because it is a very busy and challenging directorate, it help strengthen my mental ability and adaptation to challenges.



NAME & SURNAME: Tlowane Eric Monhla
BRANCH, DIRECTORATE & POSITION: Public Diplomacy, Marketing and Strategic Communication. INTERN.
CAREER INFORMATION/QUALIFICATIONS: International Relations (University of Pretoria). Certificate of Service from the Pan African Parliament, Community Development Certificate.
WHERE WERE YOU WORKING PRIOR

JOINING DIRCO?

Office of the Speaker (City of Joburg), as Regional Administrator, I have also worked at the Pan African Parliament as a transport coordinator, and at various Labour Industries as a labourer.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WORK FOR DIRCO?

The dirco is the reason why I studied in the field of my qualification. I wanted to know all that I could about different countries in the world.

However, growing up and having studied in this field has taught me that there could be more than what meets the eye in international relations.

NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE, WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE THEY IN LINE WITH WHAT YOU ENVISAGED WHEN YOU JOINED?

I love it! I would definitely like to experience and learn more from the entire department.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

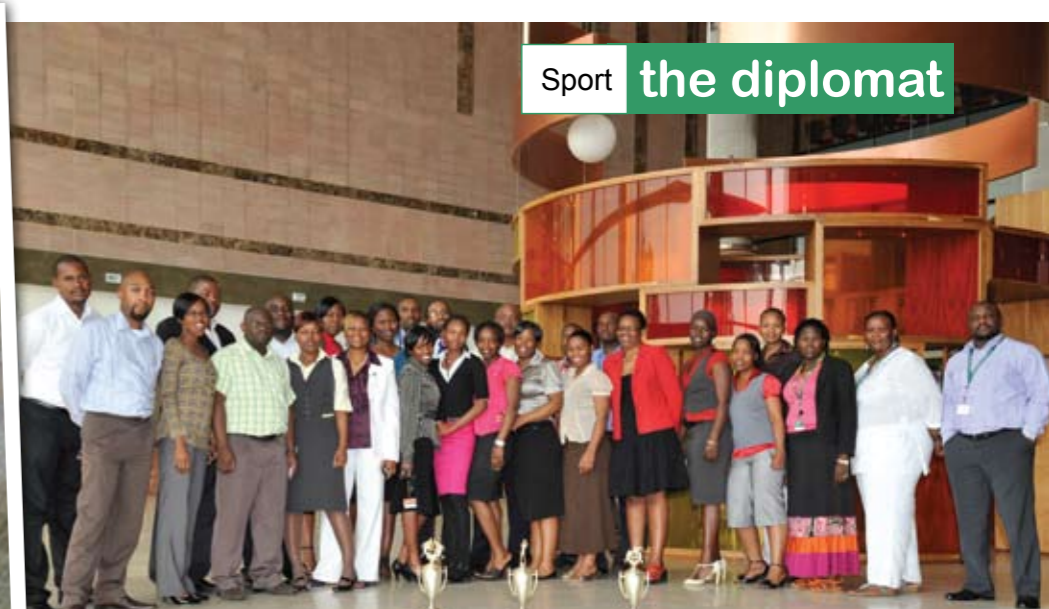
There is a master plan. For now, it is a working progress.

DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE CORRECTLY PLACED? IF YES, WHY AND IF NOT, WHY NOT?

Yes I feel that I am correctly placed. I cannot wait to learn more about other directorates.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS:

I believe I am here to stay...



An Inspired performance by team Dirco

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (the dirco) participated in various sporting events during the 2010 Annual Winter Games that were held on Friday, 30 July 2010 at Rhulani Sports Complex in Musanda/NIA. The DIRCO's participation in the tournament was informed by its strategic objective of strengthening its relationship with the diplomatic community in South Africa and with the national and provincial government departments.

As the Sports Council, our progress and innovation remain focused mainly on improving relationships with other government departments. It is for this reason that we view sport as an important element in building strong relationships, which can be turned into successful partnerships. The dirco participated in a spectrum of sporting activities including soccer, netball, volleyball, fun walk/run, action cricket, aerobics, chess, tennis and golf. Over three hundred officials from the dirco participated in the 2010 Annual Winter Games.

Some of the outstanding performances were recorded in the sporting codes such as the fun

run, where the dirco obtained positions one and two and in the men's race, soccer and netball where the dirco won silver medals, as well as in golf where our team obtained position three. Although the dirco scooped silver medals in both soccer and netball, our athletes should be proud of themselves for putting up a great performance. The DIRCO might not have won the ultimate prize, but it has achieved more in terms of attendance and participation in the 2010 Annual Winter Games. Indeed, the future looks bright for our teams and sport in general in the Department. The DIRCO's results in this tournament illustrate the level of growth and maturity of our teams after years of not taking sport seriously by our officials. As the DIRCO Sports Council, our view is that sport and recreation form part of the work-balance programme which promotes flexibility in the workplace to accommodate work and personal needs which can result in benefits to our organisation due to higher levels of employee satisfaction and motivation.

We will always intensify our efforts to improve sport and recreational activities and make them accessible to all employees of the Department. Our ideal is to see every employee of the Department involved in a



physical activity of some sort. Our strong belief is that sport play a critical role in bringing people together not only on and off the field, but even across racial lines. It is with this view that we look forward to an improved participation in the forthcoming Inter-regional Sports Tournament, National Civil Servants Sports and Cultural Events and the DIRCO Sports and Family Day. Dates, times and venues thereof will be announced in due course. ■

Contributed by James Mogale: Dirco Sports Council



The Dirco team participated in various sporting codes during the 2010 annual winter games



Mandela Day celebrated in Manila



Ambassador Nyamande-Pitso addressing guests during the Mandela Day event which was hosted by the embassy



The South African Ambassador Designate, Her Excellency Nyamande-Pitso and Embassy staff on Saturday, 17 July partnered with Efen Penaflorida and the Dynamic Teen Company (DTC) as well as MY Rights and volunteers in Novaliches to bring International Nelson Mandela Day alive in Manila. About 92 needy kids from underserved communities, identified through the Novaliches project, gathered at a temporary shelter set up at Quezon City Polytechnic University from 2 o'clock for a day of learning, games and a healthy meal.

The Ambassador Designate said the Embassy and staff were honoured to work with Efen Penaflorida in bringing Nelson Mandela Day to these 92 needy kids, as part of celebrating former President Mandela's 92nd birthday on Sunday, 18 July 2010. Mr Mandela spent 27 in jail in the struggle to free South Africa and dedicated 67 years of his life to serve his people. Mr Mandela is one of South Africa's biggest heroes and today we are working with one of the Philippines new heroes Mr F (Efen). She said, it was hoped from this group of kids, another hero will come forward to lead in the service of others.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE PROGRAMME FROM 2 – 5 PM INCLUDED:

- African storytelling by Sylvia Matona from the Embassy (over hundred books from the Asia Foundation, Fully Booked, MAA, Philindo) were also donated to Efen's push-cart street education project);

- Football skills by Michael Boyo, football coach from Cameroon, coaching the Mama Africa Football Club (UFL- LBC) and Alabang Football School;
- Dancing and singing entertainment by volunteers from DTC;
- handprint-painting, making a mural of South African and Philippines flags intertwined with the Nelson Mandela Day logo;
- learning sanitation - how to wash hands, brush your teeth... while sanitation toiletries were also donated to each child;
- group games with hoolah hoops and prizes to winning groups done by Federated Distributed with prizes to winning teams, and
- nutritional education; the importance of good nutrition and a healthy meal was also outlined to the kids.

THE FOLLOWING WERE HANDED OUT TO EACH KID:

- A whole-wheat sandwich with ground



Ambassador Nyamande-Pitso handing out gifts to some of the children that attended the event

peanut butter, also named the Mandela Sandwich in South Africa since 1994 (when the then President said every school in underserved communities should provide a healthy sandwich with fruit to every kid attending class!);

- a South African orange;
- South African pure juice (CERES);
- nutritional fruit-bars; and
- cereal pack.

Port Louis World Cup Volunteers



Mauritian World Cup Volunteers report back to the South African High Commission in Port Louis.

In February 2010, a panel of officials at the High Commission conducted interviews for the 2010 FIFA Volunteer Programme, and 5 candidates were proposed to FIFA, and all were accepted. Only three (Messer's Ehad Bhaukaurally; Rooben Armoogum and Yasine Mohabuth) could however make the journey to South Africa as 2010 FIFA SWC Volunteers, and on their return to Mauritius the High Commission hosted them over lunch at the Mission, so they



could relate their SWC experience to the staff of the Mission as well as to the Head of the Mauritian Football Association, who was also in attendance.

(From LtoR: Mr Ivan Vosloo First Secretary, Ehad Bhaukaurally; Rooben Armoogum; High Commissioner Duménil Matabane ; Yasine Mohabuth)

South African Food Festival



The South African Mission in Bangkok participated, from 16 – 21 August 2010, in the South African Food Festival organised by Dusit Thani Hotel in Bangkok and the Peermont Group of South Africa. The Opening Ceremony as depicted in the picture was presided over by H.E. Ambassador Gibson and Danny McCafferty, Manager of Dusit Thani. The week long Festival was graced by the presence of three South African chefs from the Peermont who were commended for their cooking skills and ability to offer food of a distinctly South African flavour. The Festival was a huge success in that it was *inter-alia* able to showcase a variety of best South African Wines. Owing to this some of the evening dinners were sold out thus showing the continuous adoration of South Africa beyond the 2010 FIFA World Cup.



Ambassador Gibson cutting a ribbon assisted by some of the dignitaries that attended the South African Food Festival

Minister Pravin Gordhan meets the South African diaspora



Minister Pravin Gordhan had an opportunity to interact with South Africans while in Toronto

Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan took time out of his busy schedule to meet with the South African community on June 28. The gathering was held at the residence of the Consul-General of South Africa, Ms. Tselane Mokuena. Over 65 members of the South African community currently

living in Toronto were pleased to meet and mingle with the Minister and his wife, Vanitha Gordhan. The evening began with greetings from the Minister and the Consul General which was followed by a scrumptious meal prepared by the community. Mr Gordhan was visibly excited when talking about the positive economic impact the World Cup has had on South Africa. He was especially proud when he spoke of the wonderful run by Bafana Bafana. He also mentioned the intangible results of hosting the world cup including the excellent world press coverage which has changed the perceptions of millions around the world in regard to their notions of Africa.

The Minister's remarks included a brief synopsis of South Africa's economic

outlook and he fielded questions from the attendees. The evening was a great success as the South African community of Toronto were honoured to spend time with the Minister, and felt enlightened and positive about the country's future. The Minister further briefed the South Africans on the recently held G20, its achievements and challenges faced by the developing countries. The Minister also took time to respond to a number of questions raised by the SA public which also included young people born of South African parents in Canada. The youth showed a lot of optimism about our lovely country and a desire to go back especially after the momentum created by the World Cup. Written by: Suriya Veerappan, a South African Living in Toronto

Celebrating Mandela Day



Two officials from the Mission celebrated former President Nelson Mandela's birthday in the Palestinian village of Tulkarm, where the Mission volunteered to assist at an orphanage as its contribution. The Charge d'Affaires met with the Governor of Tulkarm, Chief Talal Dweikat, who underlined the historical relations maintained between the Palestinian and South African people in their struggles for freedom. Mr Dweikat also commended the progress made in South Africa at the various levels and he applauded the successful hosting of the World Cup by South

Africa. Apart from reaffirming the warm relations between South Africa and the Palestinian people, the Charge d'Affaires explained the meaning of Mandela Day and the Mission's intention in Tulkarm. Following the meeting with the Governor, officials took part in a scouts' parade in which groups from summer camps marched along Tulkarm streets to end their parade at Jamal Abdul Nasser Circle - the city centre. The Orphanage received the two officials from the Mission well, showed them around the facilities and decided that the Mission should rather brief the officials of the orphanage on South Africa.

It was agreed that the orphanage will forward a list of projects to the Mission before Mandela Day in 2011, so that the Mission can spend 67 minutes to complete task as specified by the institution.

The officials concluded the visit at the Nour Sham Camp and the Social Work Committees' Association, where the visiting delegation was received by the official in charge of the Social Work Committees, Mr. Shareef Shahrour, members of the administrative staff, and Committee workers. The Mission undertook to maintain contact with Tulkarm and plan a return visit in 2011.

Celebrating Mandela Day



Above: Ambassador and diplomats at work
Left: Ambassador, officials, spouses and the children of Klnamu Montessori.

Due to Mandela Day falling on Sunday 18 July, the Mission in Seoul decided to observe this day on Friday, 16 July 2010. In doing so, the Mission, represented by the Ambassador HE Mr HA Dennis, four diplomats, some of the spouses and a South African teacher, visited the Klnamu Montessori. With the theme for this year's event being 'Education', it was befitting that the Mission volunteer its services at an educational institution.

for the first time this year, and as such used the occasion to create awareness about the celebration of the day in South Korea. This was done through the invitation of four media companies to spend the time with Embassy officials (a national news source, the equivalent of SAPA, two English print media and a MOFAT electronic bulletin) so as to spread the message of Mandela and volunteering to the Korean society.

We arrived at the centre shortly after 13h00 and proceeded with the formalities of the Ambassador's speech, where he

outlined the Mandela Day project, how it was conceptualised, what it means, the need to raise awareness about the Day, the UN resolution and how the general assembly would observe the day this year. The Ambassador then awarded Mandela books to each of the 25 children in the class, shared a 3 minute video clip of South Africa with the children and then traded his trademark day suit for an apron. An hour later the work was done and it turned out to be a day well spent.

Three daily newspapers published the Embassy event, while four media companies, including the national TV covered news on the need to observe Mandela Day.

The Mission was observing Mandela Day

Nelson Mandela day - Ethiopia



Like millions of people around the world, the management and staff of the Embassy of South Africa in Ethiopia, joined hands on Wednesday, 21 July 2010, to observe Nelson Mandela International Day, which fell on Sunday, 18 July 2010.

Cognisant of this year's focus being on academic institutions, with the Ethiopian schools in recess, the Mission agreed to shift its community service efforts to the paediatric unit of the Myungsung Christian Medical Centre (MCM) in the Capital, Addis Ababa. Embassy staff, both transferred and local, did not wait for a second call to contribute funds to an amount of around 5 000 Ethiopian Birr (US \$370), and to purchase, in a single day, paint, cleaning and educational materials.

They then, working as one, rolled up their sleeves and spent most of the working day, from 10h00 to 17h00, on Wednesday, 21 July 2010, on step ladders, on their feet, and even on their knees, with brooms, mops, cloths and paint brushes in their hands, to shift and remove furniture and medical equipment, wash, scrub, and paint the paediatric unit of the Centre, (which has not been opened yet, due to lack of financial and human resources), as well as the emergency ward and physiotherapy unit, and a number of adjoining rooms.

The paediatric ward was the main focus for the mission's volunteer work and the ward was spring-cleaned and given a fresh coat of paint in different, child-friendly colours.



Staff of the Embassy of South Africa in Ethiopia, observing Nelson Mandela International Day



In addition, the staff donated learning materials, in the form of colourful wall posters, reading and colouring books, paints and pencils, to decorate the ward and introduce an academic element into the ward, in line with the Department's recommended focus on education.



To conclude a long but highly satisfying day, the embassy and hospital staff, as well as some paediatric patients, shared a birthday cake and a toast to Nelson Mandela's health.



The children, assisted by embassy staff, also had an opportunity to further decorate the walls of the ward with their hand prints as a tribute to Nelson Mandela. Local media, newspapers, television and radio, were on hand to witness the activity.



Recognise the signs of a killer disease

World Rabies Day 8 September 2010

Rabies is a viral illness that can affect any warm-blooded animal including humans. It is usually transmitted via the bite of animals such as dogs and bats. The virus attacks the brain of victims and, if it is not treated soon after the bite, causes them to die in agony.

World Rabies Day is on 8 September 2010 and is celebrated annually to improve awareness of this dangerous illness. As part of the Government Employees Medical Scheme's (GEMS) ongoing effort to educate our members and future members on a range of healthcare topics, we would like to provide you with some information on rabies and advice on how to deal with the condition when you are confronted with it.

Rabies occurs throughout the country but is found in some provinces, such as KwaZulu-Natal, more often than others. Fortunately, it is not a very common condition; the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) has only confirmed six cases of rabies in humans in South Africa so far this year. Experts believe that it is much more common in this country than this figure suggests, particularly in rural areas.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) approximately 55 000 human deaths occur every year around the world as a result of rabies. Most rabies deaths occur in developing countries on the African and Asian continents.

It is important for people, especially in rural areas, to be able to recognise the signs of rabies in animals and to know what to do in the event someone is bitten by a rabid animal because it is a deadly disease if it is not treated properly.

People catch the rabies virus via the saliva of an infected animal. Usually it is passed on through a bite, but it is possible to get the disease from a scratch or lick from an infected animal.

It is vital that people stay away from stray

dogs and wild animals. Dog bites are the most common way the disease is passed on to humans in South Africa, so be wary of dogs you do not know and keep your children away from them. Children are often the victims of bite as they enjoy playing with animals. Children should not be allowed to play with or keep wild animals, such as meerkats, as pets. Such animals could be carrying the disease and easily bite someone.

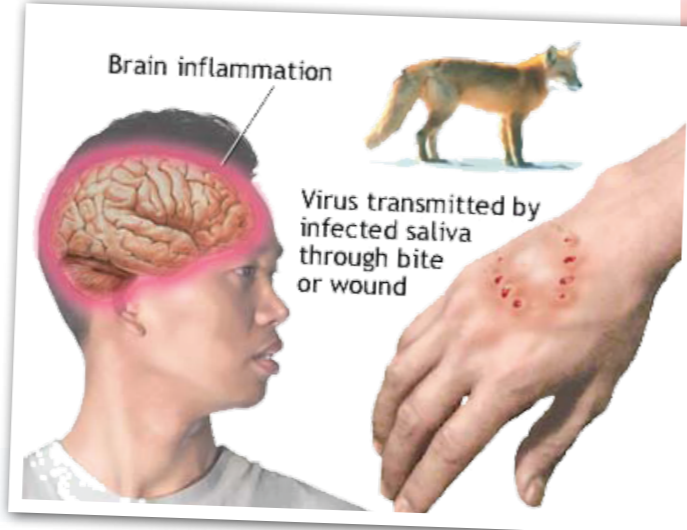
Also try to keep your dogs away from other stray dogs or animals as they too can be bitten and become infected.

Animals that have been infected with rabies often behave strangely. They may become very passive or very aggressive and some wild animals may lose their fear of humans. Some infected animals may foam at the mouth, while others may become paralysed. People should stay away from any animal that is behaving unusually, even if it is their own pet.

One way pet owners can prevent their pets from catching rabies and becoming a danger is to have them vaccinated against the disease at a veterinarian. This is one of the best ways to protect the family and your children against rabies. Rabies vaccinations for pets should be kept up to date and owners should enquire at the vet as to when the next vaccination should be done.

A rabies vaccine is available for people, but it is usually only recommended for people who work closely with animals and are at high risk of coming into contact with the disease such as vets and animal handlers. Most people are only treated once they have been exposed to the virus.

If you have been bitten by an animal and are not sure if it is rabid, rather be safe than sorry and seek medical attention. If a person is bitten by an animal that is suspected of having rabies one must clean the wound thoroughly and seek medical attention urgently. If a patient is not treated in time and the disease is allowed to set in they will die, so speed is of the essence.



The first signs of rabies in a person may include headaches, fever, agitation and confusion.

People who have been exposed to rabies receive a series of post-exposure vaccines. If they are thought to be at high risk of developing rabies (such as after having been bitten by a rabid animal) they may also be treated with rabies immune globulin, which is a blood product that contains antibodies against rabies.

It is important to be aware of rabies as it is a very dangerous disease. Fortunately, it is also usually easily preventable if a few basic steps are followed. The good news for anyone that does become infected, is that it is treatable, so make sure that anyone who has been bitten by a rabid animal gets medical attention as quickly as possible.

For any GEMS member queries please phone the GEMS health line on 0860 00 4367 visit our website at www.gems.gov.za. GEMS will assist you in every way possible to ensure your family's health and wellbeing.

REFERENCES

1. 'Rabies', World Health Organization, www.who.int/topics/rabies/en/
2. 'Rabies vaccine questions and answers', Immunization Action Coalition, www.vaccineinformation.org/rabies/qandavax.asp.
3. 'World Rabies Day', South African Veterinary Council (SAVC), www.savc.org.za.

EVER WONDERED WHY GEMS IS SA'S FASTEST GROWING MEDICAL SCHEME?

IT'S WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS WITH ITS CONSTANT DRIVE FOR QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Good quality healthcare cover has become one of the most invaluable assets of our time. It therefore comes as no surprise that over 500 000 principal members and 1,3

million beneficiaries have entrusted the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) with meeting their healthcare needs.

Every month GEMS receives over 10 000 new applications from public service employees making it the fastest growing medical scheme in the country. Two percent of all South Africans and over one-third of all eligible public service employees are members of GEMS, the largest restricted medical scheme in the country and the second largest medical scheme overall.

Despite its great size the Scheme has remained close to its members. Each and every day GEMS touches the lives of thousands of people. More than 11 000 members are contacting the GEMS call centre daily while at least 1 000 visit our regional walk in centres around South Africa. We exist to make life easier for our members and their loved ones and are always there when they need us most.

In the past four years GEMS has proved itself as a force to be reckoned with in the South African healthcare funding landscape and it is not hard to see why. GEMS benefit plans are on average between 10 - 25% less costly while offering similar or increased benefits when compared to other medical schemes in the market. Five different benefit plans, namely Onyx, Ruby, Emerald, Beryl and Sapphire, provide members with choice from a range of comprehensive healthcare benefit options.

<i>Sapphire</i>	An entry level network option that provides certain out-of-hospital care such as GP, pharmacy, dental and maternity care at private facilities and in-hospital cover at public facilities
<i>Beryl</i>	An option that provides both in and out of hospital care at a network of private facilities
<i>Ruby</i>	A savings account for day-to-day medical expenses as well as a hospital plan
<i>Emerald</i>	A traditional option designed to resemble the medical scheme plan most public service employees were enrolled on prior to the establishment of GEMS
<i>Onyx</i>	A top-of-the-line comprehensive option

GEMS is known for its unrivalled innovation and ability to design and implement benefits and services that meet and exceed the needs of its members - a fact that is supported by continuous benefit enhancements across the board. True to its stated objective GEMS remains focused on its members and their individual healthcare needs while providing accessible and quality healthcare that is both affordable and administratively efficient.

In fact, there are more than a dozen good reasons why GEMS has what is

takes to offer members the benefits that truly meet their healthcare needs:

- Unlike other medical schemes GEMS was not created to profit but implemented as policy and a valued condition of service for Government employees **EXCLUSIVELY**
- Our commitment to meeting the needs of GEMS members leaves them spoiled for **CHOICE**
- GEMS assures its members of only the highest standards of corporate governance
- GEMS works **HAND-IN-HAND** with employers to optimise its service offering to members
- At GEMS sound **ETHICS is everything**. The conduct of our trustees, employees and contracted providers are governed by an impeccable ethics policy and governance framework
- Not only has GEMS enjoyed unprecedented growth year after year but it has made considerable inroads into the previously **UNINSURED** market
- At GEMS we are totally committed to making every member interaction **EXCELLENT**
- GEMS has been singularly **SUCCESSFUL** in meeting its strategic objectives
- GEMS' constant drive to provide members with **QUALITY, affordable healthcare services has won the hearts and minds of public service employees**

The astonishing growth of GEMS bears testament to the Scheme's outstanding service provision and member-centric benefit options. Because of its impeccable corporate governance the interests of the beneficiaries of GEMS are at all times protected.

GEMS has been singularly successful in attaining its objectives and making material inroads into the previously uninsured market while enjoying unprecedented growth. Despite its sheer size the scheme has managed to maintain focus and control; a number of significant recent achievements bear testimony to this:

- The Scheme received an unqualified external audit report for the period ended 31 December 2009 thereby maintaining its excellent track record.
- During 2009 a number of other audits and reviews were performed such as the Scheme's annual Service Level Agreement audit, a legislative compliance review and a Board Effectiveness Review. The ratings achieved by the Scheme throughout the year were positive and highly favourable.
- The Scheme has always managed to keep non-healthcare expenditure impressively low, the 2009 financial year is

a case in point when non-healthcare costs represented 7.19% of gross contribution income, significantly lower than the industry average of 13.2%.

While maintaining efficient non-healthcare costs that are less than half of the industry average, GEMS continues to provide its members with highly effective and efficient services. Every month more than five million claim lines to the value of R1 billion are processed in two weekly claim runs. Despite the substantially increased numbers of members being dealt with, service delivery has remained second to none with 96% of all claims being processed electronically within 16 days from the date of service. Service levels are well maintained and independently audited each year.

BUT WHAT DO THE MEMBERS HAVE TO SAY?

It is the members who can reveal the real truth about a medical scheme and its service levels and it speaks volumes when independently surveyed GEMS members unequivocally state that the one aspect that they value the most about their medical scheme is its service excellence. To its credit, GEMS has taken every measure to ensure that its service levels remain in a league of their own. These efforts have had an encouragingly positive result, so much so that the Scheme has continued to grow in leaps and bounds while service levels have remained impressive.

Just how impressive is evidenced by the pleasing results of a recent survey conducted among 2 000 GEMS members. Of those surveyed 80.4% indicated that they were "very satisfied" with the services of the Scheme while 81.3% rated the team as being friendly and caring. A further 80.5% of those surveyed viewed the staff as knowledgeable and professional.

When those who were surveyed were asked what they valued the most about GEMS they said that it was the Scheme's good service that held the greatest appeal for them while the affordability of GEMS was rated second. The result of this service excellence has had a marked impact on membership growth levels.

Despite the many successes achieved by GEMS, the Scheme's executives know all too well that they cannot sit back and rest on their laurels.

The key focus of GEMS therefore remains on providing members with "Access to excellent healthcare that is both affordable and administratively efficient". At the end of the day it is our constant drive to provide members with quality and affordable healthcare services that is winning hearts and minds around SA.■

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 01 – 07 SEPTEMBER - Arbor Week 2010
- 01 – 30 SEPTEMBER - Heart Month
- 01 – 30 SEPTEMBER - Heritage Month
- 01 -30 SEPTEMBER - Tourism Month
- 05-11 SEPTEMBER - World Water Week
- 06 – 11 SEPTEMBER - Kidney Awareness Week
- 06-13 SEPTEMBER - National Book Week
- 08 SEPTEMBER - International Literacy Day
- 13 – 17 SEPTEMBER - National Parks Week
- 21 SEPTEMBER - International Day of Peace
- 24 SEPTEMBER - Heritage Day
- 27 SEPTEMBER - World Tourism Day
- 30 SEPTEMBER - International Translation Day

Where were you?

