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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to this month's edition of *the diplomat*. This issue is dedicated to the FIFA 2010 World Cup activities. The month of June also had a few political engagements at home and abroad, which include President Jacob Zuma's working visit to France and at the G20 in Canada, 2010 activities at the Shanghai Expo South Africa's Pavilion, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe's meeting with Japanese Princess Takamado. In this edition, we also bring you the following: Europe's Heads of Mission conference, Mr Piet Maredi's farewell, DIRCO's Head Office 2010 activities, mission activities plus many more.....

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the dirco supports
Bafana Bafana

11 June to 11 July 2010

Ke nako!



www.southafrica.info

SOUTH AFRICA'S WORLD CUP GRAND OPENING

Pictures: Sanjay Singh



Welcoming message from the President

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to South Africa and to Africa.

Whether this is your first time in our beautiful country, or you have visited our shores before, I am sure that your time here will be something you will remember for years to come.

Africa is where the world meets. It is a true melting pot, where the colour and energy of a number of different cultures have combined throughout history, each adding something special to the African experience.

This is a place where every day is different, and life is never just ordinary. It is a continent that sings in the voices of many different traditions, and dances to the beat of our shared pulse.

When South Africa was announced as the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ host nation, we knew that this was our chance to showcase Africa's potential to the world.

This is as much a celebration as it is a sporting event, and celebration is something we do very well.

We are not afraid to sing and dance, spreading our joy and including everyone when we are happy. We are proud of this great celebration of football and unity.

More than anything else, the spirit of Africa will define this important event. Football is a universal sport, and something we as Africans have embraced wholeheartedly. We have also made it our own, and added a local flair.

From our cities and townships, to the open horizons of our countryside, we play football with a uniquely African flavour, and are excited to share our passion for the beautiful game with the world.

By coming to our country to experience the 2010 FIFA World Cup™, you are helping to bring our continent to the rest of the globe.

When your time with us is over, and you return to your homes, you will take with you not only souvenirs and pictures, but also your experience of the real Africa.

This is a place of infinite possibilities, and by sharing your African experience with your friends at home, you too can help build our continent's bright future.
Hearty African Greetings.

Organisers of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ Opening Ceremony promised a colourful, energetic and distinctly African fun-filled affair as a precursor to the first FIFA World Cup on African soil.

The ceremony was staged at Soccer City Stadium under the theme "Welcoming the World Home".

Minister of Arts and Culture Lulu Xingwana, Local Organising Committee Chief Marketing Officer Derek Carstens and Executive Director in the Johannesburg's 2010 Unit Sibongile Mazibuko briefed international and local media in Nasrec prior the official opening regarding the opening ceremony activities.

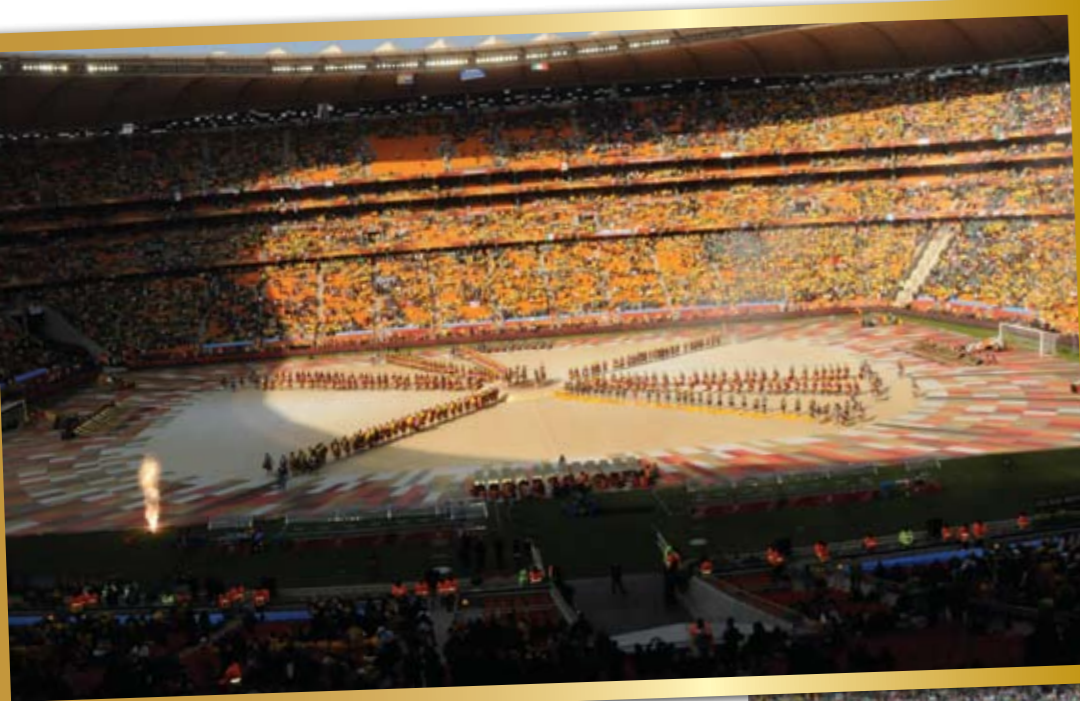
Members of the public who had tickets for the opening match arrived from 10h00 when the gates opened to witness the opening ceremony which began at 14h00.

The event casted 1 581 artists, dancers, musicians and performers from all walks of life ranging from young to old.



One of the performances that took place during the opening ceremony of the FIFA 2010 World Cup™

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R & B superstar, R Kelly, sang the ceremony's showpiece song, 'Sign of a Victory' with South Africa's Soweto Spiritual Singers.

The ceremony reflected Africa's proud cultural heritage, and also showcased the significant infrastructural and technological progress the continent has made. It included Africa's rich artistic talent, established and emerging, as well as some exciting new performers.

The rest of the world-class line-up for the Opening Ceremony featured celebrated South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela, charismatic Nigerian star Femi Kuti, who performed the famous 'Bang, Bang, Bang' track, Algerian Afro-pop artist Khaled, legendary Ghanaian band Osibisa, as well as top-class South African artists Thandiswa Mazwai, Hip Hop Pantsula (HHP), TKZee and vocalist Timothy Mlooi.

The Opening Ceremony was produced for the Local Organising Committee (LOC) by the VVW Till Dawn Consortium, comprising the VVW Group and Till Dawn Entertainment. The consortium, which successfully staged the opening and closing ceremonies of the FIFA Confederations Cup 2009, will also produce the tournament's closing ceremony for the LOC on 11 July 2010.

The ceremony was followed by the opening match of the 2010 FIFA World Cup between South Africa and Mexico. ■



Left: President Jacob Zuma enjoying the Opening Ceremony with United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.

Above: Dirco's Chief Financial Officer, Asogan Moodley enjoying the Opening Ceremony



Left: Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim watching the Opening Ceremony

Right: Deputy Minister Sue van der Merwe sharing a joke with guests during the Opening Ceremony



Left: President Jacob Zuma and FIFA's President, Sepp Blatter, greeting the South African national squad just before the FIFA 2010 World Cup™ opening match between South Africa and Mexico





STRENGTHENING PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

President Jacob Zuma attended the 25th Africa-France Summit which was held in Nice, France. The Summit focused on the African continent's role in global governance, strengthening peace and security, climate and development.

It further provided the South African Government and the private sector the opportunity to engage their French counterparts on key priority areas for Africa's socio-economic development, as well as identify opportunities for further collaboration.

President Zuma addressed Heads of State and Government representatives on "Strengthening peace and security in Africa". Areas of focus discussed related to peace and security on the African Continent; the operationalisation of the Peace and Security architecture; the challenge of insufficient technical and financial resources, coupled with skills shortages; and the aspect of unconstitutional changes in government in Africa.

As South Africa viewed the Summit of strategic importance, given the bilateral relations it has and is seeking to expand with France.

President Zuma was accompanied by Ministers of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, and Trade and Industry Minister, Rob Davies.

Total trade between South Africa and France had been increasing consistently from 2000 to 2004 where-after it declined from R24, 3 billion in 2004 to R21.9 billion



President Jacob Zuma participating in discussions during the Summit

in 2005, a decrease of 9.9 percent. Total trade started to increase again from 2006 and reached R31.6 billion in 2008. The huge decline in total trade in 2009 can be attributed to lower global demand for imports as a result of the global crisis in 2008 and

2009. However, France remains an important trading partner for South Africa. The country is ranked 20th in the world as South Africa's export partner in 2009 (18th in 2008) and 9th as the country's import partner in the same year. ■ Source: BuaNews



Heads of State that attended the 25th Africa-France Summit in Nice, France



AFRICA OPEN FOR BUSINESS

President Jacob Zuma has declared to world leaders that Africa is open for business.

Addressing the G20 business leaders in Toronto on the eve of the G8 and G20 Summits, President Zuma said Africa can no longer be viewed only as a destination for development aid.

He said together with the developed world, there must be ways to promote stronger and more effective international partnerships for growth and development.

President Zuma says African leaders do not want to create the impression that they have come cap-in-hand to ask for favours. "We reiterate that Africa is open for business. It is open for trade and investment."

President Zuma said Africa's recent economic success is "proving Afro-pessimists wrong." Sub-Saharan Africa's growth rate is only

surpassed by China and India. President Zuma attributed this to good policies and regulations, business rescue programmes, job retention schemes and huge infrastructure programmes. "There is every expectation that Africa's current pace of growth will remain at a high level, at around six percent per year," he said, also calling for fair trade.

"Our movement forward will be greatly enhanced by the speeding up of economic reforms to enable more inclusive and faster growth," he said.

He emphasised that changes in both the voting structure and leadership of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank will be crucial in ensuring a more stable and equitable financial infrastructure.

"The developing world has an equal right to run these institutions," said President Zuma.

Reform of global financial systems will be a priority issue for many G20 members: China, India, and Brazil who will join South Africa in arguing that their economic strength needs to be better reflected in the architecture of major institutions.

Leadership of the World Bank and the IMF has been dominated by Europeans and



President Jacob Zuma in discussions with Minister Pravin Gordhan and Mr Mandisi Mphahle during the G20 Summit

Americans, which many analysts see as a strong Western influence and an imbalanced voting structure. With the World Cup in full swing, the President said the country will never be the same again.

He says through the successful hosting of the event, Afro-pessimists are once again proven wrong. "More than the infrastructure that our future generations will inherit, we remain hopeful that the various skills that our people acquired since we started working on this FIFA World Cup™ project, will prove useful going forward."

Above the economic benefits, President Zuma said there will also be a legacy of education for the African continent- through the 1Goal Education for All Campaign. ■

Source: BuaNews



DEPUTY PRESIDENT MEETS WITH PRINCESS TAKAMADO

It was a royal affair at Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe's residence when Japanese Princess Takamado presented him with a soccer t-shirt autographed by the Japanese team.

also known as the Blue Samurai, when she visited the Deputy President in Pretoria. She brought along the autographed soccer t-shirt, which was in the blue of the Japanese team, and had the name Motlanthe printed on the back.

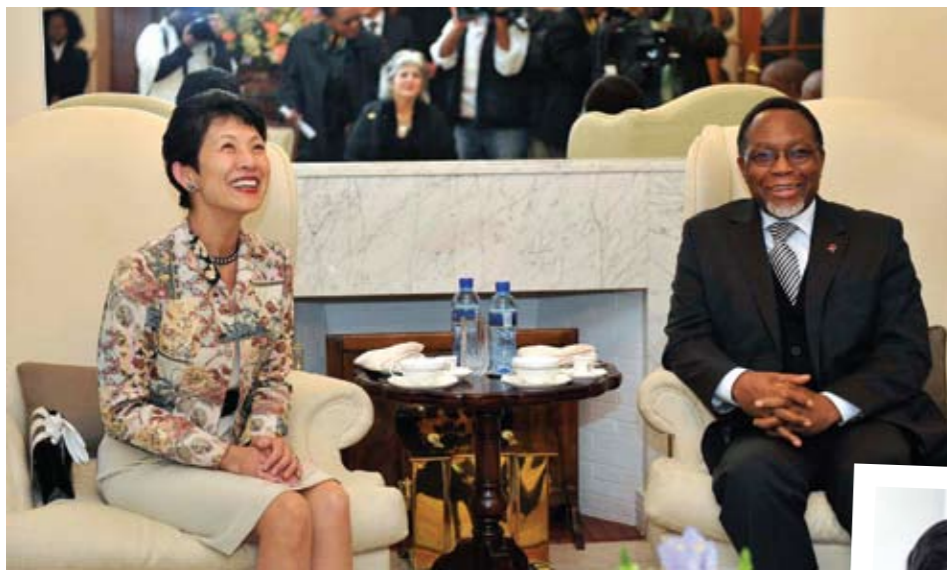
The princess, who is also an honorary patron of the Japanese Football Association, was in the country to support Japan's soccer team,

"I'm now part of the Blue Samurai," the Deputy President remarked as he held up the t-shirt. Smartly dressed in a beige dress, a short



World Cup and had met with the Japanese team to encourage them a day before their crucial match with Denmark.

She was among the thousands of fans cheering the team on to a 3-1 victory over Denmark at the Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Rustenburg. The win also meant that Japan moves on to the next Round of 16 of the World Cup. While in South Africa, the princess also visited a number of charities and met with South African groups that have strong links to Japan. ■ BuaNews



Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe in discussion with Japanese Princess Takamado

jacket and clutching white gloves together with a soccer ball patterned handbag, the princess accepted a snow globe that enclosed a replica of Soccer City from Deputy President Motlanthe, with much delight.

President Motlanthe who showed her how it was done.

Deputy President Motlanthe told the princess that Soccer City was where the final match of the World Cup would be played. "I hope the Blue Samurai participate in that final," he added.

It was Princess Takamado's first visit to South Africa. She became a member of the Japanese Imperial family through her marriage to Prince Takamado. Togwawa Hiroyuki, from the Japanese Embassy, said the princess had come to South Africa specifically for the

"Isn't it lovely?" the princess said as she excitedly shook the snow globe, joking that if she turned it to just the right angle she could see the Japanese team inside.

She broke out in laughter when he handed the second gift - a vuvuzela covered in beads to show the South African flag. The princess did not try out the vuvuzela herself but instead handed it over to Deputy



VISITOR NUMBER ONE MILLION

Story and photos by Somkgele Mnguni



Visitors waiting in the queue at the South African Pavilion

It's not often that in an exhibition you get visitors that are counted in millions. Normal exhibitions usually attract visitors who are counted in thousands or hundreds. Pertaining to World Expositions which are coordinated by the Bureau of International Expos, this becomes a different ball game as the stage is big enough to fit an abundance of visitors from the world's most populated country.

The magnitude and nature of world expo events, in terms of the format, duration, exhibition space, exhibition themes and so forth entail a very big number of exhibition visitors as opposed to normal less big exhibitions that take place for a week or month.

Of-course, factors such as the design of a country's pavilion (look and feel of exterior and interior), the country's products and services that are showcased as well as images that are projected determine the level at which expo visitors are attracted to a pavilion.

No doubt that South Africa's pavilion projection of Brand South Africa at the 2010 Shanghai Expo attracts a high number of visitors to the pavilion.

South Africa promotes itself at the expo by showcasing various themes such as tourism, arts and culture, modern economy, industry sectors, infrastructure development and so forth. To top it all hosting the Soccer World Cup further makes South Africa to be at the centre stage at the Shanghai Expo and this has contributed to the pavilion receiving a high number of visitors.

It was a jubilant and exciting moment for the South African Pavilion on 22 June 2010



Top left: One Millionth visitor with South African and Chinese staff
Top right: Sonia with the South African Pavilion Director Mr Schoeman Du Plessis

at 12h25 pm as the pavilion received its 1 millionth visitor. 22 year old Sonia Cao who hails from Hunan Province in the South West of China became visitor number one million. She was greeted at the entrance by the South African Pavilion Director and the permanent Chinese and South African staff who presented her with a hamper. Sonia mentioned that she was happy and excited to be the pavilion's one millionth visitor and therefore honoured to have received a warm welcome into South Africa's home.

She alluded to the fact that she became interested into visiting the pavilion as she wanted to get more information about South Africa hosting the world cup, specifically the process through which the country went through in preparing for the cup and how the country and its citizens will benefit from hosting this event.

Vibrant South African colours which represent the national flag and which are showcased inside the pavilion also caught her eye. A student in Canada studying Finance with ambitions of venturing into the Banking Sector, Sonia Cao admitted

that she was taken by surprise to see that South Africa is a developing country which is modernised as this is evidently showcased through a projection of modern cities, roads, infrastructure, tourism destinations and so forth. Her perceptions of South Africa before visiting the pavilion were that of a country that is characterised by desserts and animals.

"I respect Mr Mandela for promoting human rights and for his efforts that contributed to the liberation of South Africans", said Sonia. The South African Pavilion receives +/- 30 000 visitors daily with numbers increasing during weekends and the majority of visitors are Chinese nationals who come from various provinces.

Since the commencement of the expo South African security staff members at the pavilion entrance used a counting machine to count visitors. Visitors also get South African stamps on their expo passports as a testimony of having paid a visit to the pavilion. There are other visitors who flock to the pavilion to watch the screening of live world cup matches. ■

EUROPE HEADS OF MISSION OF MISSION

Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane led discussions during the conference.

The Europe Heads of Mission held a successful Conference in Brussels from 8-10 May 2010. The discussions were led by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, with support from the Director-General, Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba and the Deputy Director-General (DDG) for Europe, Ambassador Rapu Molekane.

Sectoral presentations were made by the DDG Corporate Services, Mr Asogen Moodley, DDG Human Resources, Ms Mathu Joyini, DDG Multilateral, Ambassador George Nene and DDG Africa-Bilateral, Mr Mxolisi Nkosi. The two and a half day Conference also paid attention to regional political and economic dynamics.

Of note was that the Conference coincided with the first anniversary of the fourth democratically elected government, inaugurated on 7 May 2009, and also as a sequel to the Heads of Mission Conference held in Sandton in August 2009, where the mandate of the newly renamed Department of International Relations and Cooperation was laid down. Strong emphasis was made on the imperatives of south-south and north-south relations, as well as South Africa's partnership with international organisations and non-state actors. The Conference also benefitted from the Minister's Budget Vote presented on 22 April 2010 to Parliament, where it was reaffirmed that South Africa's foreign policy rests on the centrality of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African continent, commitment to South-South relations, multilateralism, relations with countries in the Northern hemisphere and the strengthening of the social, political and economic relations.

The Conference reflected on the objectives of the AU Constitutive Act and the ongoing work of the AU. Furthermore, the SA-EU Summit held in September 2009 in Cape Town received attention, highlighting the need to continue to engage the European Union on already established dialogues, and continue



Europe Heads of Mission in Brussels posing for a group picture with Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and some of DIRCO's senior management

to push forward the establishment of the remaining dialogue forums to be realigned with the five key priorities of government. Incidentally the 10th SA-EU Ministerial Political Dialogue and the Africa-EU Troika were held after the Conference.

The bilateral relationship with the EU is one of the most important structured ones that South Africa maintains in the world, in addition to same arrangements with individual member countries in Europe, SADC-EU relations, and for Africa-EU relations. The Conference also dedicated a session to the ongoing Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations and their implications for regional integration in Africa.

The Minister highlighted South Africa's endorsement by the African Union, as Africa's candidate for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) non-permanent seat for the period in 2011- 2012, which, amongst others, will intensify development work and cooperation programmes with some individual members of the EU, as well as the EU to support our peace building efforts and post-conflict reconstruction in the continent.

The implementation of the Lisbon Reform Treaty from 1 December 2009 received attention due to implications for South Africa's engagement with Europe and the way Europe engages the world.

On the central and eastern regions of Europe, the Conference emphasised that relations are just as significant, especially with new members of the EU. South Africa will always count on support of these countries in multilateral and bilateral fora.

Further afield, the Conference paid attention to the strategic engagements with the emerging economies of the South namely: China, Brazil and India, with emphasis on bilateral relations; as well as IBSA, BRIC and the G20. The ongoing economic crisis received special attention and participants were unanimous that recovery is in the horizon.

On the trade front, the Conference recognised the importance of non-state actors and the need for more structured relations to realise South Africa's economic development objectives, trade and investment partnerships with the rest of the world. South Africa must continue to enhance its relationships with non-governmental organisations and especially South African business abroad in order to expand our economic support base. Such non-state actors should be brought to the fold in support of the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA),



Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and Dr Anil Sooklal

as South Africa looks beyond development assistance towards development cooperation through trade and investment. Recognising that trade is on a steady increase and shows significant potential, the Conference agreed that visits to the region should be prioritised to strengthen the communications and maximise the trade opportunities, despite the change in import-

export flows recently in the wake of the fiscal problems in this region. The Conference was an opportunity for Heads of Mission to share experiences and best practices. It also highlighted how interlinked the region is and how information sharing must be enhanced between Missions in supporting South Africa's overarching objectives. ■ Contributed by the

Mission in Brussels, Belgium.



REGION: Europe
COUNTRY: Belgium and Luxembourg (non-residential)
NAME: Dr Anil Sooklal
TERM ALREADY SERVED: 4 years - extended to June 2011.
PREVIOUS POSTINGS:

My first posting was to the South African Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva where I served as a Counsellor, Political (1995-1997). Thereafter I served as a Counsellor, Political at the South African High Commission in New Delhi (1998-1999).

CAREER INFORMATION/QUALIFICATIONS:
 I received my Diploma in fine Art in 1979 and a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Oriental History) in 1983 from the University of Durban-Westville (now called the University of KwaZulu-Natal). I proceeded with an Honours Degree (Cum Laude) in 1984. I completed my Masters Degree and D Phil in Religious Studies in 1986 and 1989, respectively, from the University of Durban-Westville, where I also obtained a PhD in Oriental History in 1992.

In addition, I have completed a Certificate in Human Rights from the UN Centre for Human Rights in Geneva (1993); and a Certificate in International Trade and Investment Promotion, International Trade Institute of Singapore, Singapore Co-operation Programme, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004).

I joined the then Department of Foreign Affairs in 1995. Prior to joining the Department I was a Senior Lecturer at the University of Durban-Westville (1985-1994) and at the University of South Africa (1984).

Following the first two postings, I was appointed the Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Office in Cape Town (1999-February 2000). I served as the Acting Chief Director: United Nations Political and Global Security Affairs (February 2000-September 2000). I was appointed the Chief Director for North Africa (September 2000 – March 2001). Thereafter I acted as the Deputy Director-General for Asia and the Middle East, while also the Chief Director for Asia and Australasia (2001-2002). I was appointed as the Deputy Director-General for Asia and the Middle East in 2003, a position I served in until 2006, when I was appointed to my current function.

GENERAL INTERESTS (E.G. HOBBIES):
 Jogging, Movies and Meditation / Yoga.

COMMENTS FROM THE HoM ABOUT THE COUNTRY OF ACCREDITATION:
 In addition to being the Ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, we are also the Mission to the European Union (EU). The Embassy fulfils a double function. Bilaterally, while Belgium and Luxembourg are small, they are interesting countries due to the history, the

cultures and the strategic positions of both countries in Europe. In addition to the dirco officials, we also have colleagues from the Departments of Agriculture; Forestry and Fisheries; Defence and Military Veterans; Trade and Industry; Science and Technology; and SARS, who service both countries, as well as the EU.

South Africa's relations with Belgium can be traced as far back as 1875. Since then relations have expanded significantly, with political, development co-operation and trade deepening. Dialogue and cooperation focus not only on bilateral issues, but also on continental and global issues such as the Consolidation of the African Agenda. On a bilateral level and also through its membership of the EU, Belgium is one of South Africa's most consistent and important development partners, supporting sectors such as land reform, health, and safety and security.

Belgium also serves as the capital of Europe as it hosts the majority of EU institutions. The EU remains one of South Africa's key trading and development partners. The scope of South Africa's relations with the EU has deepened extensively since the signing of the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement in 1999. Through the SA-EU Strategic Partnership Joint Action Plan (JACP) agreed to in 2007, South Africa and the EU now have 12 Dialogue Forums which facilitate dialogue and have strengthened cooperation on sectors such as health, energy, science and technology, trade, and development. Discussions are ongoing for the establishment of the dialogues on education, and employment and social development, amongst others.

Political dialogue and co-operation cover all domestic and international political issues of mutual interest. Regionally, we are an active member of the SADC Group here in Brussels and remain focused on the continued engagement for a developmental outcome in the SADC-EU EPA negotiations. Continentally, South Africa also cooperates with the EU on peace and security matters.

In addition, the Mission also manages South Africa's relations with the ACP Group of States of which it is a qualified member. This includes participating in the ACP-Parliamentary forums and committees such as the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. South African Parliamentarians also engage their EU counterparts bilaterally through the SA-EU IPM, strengthening their oversight role regarding the overall SA-EU Strategic Partnership.

ANY COMMENTS:
 The EU is currently going through internal changes brought on by the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. The changes will also inform the EU's engagement with Third World countries. The challenges being experienced by the Euro currency have lessons for Africa, as we also aspire towards a common currency.

We believe our Mission is ideally placed to promote and protect South Africa's interests in the heart of Europe. Our work is focused on enhancing South Africa and Africa's developmental agenda, with a particular emphasis on the five electoral priorities. It is an exciting, fast-paced Mission which offers a vibrant environment for all our officials. It is an ideal environment to advance South Africa and Africa's priorities while at the same time growing professionally at the individual and collective levels. ■



By: Siphokazi Mgudlwa
 Pictures: Jacoline Schoonees

Mr. Piet Maredi bidding farewell to his fellow colleagues

FAREWELL NTATE



After 34 years in DIRCO, Piet Maredi is ready to rest with his family in Sekhukhune



DIRCO workers bidding farewell to Mr Maredi

Mr Piet Maredi left DIRCO on a high note on 29 June 2010 looking forward to taking care of his family and livestock in Sekhukhune, Limpopo.

The 60 year-old started working for the Department in 1976 as a general assistant at Supply Chain store room.

"When I was assigned to work at the storeroom, I told myself that I would give it my all because getting employment in government in those days was extremely difficult," said Mr Maredi. He spent 20 years in Supply Chain when he indicated that he

ended becoming a master in managing storerooms and fixing rack.

20 years later, he was transferred to Public Diplomacy's store room where he was responsible for packaging material that is distributed to all our missions and also the Department's stakeholders.

Mr Maredi's farewell was not only attended by Public Diplomacy officials but also the general assistants in the Department. He is looking forward to spending quality time with his family in Sekhukhune, Limpopo. ■



Mr Paseka Mokhethea, Director: Content Development handing a farewell gift to Mr Maredi



By: Siphokazi Mgudlwa
Pictures: Jacoline Schoonees



LET THE GAMES BEGIN AT DIRCO

The DIRCO Head Office was full of festivities in June. This included an event that was planned by Public Diplomacy to create a hype around the FIFA 2010 World Cup.

Staff members divided themselves into teams according to their different branches and were subjected to questions around the World Cup. All the Branches in the

Department participated in the activities. After much fun and excitement Branch Asia and Middle East won the challenges with Protocol and Africa Bilateral as runner-ups, and all the participants received gifts relating to the World Cup. The winning team received a clock watch and goodies bag with 2010 memorabilia.

The rest of the staff members also received World Cup related goodies which included Vuvuzela's, t-shirts and caps. ■



The Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) strongly believes that every South African should know his or her HIV status and, as government employees, we should be taking the lead in driving this important initiative. We are therefore actively encouraging HIV testing through our established and highly effective system of GEMS Wellness Screening Days to make it easier for government employees to get tested.

DIRCO officials walking into the Wellness Centre for advice and voluntary testing



The Department of Health recently launched a nationwide campaign to encourage 15 million South Africans to get tested for HIV/AIDS over the next 15 months.

It is hoped that the campaign will dramatically increase proactive behaviour in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the country. As GEMS this ground breaking campaign by Government is particularly close to our hearts.

The ultimate purpose of this campaign is to diagnose HIV-positive people so that we can take the most appropriate action to safeguard their health as early as possible. For those who are not yet members of the scheme it is not too late to join. All Government employees qualify for an enhanced employer medical subsidy when joining GEMS.

Living with HIV/AIDS is a very personal issue and empowering yourself does not require you to make your personal challenge a public one. On the contrary, your battle against HIV/AIDS can remain as private as you want it to be.

Aid for AIDS (AfA) is an HIV/AIDS Disease Management Company that works for GEMS to provide you with the confidential

support you need if you are HIV positive. They can also help if you simply need more information about the disease. By turning to them for help, you help yourself by taking control out of the hands of the virus and putting it back into your own.

Eunice (44), a teacher, discovered her status seven years ago when she decided to get tested after yet another family member passed away. "The hardest part is knowing your status. Registering on GEMS' HIV Disease Management programme, which is managed by AfA, meant that I would be guided and advised by qualified doctors and that I was able to breathe a sigh of relief."

Despite the morbidity or effects of this disease, there is a way out. "I was sick and tired of feeling depressed about it," says Eunice, "I couldn't sleep at night because I was so worried. When I finally registered on the AfA programme, they were very patient and understanding.

They explained to me that having HIV and not taking any medication, if required, is like leaving the doors and windows of your home unlocked when you know that robbers are coming. I was glad that I had decided to take responsibility, even though I know it's not my fault that I have HIV."

There are many individuals, like Eunice, who have decided to take responsibility for the quality of their lives because they don't want HIV to be responsible for their deaths. AfA offers all the medical services you will need. They also give you useful information about the disease that you may not be aware of.

Sifiso (39), an administration clerk, found that AfA helped him get his health back under control. "They introduced me to "Positive Living" which shows me how to live my new life. There is information about keeping my belongings clean and washing my fruit and vegetables so that I don't get any bacterial infections. They also told me which foods are good for me to eat and how much exercise and sleep I need. In fact, I feel better now than I ever have. It's amazing, I feel like I've had a fresh start in life."

The GEMS HIV Disease Management programme, managed by AfA, is helping Eunice and Sifiso to empower themselves, while the Scheme takes care of all the technicalities. Treatment is closely and consistently monitored so that optimum results are achieved. The doctors and laboratory staff make sure that each and every patient is on the right medication so that their lives can continue normally. Each

Pictures: Jacoline Schoonees

patient receives appropriate counseling, as their emotional and mental wellness is not only important for their own sake but also for that of their loved ones.

"Before I registered on the AfA programme I was always worried because I knew I was HIV positive and my family could see that I was depressed. It was like a black cloud hanging over the house and I felt like it was my fault. Now that I'm on the ART things feel normal again at home. Of course I have had to change my life a bit, but it's worth it. I would rather make the effort to take my medicine on time and to put on a jersey when it's getting cold, than to let myself die," says Sifiso.

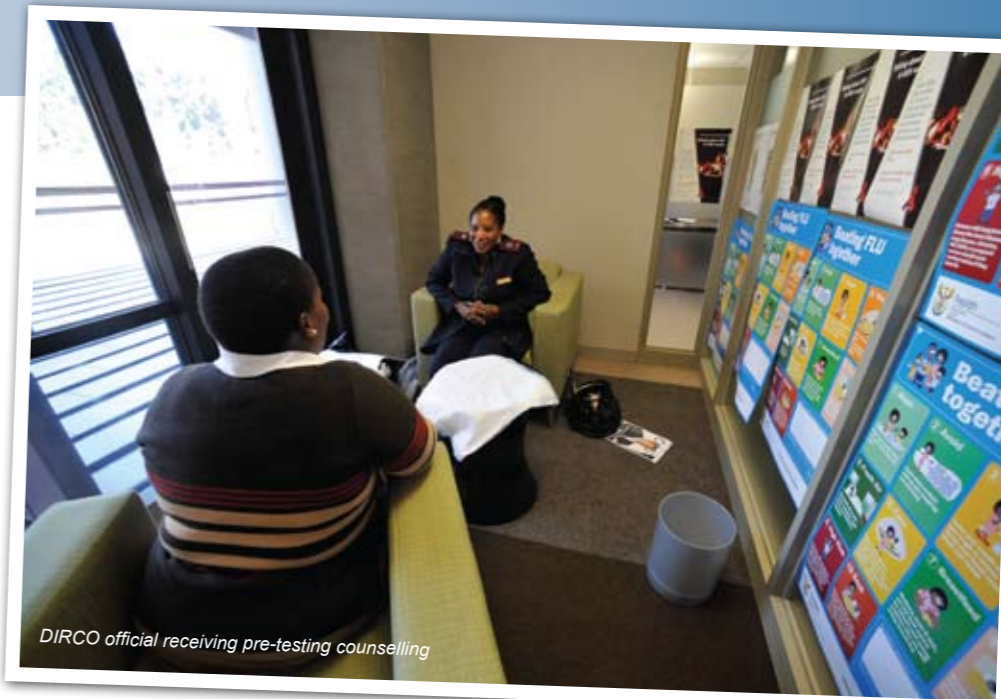
Aid for AIDS not only offers support on a normal day-to-day basis, but also for those who are going through stressful times. For example, a new mother often finds it difficult to adhere to her antiretroviral programme after giving birth and the stress of caring for a newborn can lead to her neglecting her own health. She will need support at this time and *Aid for AIDS* can assist with this transition.

The organisation also offers answers to the sorts of questions many people have, such as:

- What should I do if I am HIV positive, or think I might be?
- How will my condition be monitored?
- Will I receive a medical aid cover for antiretrovirals?
- What benefits are available?
- How do I join the *Aid for AIDS* programme?

Joining the programme is easy and can be done in the six simple steps below:

- 1) **Register with Aid for AIDS (it's confidential). Contact them on 0860 100 646, or download the application form from www.gems.gov.za.**
- 2) **Fill in your details. Get your doctor to examine you and complete the form.**
- 3) **Fax it to the toll-free number - 0800 600 773 or post to - The Aid for AIDS Programme, PO Box 38597, Howard Place 7450, South Africa.**
- 4) **The Aid for AIDS medical team will review your case and discuss the appropriate treatment with your doctor.**
- 5) **Aid for AIDS will send both you and your doctor a letter explaining your treatment plan.**



DIRCO official receiving pre-testing counselling

6) Treatment can be obtained from your dispensing doctor, pharmacy or through the GEMS designated service provider for chronic medication, Medipost.

know their HIV status.

It is only once all South Africans become mobilised and more proactive about HIV/AIDS that we will be able to address the pandemic that is threatening to destroy our nation.

By contacting *Aid for AIDS* and knowing your status, you will be joining the many that are fighting HIV/AIDS. Only you can help yourself in making the decision to take back control of your life but this organisation will help you to look after it once your choice is made.

With our ever-growing member base we hope to encourage more individuals to take responsibility for their lives and to

Want to know more about becoming a GEMS member? Please visit our website at www.gems.gov.za. For members who have any questions on HIV/AIDS, please phone the GEMS call centre on 0860 00 4367. GEMS will assist you in every way possible to ensure your health and wellbeing as well as that of your family and loved ones. ■



DIRCO official testing for HIV/AIDS virus

UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY – Moral Regeneration Month

11 **JULY** – World Population Day

18 **JULY** – Mandela Day



Where were you ?

