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VOICE

Internal Newsletter of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation

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Volume 5, 2015

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Diplomatic Mail

The new-look *Ubuntu Diplomat*

Dear Team,

The profile section in *Ubuntu Diplomat* is very interesting because it gives us an insight into our colleagues that we didn't know before.

The layout is good and edgy.

What I think can be done to improve the publication:

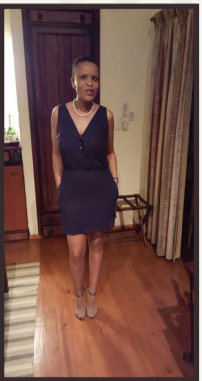
- More opinion pieces on international relations matters and socio-economic issues that affect the majority of South Africans.
- Add a feature on people leaving or who have joined DIRCO and colleagues who are going on retirement and their experiences over the years they served the department.

Some colleagues feel the magazine focuses more on issues and achievements by missions and not enough on Head Office activities.

Another suggestion is to run monthly competitions.

Other than that, I love it, keep up the good work!

Vuyiswa Zuma
Directorate: Change Management and Service Delivery



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You can contact us on the telephone numbers provided below. Should you wish to email us, please reference 'Foreign Guide' in the email subject line.

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Guest Editor's Letter

Dear Diplomats,

It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be a guest editor of this month's edition of *Ubuntu Diplomat*. Heritage is a subject very close to my heart and I am proud to say I am a traditionalist!

With that said, I am proud to bring you the sixth edition of our internal publication.

In September, our country, South Africa, celebrated Heritage Month under the theme: "Our knowledge, our heritage: Towards the identification, promotion and preservation of South Africa's living heritage". Having celebrated Women's Month in August, as women, we were challenged yet again to promote and preserve our cultural and traditional beliefs in our families and communities by imparting knowledge through various platforms.

During this month, South Africans across the globe were encouraged to celebrate their cultural heritage and the diverseness of their cultural beliefs and traditions. Our heritage as South Africa is very rich with colourful traditional attires, beautiful traditional songs and sounds, indigenous games and foods.

September was not only Heritage Month but we also celebrated Public Service Month. The month sought to celebrate, recognise and showcase public servants who followed Batho Pele principles, which required them to be polite, open and transparent and deliver accessible, effective and efficient quality services to all. South Africans are known to be warm and welcoming, so during that month as public servants, we were encouraged to

showcase our rich cultures while we strove for excellence in changing the lives of our fellow South Africans.

Given our 2015 theme, I challenge each and every one of you to know yourself and share yourself with the world.

Ke Serialong, ke Mofokeng wa tshela ya lekotwane, motho wa mmammulana, mottlatla, motho wa lebodi le tswa kwana ha tshela, sethogolo sa matelebele a Moletlane, Bathokwa ba Mmaseboko seboko a se bokwe ngwaneng!

Thank you!

SC
Serialong Chauke



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Minister Nkoana-Mashabane concludes successful Working Visit to Mauritania

BY TERENCE TSHISEVHE
SOUTH AFRICAN MISSION: MAURITANIA

At the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Vatma Vall Mint Soueina, Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane undertook a Working Visit to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on 24 August 2015.

The objective of the visit was to further strengthen and consolidate the strategic and historical bilateral relations between the two countries, and to sign the Agreement on the Establishment of a Joint Commission of Cooperation, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding on Regular Bilateral Consultations.

The two ministers also had an opportunity to discuss a broad range of regional and international matters of mutual concern and interest. Some of these discussions focused on matters of peace and security in the Sahel and North African regions. South Africa regards Mauritania as an important partner in the advancement of the African Agenda as well as an important member of the Sahel and Maghreb regions.

During the visit, the Minister was received by Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and conveyed the brotherly greetings of President Jacob Zuma.

The Minister also held courtesy meetings with Yahya Ould Hademine, Prime Minister of Mauritania; and Khadijetou M'Bareck Fall, Minister-delegate for African and Maghreb Affairs, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane also extended an invitation to her counterpart to pay an Official Visit to South Africa, which she accepted. The aim of the visit will be to inaugurate the Joint Commission of Cooperation, of which the agreement was signed during the Working Visit. The date of the visit will be determined through diplomatic channels.

The Minister concluded her Working Visit to Mauritania by visiting the Embassy where she also engaged with the locally recruited personnel.



The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, meets with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Vatma Vall Mint Soueina, 24 August 2015, Nouakchott, Mauritania

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INTERCONTINENTAL
JOHANNESBURG SANDTON TOWERS

The voice of women recognised



BY MAUD DLOMO

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: DIPLOMATIC TRAINING, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

On Friday, 28 August 2015, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), concluded its August Women's Month celebrations with a graduation ceremony for the 40 women who participated in the Capacity-Building Programme for South African Women on Conflict Resolution, Negotiation, Mediation and Elections, as well as the launch of the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa.

The programme, from 24 to 28 August 2015, included women from different women's organisations (two from each province), including the South African Progressive Women's Movement. To institutionalise this initiative and also contribute towards improved coordination of South Africa's mediation efforts, the Women's Programme culminated in the launch of the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa, hosted by Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane.

The establishment of the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa was a result of the need to assist in establishing a database of all South African women involved in peacemaking and capturing their experiences in order to inform and assist communities to address conflict and build peace. It was also decided that the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum could form an important foundation as a resource base for the newly developed DIRCO Mediation Support Unit. It is envisaged that it will inspire other women on the African continent and elsewhere to continue to play the important leadership and peace-building roles they have traditionally played without necessarily being part of official delegations.

The forum will be an annual institution of women discussing issues related to African peace-building and development. It will also be the South African chapter of an African association of women involved in conflict resolution and peacemaking. In formalising the Annual Dialogue Forum, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane recommended that Mme Gertrude Shope be requested to lend her name to this institution due to the role she has played in South Africa's struggle in general, her contribution to advancing the role of women in South Africa and also her guidance and advice to and positive influence on current South African female leaders. While in exile, from 1970 to 1971, Mme Shope was secretary to the head of the African National Congress' (ANC) Women's Section, Florence Mophosho. Together, these two women started the publication, *Voice of the Women*.

The launch of the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa started with a moving tribute to Mme Shope by Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, who described herself as a "daughter" of Mme Shope. Minister Mapisa-Nqakula related a number of stories of Mme Shope during the struggle years, including one where their convoy hit landmines in southern Angola and where their airplane was hijacked on their way to Tanzania. In each of these stories, Mme Shope was the one who brought



calm, stability and leadership to the events. In the keynote address, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said that most women were mediators and conflict solvers by nature. "Women are always peacemakers and they are the ones who are always exposed to situations where some strong men want to take over power. Women are the first to arrive at police stations." She also informed the audience that Mme Shope was chosen as the icon of the forum as she was a true unifier, soldier, mother, mediator and leader.

In response, Mme Shope exclaimed her honour for the Annual Forum to be named after her and to be part of the launch. She said that: "It is our duty as South Africans

and particularly as South African women to continue to play this very important role by participating in many peace-building initiatives. And also in as many important initiatives as we can that address conflict resolution and peacekeeping".

The audience consisted of more than 500 people from the Diplomatic Corps, United Nations (UN) agencies, the media and women organisations such as the South African Progressive Movement for Women, Retired Teachers Organisations, Moral Regeneration Committee, South Africa Congress of Non-Profit Organisations, South African Students' Congress, South Africa Women in Dialogue, National Association of

Manufacturers in Electronic Components, ANC Women's League, Community Work Programme, SABC, UN Women and DIRCO and partner departments from the International Cooperation, Trade and Security Cluster. Women from the following communities also attended: Mamelodi, Soshanguve, Soweto and Greater Johannesburg.

The event was also attended by Mme Shope's children, Lyndall Shope-Mafole, Ambassador Thaninga Shope and Ambassador Lenin Shope, and culminated in the hand-over by ministers Nkoana-Mashabane and Mapisa-Nqakula of a special photo of Mme Shope, as well as a special birthday cake (it was her birthday on 15 August). 🌍

Know our Heads of Mission

1. Tell us about yourself?

My name is Ruby Marks. I was appointed as Head of Mission in 2011, and I am accredited to Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia.

2. What is your daily routine?

Every day is different, there's definitely no routine! This of course is what you would expect from working as a diplomat in a high-paced environment. Diplomatic practice is very context-specific and context-aware, so any day could be spent meeting potential investors; dealing with consular issues; meeting with the other female ambassadors accredited to Thailand that I convene for sharing of best practices around women's empowerment and gender equality; or meeting with the other African ambassadors in my capacity as Dean of the African Ambassadors. There's a constant flow of new ambassadors who arrive, and given South Africa's standing, come to pay a courtesy call. In addition to this, there are 36 non-resident African ambassadors to Thailand, who come calling when they are in Bangkok. This has proven to be an invaluable opportunity to share perspectives on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. In my capacity as Dean of the African Ambassadors, I convene all the Thai Honorary Consuls in a forum to support Thai trade and investment into Africa. I also initiated the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Ambassadors' Forum, and we arrange activities to raise the profile of BRICS in all our countries of accreditation.

3. How have you acclimatised to the environment?

Well, there are three seasons in Thailand: hot, hotter and hottest! The humidity is really high, and it can become uncomfortable. I also have a new appreciation for our traffic system in South Africa: the traffic here is absolutely crazy, with what seems like thousands of motorbikes zooming around! Thailand also has the unenviable statistic of being the country with the second-highest traffic fatality rate in the world. Couple the crazy traffic with the incessant rain that the monsoon season brings, and you have a recipe for disaster for timekeeping at meetings. I've even had to ditch the official vehicle on a few occasions to jump onto a motorbike to make it on time for appointments! Not the most elegant way to travel when you are formally dressed, but you learn to do whatever it takes to ensure that you observe good protocol through timekeeping!

4. What are the core activities of the Mission, and how do you implement this?

When I arrived in Thailand, I had an initial 100-day plan to shift the focus of the Mission to what is our core activity now – economic diplomacy. I am driven by an immense sense of urgency, because I am always reminded of a cartoon that was produced by one of our newspapers. It depicted a woman doing her washing in front of her corrugated iron shack, and the accompanying conversation bubble said, "Foreign Affairs? What do they do for me?!" I am also driven by the late Mam' Ruth Mompoti, who in a wonderfully soft and humble way, had a habit of greeting you by saying, "What did you do for our people today?" So, that is where it starts for me, the incredibly privileged moment that I have to lead a team in the Mission that can make a difference! Our initial planning in the Mission when I arrived has now become a routine part of our key deliverable, and I regard increasing trade and investment as my key performance indicator, because while much of the work that the Mission does is process-oriented, trade and investment is tangible, measurable and concrete.



Phuket Surin Beach



Bangkok



Bangkok

And of course, as the Freedom Charter states, and Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane reminds us of so well: "There shall be peace and friendship". It is the existence of peace and friendship that South Africa fosters regionally, continentally and internationally, that allows us to focus on our key national priorities, which at its core is growing the economy. Therefore, the focus of the Mission remains on deepening our knowledge of the trade environment in all of our countries of accreditation.

5. What do you like about the country of accreditation?

Thais are incredible friendly and hospitable, and genuinely curious about South Africa and Africa. There's an inherent warmth that reminds me of home, and their absolute love for His Majesty the King is wonderful to behold. Their hospitality industry is also an incomparable experience, and something that we can really learn from. I love

their patriotism – two flags are displayed in front of each home: one for the country and the other for the Monarchy. They also broadcast the national anthem at public places such as train stations twice a day, and the national anthem is played before the start of every movie during which you are required to stand to show your respect. Buddhist values are also important, and each Thai child is taught these values from a very young age. Of course, I would also have to add the wonderful Thai food, and the massages that you can get here. The beaches, when I am able to visit, are also beautiful and very well kept.

6. One thing that people in HO should know about your country of accreditation?

Actually, there are several! Thai means "land of the free people", because Thailand has never been colonised. The country has the longest city name on Earth for a capital, called

Krungthepmahanakhon (this, by the way, is the abbreviation). Fortunately for the rest of us, though, the name Bangkok stuck! It is also one of the most popular holiday destinations in the world. The dominant spiritual belief is Buddhism, and there are only about 5% Christians and Muslims in the country. There is also evidence of strong links between Thailand and South Africa. Thai slaves were transported to South Africa before slavery was abolished by King Rama IV by the Dutch East India shipping company, who intermarried with other slaves at the time.

7. Favourite spot/restaurant?

Any of the beautiful Phuket beaches!

8. Are there any similarities between your country of accreditation and South Africa?

Our mutual family kinship patterns of respect and closeness of families, and the warmth and hospitality of the people.

9. Are there any myths that are commonly held regarding your country of accreditation that you would like to bust?

Thai women are strong, independent women, and yet there's a general persistent stereotype that sees Thailand as a prime destination for sex tourism. Of course this exists, as it does in other countries faced with social inequality, but it does a grave injustice to the vast majority of Thai women who work hard, lead independent lives and work to support their families. Many people also do not know that Thailand is one of the economic powerhouses within the ASEAN, with the status of an upper-middle income country. Thailand also has one of the lowest unemployment figures in the world, at less than 0,6%. Small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) are one of the economic drivers of the Thai economy, accounting for more than 80% of the workforce and almost 40% of gross domestic product (GDP). However, the reasons for these low unemployment figures is highly instructive – the agricultural sector considers workers "employed" even if they are informal, seasonal workers. Thailand's social welfare system, for example, in pensions and unemployment insurance, is still patchy in implementation, and so there's little alternative but to enter the "informal" sector, which is also considered as employment. The informal sector accounts for almost 70% of the total workforce, and includes street vendors, motorbike drivers and the "self-employed" in grey areas of the economy such as sex workers, who are also counted as employed.

10. What are some of the things that South Africa can learn from your countries of accreditation?

There are many things that South Africa can learn from Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. Despite everything, Asia remains a basin of innovation and creativity, with a population that takes responsibility for their own economic lives. Of course, this has to be supplemented with support from the State, but we would do well to study the success factors of the SMME sector. The hospitality sector is another key strength that we can learn from, because tourism has become a key driver of the Thai economy and accounts for 9% of the GDP. This figure rises even more to 20% when we include the indirect effects of tourism.

Thailand has also shifted to a "Look West" strategy to Africa. This means that there's a renewed commitment to enhance trade relations with the continent. South Africa should therefore continue to prioritise this important country. 🌐

Everyday things photo competition!



Do you have a passion for taking photographs of your daily life? For a chance to win, enter this competition by sharing photographs of your daily life while on a working trip, leisure, prominent people you have met, etc.

Photo guidelines:

- The photo must have been taken by yourself
- The photo must be in JPEG (.jpg) format
- The photo must be clear and of high quality
- The photo must have a caption

The competition will run until October 2015 with winners announced monthly. Send your name to:
Vhq-Editorial_Committee

PRIZES UP FOR GRABS!

Be our next Guest Editor!

Are you a good writer?

The Editorial Committee of the internal newsletter, *It's Your Voice* invites officials to contribute to the magazine by being guest editors on a monthly basis.

Guest editors are required to write editorials and timeously submit them for publishing.

The proposed length of the editorials is approximately 150 to 200 words.

The Editorial Committee is responsible for the concept/theme of the issue and will edit the submitted editorials.



LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE

Using the Subjunctive Clause in Submission Writing

The subjunctive is a special kind of present tense, using an infinitive that does not have the letter "s" in the third person singular. It is a formal construction and is more often in the written form than in the spoken form. It was used much more frequently in old English.

The subjunctive is often used with a "that" clause, to formally express the idea that something is important or essential.

Verbs used with the subjunctive:

Verbs commonly used with the subjunctive are: advise, recommend, decide, desire, insist, order, petition, propose, urge etc.

Note the subjunctive verbs in the following sentences:

- Thabo proposed that Tom telephone his accountant.
- She recommended that he go and see a doctor.
- The queen commands that he attend the ceremony.
- It is recommended that the director-general sign the attached letter.
- It is recommended that the director approve the attached memorandum.
- It is recommended that the director consider the draft programme for the workshop.

Miscellaneous rules of grammar

Punctuation: Initial capital letter or not

It is helpful to apply this general rule: if the title precedes a person's name, or if it is the full or official title of someone or something, then use initial capital letters; if none of these, then use a lowercase initial letter:

Example:

President Mabuza; but: the president chaired the meeting.

Director-General Matjila; but: the director-general has approved the submission.

Often, the use of "a" before a title is a clue to using a lowercase initial letter for the title, because "a" indicates general, not a specific instance.

Department or department:

When referring to a specific department by its correct title, e.g. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation, use uppercase initials.

When referring to a department generically or in the plural, use lowercase: the international relations department, the departments of labour and of education.

Director-general. Plural: directors-general. Initial uppercase in full title; Director-General of the Department of Basic Education.

Did you know?

- "Feedback" is the shortest word in English that has the letters a, b,c,d,e, and f.
- "Four" is the only number whose number of letters in the name equals the number
- "Forty" is the only number which has its letters in alphabetical order
- "Rhythms" is the longest English word without the normal vowels, a, e, i, o, or u.
- "Go" is the shortest complete sentence in the English language
- "Bookkeeper" is the only English word that has three consecutive double letters

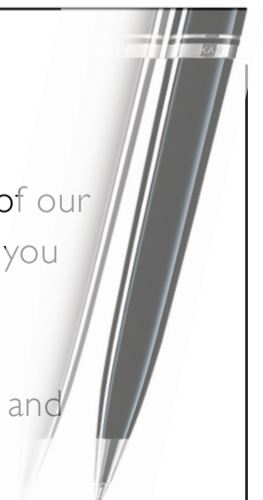
Source: Yahoo.com/question

Write to us!

The Editorial Committee wishes to solicit your opinions, views, suggestions and comments on the look and feel of our internal magazine "*It's Your Voice*" as well as other issues you may want to raise.

In not more than 50 words, please share your thoughts and ideas with us. Photographs are also welcome.

Send your pictures to: Vhq-Editorial_Committee



“Love Poem for my Country”

BY SANDILE DIKENI
SOUTH AFRICAN WRITER AND POET

My country is for love
so say its valleys
where ancient rivers flow
the full circle of life
under the proud eye of birds
adorning the sky

My country is for peace
so says the veld
where reptiles caress
its surface
with elegant motions
glittering in their pride

My country is for joy
so talk the mountains
with baboons
hopping from boulder to boulder
in the majestic delight
of cliffs and peaks

My country is for health and wealth
see the blue of the sea
and beneath the jewels of fish
deep under the bowels of soil
hear the golden voice
of a miner's praise for my country

My country is for unity
feel the millions
see their passion
their hands are joined together
there is hope in their eyes
We shall celebrate



VOICES FROM DIRCO

The Kingdom of Mapungubwe

BY SEAN MULAUDZI
DIRECTORATE: RADIO

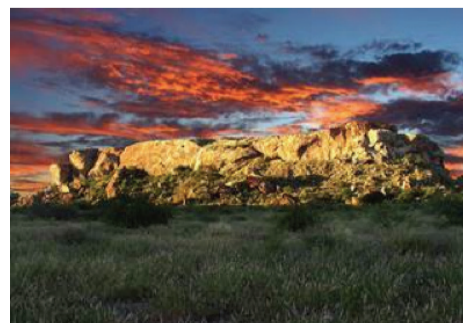
The story of Mapungubwe reads like a novel; a once great precolonial Kingdom that traded with East (Asia) and then just vanished from the hill that was Mapungubwe. During the last few years, I have done some reading on the once great Kingdom of Mapungubwe, so the natural next step was to visit the site where it all happened in the 1200s. After doing some research, I found out that SANparks manages the site as part of the Mapungubwe National Park, with the Tuli Block (Botswana) and the Tuli safari area (Zimbabwe) forming part of the Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area, now officially known as Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area.



On 3 July 2003, the Mapungubwe Landscape was declared a World Heritage Site, making it more and more interesting as this area is located just a few kilometres north-west of Nancefield, a town to the north of Musina. So, on one very hot Friday in Limpopo, I set off for Mapungubwe, and the drive to Musina alone is some 240 odd kms. On the way, you will pass the town of Louis Trichardt, which has been at

the centre of many a name change, so it might be called Makhado by the time you drive there. As the road (N1) starts to ascend, you will find the Verwoerd tunnels, and immediately after the road ushers in dry savannah vegetation for the rest of the journey with no further settlements of the way besides a toll gate and two filling stations.

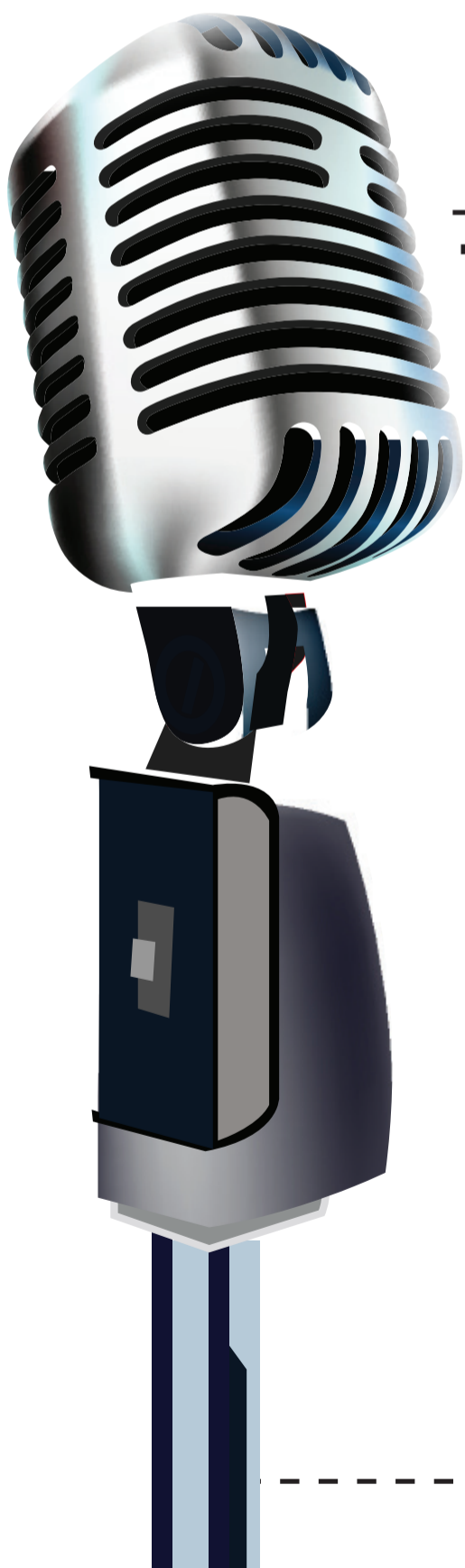
After asking for further directions at the Shell Ultra City on the edge of town, I stocked up on some water and more ice, and as the dry heat of the town set in, I drove on towards Mapungubwe National Park. After a short drive, I arrived at the Entrance, which I had missed initially, as it wasn't as imposing as the Kruger Gate, for instance. After sorting out my day pass, I drove in and started off for Mapungubwe Hill. A few agonising minutes later on a gravel road, I arrived at the hill. I found a ranger who proceeded to school me on the Kingdom of Mapungubwe, where the original inhabitants came from. And it turned out that they were into farming, fishing, mining and trade with other markets. In its time, Mapungubwe was an important trading hub and it connected the North with the East.



They sounded like a sophisticated Monarchy and very advanced at the same time. It was recorded to be one of the oldest precolonial kingdoms in southern Africa. From the hill, I drove eastwards towards a viewing point, and from this point I had a clear view of the Limpopo River and Zimbabwe across the river and the border as well. The guide there also reminded us that the people of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Limpopo were once ruled by one king in the times of the Mapungubwe Kingdom, before the colonisers erected borders and chopped up Africa.

From the viewing point, I drove past the Leopards Caves and was lucky enough to catch a glimpse of some leopards as they basked on the rocks. Although leopards prefer hunting at night, I stayed far away. In fact, I used binoculars to get a close-up view. After a few kilometres twisting and winding on gravel roads in the sweltering heat, we arrived at the convulsion point. This is where you are able to see both Botswana and Zimbabwe while on South African soil. This is made possible by the fact that this is where the Shashe River, which is a border between Botswana and Zimbabwe, joins the Limpopo River.

At this point, I was literally sweating and realising the amount of driving that I still had to do and decided to bid farewell to the national park and head back towards civilisation. 🌍





South Africa is home to eight Unesco world heritage sites. Unesco, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, has identified these eight sites to be of “outstanding value to humanity”.

Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape: The 160 000-ha Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape of dramatic mountainous desert in north-western South Africa constitutes a cultural landscape communally owned and managed. This site sustains the semi-nomadic pastoral livelihood of the Nama people, reflecting seasonal patterns that may have persisted for as much as two millennia in southern Africa.



Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape



iSimangaliso Wetland Park



uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park

uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park: The park is in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, covering 242 813 ha (2 428 km²). The park includes Royal Natal National Park, a provincial park, and covers part of the Drakensberg, the highest mountain range in southern Africa.

iSimangaliso Wetland Park: The 332 000-ha park contains three major lake systems, eight interlinking ecosystems, 700 year-old fishing traditions, most of South Africa's remaining swamp forests, Africa's largest estuarine system, 526 bird species and 25 000 year-old coastal dunes – among the highest in the world.

Robben Island: An island in Table Bay, 6,9 km west off the coast of Bloubergstrand, Cape Town. Nobel Laureate and former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, was imprisoned there for 18 of the 27 years he served behind bars before the fall of apartheid. To date, three of the former inmates of Robben Island have gone on to become President of South Africa: Nelson Mandela, Kgalema Motlanthe and Jacob Zuma.

The are four other Unesco world heritage sites:

- Cape Floral Region Protected Areas
- Vredefort Dome
- Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape
- Fossil Hominid Sites of Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, Kromdraai and Environs.



Robben Island



A day in the life of ... **Reed Mkhohliso**

Sub-Directorate: International School, International Partnerships, International Offers

1. Tell us about yourself ...

I was born in the beautiful tourist town of Parys located on the banks of the Vaal River in the Free State. I obtained my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Political Science from the University of the Western Cape. I am also a former recipient of the SUSI (Study of the United States Institute for Student Leaders) exchange scholar programme from the University of Arkansas, where I focussed on studying the civil rights movement in the United States of America and the anti-apartheid liberation movement in South Africa.

2. What is your daily routine?

My day is usually structured. I first prioritise my work projects in order of importance. I usually have a to-do list and a method

of approaching these projects. Of course I have made it a habit to have daily briefs with my seniors about work and providing necessary feedback.

3. How long have you been with DIRCO?

I have had the privilege of serving in DIRCO for five years. I joined DIRCO through the Cadet Programme in 2009 and have enjoyed the work environment.

4. What do you enjoy most about working for DIRCO?

DIRCO is a dynamic environment. This organisation deals with pertinent issues affecting the lives of South Africans. I enjoy learning new things. That really builds a person on many levels.

5. What do you like about your job?

Interacting with various stakeholders, working under pressure and learning from seasoned officials.

6. Anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

I have a keen interest in precolonial history. I believe a vast repository of our history remains unearthed. Our indigenous knowledge is often passed through word of mouth and sadly is hardly captured in written form. In this light, my grandmother's tales are personally invaluable to me. I enjoy gym and wake up early to start my day there before reporting to the office. I find that it prepares and channels me to deal with my work efficiently. My spiritual life is vibrant and it anchors me. 🌍



1. The people



Amazing. Friendly. Patient. Welcoming. Hospitable. Laid-back: men who fish from their Comorian-style canoes; women who do embroidery next to the road; mamas who offer herbal remedies when you are sick; papas trying to teach you Comorian; children playing under the trees ...

2. Shopping from Volo Volo



– the local lively market in the centre of Moroni with a charged atmosphere and an element of surprise. It offers meat, fish, local artefacts, handicrafts, souvenirs, cutlery, clothing, vegetables, toiletries, make-up, jewellery, kitchenware, spices, vegetables and fruit.

3. The weather

If you like tropical weather like I do, Comoros is the place for you! A tropical island where the sun rises and sets over the Indian Ocean. Hot and humid weather all-year-round with two distinct seasons – the dry season and the wet season. However, I would like to add another season – the “wedding season”!

4. Grand marriages

Generally, the “wedding season” is from June to August. The Comorian people value these marriages (which also give you elevated status in society) and thousands of Euros are spent to make these events as memorable as possible. Grand marriages are impressive weddings with celebrations which often last for two weeks, with a different celebration each day – some for men, some for women, some for both. The Comorian Diaspora travel to their home country during the “wedding season” to participate in the most important events on the Comorian social calendar – therefore also the travel peak season. People often stay engaged for years to save enough money for a grand marriage: events during which the men dress up in their ceremonial robes and women have the opportunity to wear their most festive colourful dresses and exquisite jewellery.



5. Coelacanth



The living fossil coelacanth, once believed to have been extinct, still lives off the Comoros Islands and various have been caught over the past 75 years. The National Museum in Moroni has a specimen of its own and the history of the African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme Project, which involved a South African Professor from Rhodes University, is on proud display in the museum. Interesting to note that the coelacanth, which can grow up to 2 m and weigh up to 100 kg, give birth to live young! Samantha Weinberg is the author of a book, “A Fish Caught in Time” – the story of the discovery of the coelacanth, which makes an interesting read.

6. Food and spices

As can be expected from a tropical island, fish in abundance. Imagine a healthy flavourful meal at a small bungalow restaurant on the beach of barbecued goat meat with grilled bananas, bread and fruit or grilled chicken with cassava. Or a more decadent meal of spicy coconut lobster on a bed of jasmine rice served on the hotel terrace overlooking the sea. Or a down-to-earth crab meal served with rice in a small restaurant in downtown Moroni.

7. Moroni

Not only the capital but also the largest city with approximately 75 000 inhabitants – a congested town where the hustle and bustle of daily life leaves you either energised or totally exhausted. Moroni has a busy port with ferry connections to the other islands and Tanzania and Zanzibar. During 2013, when I shared the news of being posted to the Comoros with Amb Gabriel Setlhoke who was the Director: Horn of Africa & Indian Ocean Islands at the time, he referred to the Comoros as an island with only one road (a very bad one riddled with potholes, it should be said) – the one leading from the airport to Moroni. It might be true, however, I've come to learn, in the words of Robert Frost: “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference”!

8. Nature



Picture-perfect beaches. Clear turquoise water. Stunning sun rises and sun sets. Beautiful inland forests and rivers. Mount Karthala – an active volcano on Grande Comoros, which has the world's largest crater in diameter.

9. A producer of perfume oils and essence

Comoros produces about 65% of the world's perfume oils and essence – jasmine, vanilla, ylang-ylang, vanilla, nutmeg ... The perfume flowers ylang-ylang (which literally means flower of flowers) are a key ingredient of Chanel No 5.

10. Lessons learnt

Patience (to wait) ... Humility (to be humble) ... Resilience (growing stronger) ... Endurance (not to give up) ... Respect (respect to be respected). I will leave you with a famous Comorian proverb: “To complain about a lengthy road will not shorten it. Take a step forward and your way will shorten”. And that makes all the difference!



Globe at a glimpse



News from Bulgaria



Sofia Film Festival

The South African Embassy in Bulgaria took the initiative to screen the South African film "Drum" on the sidelines of the International Sofia Film Festival on 31 March 2015.

The screening of the film was received with great interest by both the Diplomatic Corps in Sofia and the Bulgarian public and has further contributed to creating awareness of South African history, culture and film industry.

International Tourism Fair-Veliko

The South African Embassy in Bulgaria participated in the International Tourism Fair-Veliko. Turnovo Cultural Tourism from 1 to 4 April 2015 within the framework of promoting travel, tourism and cultural relations between South Africa and Bulgaria.

The stand was decorated with banners and posters related to South Africa's culture and tourism. Various cultural, tourism and travel-related advertising movies were played.

A large number of visitors were interested to learn about South Africa as a cultural and tourist destination.



South African National Day 2015

The South African Embassy in Bulgaria celebrated Freedom Day with a big reception hosted by Ambassador Vanessa Calvert and Mr Calvert at the Royal Ballroom of Sofia Hotel Balkan (Sheraton) on 22 April 2015.

Some 300 guests attended the reception, including Members of Parliament, the

Chairperson of the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria, many ambassadors, high-ranking officials, journalists, South Africans residing in Bulgaria etc.

Two South African chefs were invited to cook for the guests, and they produced delicious typical South African cuisine made with South African condiments.



Mandela Day 2015

The South African Mission in Bulgaria celebrated Mandela Day by undertaking 67 minutes of community service on the former President's birthday, 18 July.

This year, Ambassador Calvert requested all diplomatic missions and representations of international organisations to join the Mission in celebrating Mandela Day by donating books to the SA Embassy, which the Embassy handed over to the Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe" and to the Bulgarian National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

On 20 July, at a ceremony taking place at the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Calvert donated more than a 100 books provided by the different missions to the National Commission for UNESCO. The books were received by Maria Donska, Secretary General of the Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO, and Dimitar Filipov, Director of Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At a touching event organised by the Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, Ambassador Calvert donated more than 100 books at a school located in Trudovets – a small village near the capital, Sofia. This event became part of the campaign "Together we are better in ... school". The aim of the campaign is to get Bulgarians and Romas together to support, through their voluntary work, schools in their respective



towns or villages, and to share memories from their school years and their dreams of the schools of the future where children from different ethnic groups study together.

During the event, Roma and Bulgarian parents did some voluntary work for the school. Together with the school principal and Amalipe representatives, Ambassador Calvert shared memories about the schools in South Africa before and after the democratic changes in the country in 1994. The entire conversation was about tolerance.



I am a very active official in terms of sports within the department as I am member of DIRCO Aerobics and DIRCO Athletics. I am encouraged by our coordinators to participate in sport.

As far as health and fitness are concerned, I wish to encourage DIRCO officials to participate in sport activities to improve their health and lifestyle.

Our lifestyle these days needs proper management. We do not look at what we eat. We like fast food all the times. This increases the risk of diseases that could have been avoided. As a woman, I keep myself healthy and active by participating in sports activities.

Daily exercise helps to:

- reduce the risk of high blood pressure
- reduce the risk of sugar diabetes
- boost mind function and energy
- decrease the risk of cancer
- reduce stress, depression and anxiety
- reduce the risk of strokes
- improves the skin.

In short, I would like to say, it is indeed an honour to be a member of the DIRCO athletic and aerobics clubs and to be a DIRCO official who always fly the South African flag high. 🇿🇦



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