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VOICE

Internal Newsletter of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation

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Editor's Letter

Dear Diplomats,



I must say it is indeed a big challenge as well as a great honour and privilege for a young person like myself to be the guest editor of this month's edition of *It's your Voice-Ubuntu Diplomat* magazine. Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Branch: Diplomatic Training, Research and Development as well as the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) as a whole for the dedicated work that it is undertaking to mould young South Africans as future diplomats of this country. History has proven that South Africa is rich with diversity and has young

people who are able to bring about change and fight for their future. As we mark 40 years since the 1976 Youth Uprising, it is important that South Africa produces young diplomats who can advance our country's national interests in the face of the current turbulent global dynamics. It is in this spirit that I would like to recall what one of the founding members of the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League and former President of the ANC, the late Comrade Oliver Reginald Tambo, said: "A nation that does not take care of its youth has no future and does not deserve one".

It is against this backdrop that we must emphasise the importance of youth development as the key to addressing the socio-economic challenges that are still so prevalent in our country.

In this month's edition, you will find a number of highlighted events that took place in June 2016. On the 40th Anniversary of the 1976 youth protests, the big question that lies within is "what happens now"? A number of questions are arising from this nation's growing population, namely how do we implement the African Union's Agenda 2063, the United Nations sustainable development goals and the Paris Agreement and who should implement them? Also read about the department's Centre For Early Warning which, in the face of unforeseen conflicts and crises, provides a critical platform

to coordinate and present information to the Executive and key stakeholders on international and national developments.

We feature Ambassador Joseph Ntshikwane Mashimbye, who presented his credentials in Brazil.

Turn to page six to see who recently visited the OR Tambo Building.

We present you with a day in the life of Sean Casale and ending on a high note for Youth Month, the department hosted the fourth South African Institute of International Affairs Young Leaders Conference. Seventy-five jubilant young delegates from throughout South Africa converged at DIRCO on 30 June 2016 under the theme "Young South Africans Taking the Lead in Creating a Sustainable Future". As they interacted with Deputy Minister Nomaindiya Mfeketo and handed over their declaration, they emphasised the importance of acknowledging that "Youth are ready, therefore use us".

May you enjoy all that we have to offer in this month's edition.

Tshenolo Manamela

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CFEW

Centre for Early Warning



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CENTRE FOR

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1. INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Centre for Early Warning (CFEW) is an initiative of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) to provide essential early warning services to the Executive and other key stakeholders in the field of early warning. Among others, CFEW will support DIRCO's international relations engagements by making use of open-source data-collection methods, with sharp focus on South Africa's foreign policy mandate. The functions of CFEW will also complement the current work of South Africa's National Early Warning Centre (SANEWC) and the African Union Continental Early Warning System (AU CEWS) to prevent conflict and mitigate potential crises in Africa through proactive alerts.

2. BACKGROUND

The AU launched its CEWS in 2004 as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture, and has been in existence for over a decade. Despite some challenges it currently faces, it continues to deliver on its set mandate of conflict prevention and mitigation.

In 2013, the AU Summit took a bold decision to establish the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) as a transitional arrangement, pending the full operationalisation of the African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capability. South Africa was among

the initial 12 countries that pledged support and resources to the ACIRC and has been at the forefront in calling on the AU to activate the requisite mechanisms for long-lasting peace and stability on the continent. The mandate of the AU CEWS complements and supports the principled purpose of ACIRC in that, once conflict has been detected by the AU CEWS, ACIRC will remain seized with efforts to rapidly provide mediation support.

In keeping with South Africa's pledge to support ACIRC, particularly the early detection of conflict, prevention and mediation, DIRCO has deemed it fit to establish CFEW as an apex unit in the collection, coordination and distribution of all information related to early warning systems within the department, including the streamlining of early warning report-generation by South Africa's missions abroad. The establishment of this centre does not expunge the existing news and information services provided by DIRCO Press. The name "Directorate: Early Warning Services" replaces the "Directorate: Operations Centre", but retains its erstwhile functions. Accordingly, the Directorate: Early Warning Services now has two sections with distinct functions, namely DIRCO Press and Early Warning. The DIRCO Press provides various daily news products, while Early Warning will specifically focus on early warning reports. The Directorate: Early Warning Services is one of the three directorates within the Chief Directorate:

Centre for Early Warning, located in the Branch: Public Diplomacy. Other directorates falling within this Chief Directorate are Media Liaison and Rapid Response.

3. MANDATE OF THE CENTRE FOR EARLY WARNING

The mandate of CFEW will, among others, include monitoring of media reports from open sources using both manual and automated data-collection methods and analyses and ensuring general efficiency and enhancement of the department's early warning communications system.

"Early warning" is loosely defined as "before the fact" and by its anticipatory nature requires instant access to events and real-time information around the clock. Early warning depends on open sources and the sharing of information. Consistent with DIRCO's strategic objectives, in particular the principal strategic objective of prioritising the African Agenda, the centre will focus on crisis situations on the African continent as well as developments in other regions around the world crucial to South Africa's foreign policy mandate. Such a responsibility demands access to skilled human resources, exceptional sources of information and the innovative use of technology, including a collaborative approach to the provision of such a service working together with both internal and external stakeholders.

4. CENTRE FOR EARLY WARNING: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Directorate: Early Warning Services has the following roles and responsibilities:

- manage coordination of early warning information on national and international developments, in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders
- manage a team of analysts (specialists on various regions) to ensure the effective delivery of the directorate's work plan, including quality control of outputs (early warning reports)
- manage the provision of early warning information to Head Office by South Africa's missions abroad
- manage cooperation between the department's Early Warning Centre and relevant government agencies, including international non-governmental and other organisations
- monitor media on a 24-hour basis; compile media-monitoring reports daily, as well as regional and multilateral reports; and distribute media reports to missions and Head Office
- offer a 24-hour departmental Call Centre service.

5. MAIN DELIVERABLES

In the conduct of South Africa's international relations engagements, and the fulfilment of the

Ambassador Mashimbye presents credentials in Brasilia, Brazil



(Left to right) Jose Serra, Minister of External Relations; Michel Miguel Elias Temer Lulia, Acting President of the Federative Republic of Brazil; and Joseph Ntshikiwane Mashimbye, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of South Africa

EARLY WARNING

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overall mandate of DIRCO, CFEW will deliver on the following:

- providing early warning information, including reports
- rendering rapid response, mitigation and mediation strategy and advice
- curtailing and prohibiting speculation about South Africa's foreign policy posture on contemporary issues in the global political discourse
- encouraging proactive response to contemporary foreign policy subjects in their relationship with South Africa's foreign policy posture.

6. INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS: SOUTH AFRICAN MISSIONS AND BUSINESS

6.1 South African missions abroad

To fulfil this mandate and deliver on the strategic objective of producing early warning products, CFEW requires access to and support of all DIRCO's business units as well as our embassies all over the world. This form of collaboration is essential, since CFEW's mandate is derived from the overarching mandate of the department, which is to create a better South Africa and contribute to a better and safer Africa in a better world. One of the strategic-oriented goals of the department is "to work towards continental and global development, security and human rights for all through identified processes, mediation, peace-

support and post-conflict reconstruction efforts and resolutions (Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017, p16)".

Within this context of a requirement for rapid information flow on early warning reports, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, in her 2015/16 Budget Vote Speech underscored that "with the establishment of our Centre for Early Warning, DIRCO is poised to give more impetus to our peacemaking efforts on the continent".

6.2. Business units and missions

The line-function business units will play a key role in coordinating early warning reports, in their various classifications, from the missions as requested by CFEW and including at their (branches) own initiative. Through the business units, missions will also be encouraged to frequently provide CFEW with early warning alerts emanating from their countries of accreditation.

7. EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Among other stakeholders, CFEW will be interacting with national and international state and non-state organisations such as SANEWC, Southern African Development Community Regional Early Warning Centre, AU CEWS, International Red Cross and Gift of the Givers Foundation. 🌐

Thursday, 23 June 2016, was a remarkable day at the *Palacio do Planalto* (Presidential Palace) in Brasilia, Brazil. Joseph Ntshikiwane Mashimbye, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of South Africa, was among the 11 ambassadors of diplomatic missions accredited to Brazil, who presented letters of credence to Michel Miguel Elias Temer Lulia, Acting President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

In attendance was the Minister of External Relations, Jose Serra; the Director-General of the Ministry of External Relations, Ambassador Marcos Galvão; and International Affairs Adviser to The Presidency, Ambassador Claudio Frederico de Matos Arruda.

Ambassador Mashimbye was supported by his spouse, Nolukhanyo Mashimbye; Ambassador Fernando Abreu; Brigadier-General Sam Madumane; Defence Attaché and the Embassy staff; Julie Ramaboea, Minister Plenipotentiary. The official ceremony started with the signing of the "Message Book".

In his brief discussion with Vice President Temer, Ambassador Mashimbye emphasised the need for South Africa and

Brazil to strengthen bilateral relations, especially the trade imbalances between the two countries.

In his response to the Ambassador's remarks on the strong relations that the two countries enjoy in multilateral platforms such as India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), Mr Temer underscored the significance of re-launching the IBSA

On the political situation in Brazil, Ambassador Mashimbye assured Acting President Temer that the South African Government respected and recognised his government as it was established through a constitutional process.

Ambassador Mashimbye also commented that during the Soccer World Cup in 2010 in South Africa, he was fascinated and thrilled by the joyful and noisy behaviour displayed by the Brazilian soccer fans. In a quick response, Acting President Temer with an infectious smile, said: "Africa do Sul também (South Africa too ...), that is why we are friends".

The day was concluded in a South Africa-Brazil style celebration, with Ambassador Mashimbye and his spouse hosting a "braai/churrasco" attended by prominent business leaders in Brazil. 🌐



40 years since the 1976 student protests! What now?

BY ITUMELENG MOGALE

South Africans recently celebrated 40 years since the 1976 youth protests – the day when students decided to take the future into their own hands. One is reminded of the poem, “The Fray” by Jon Treloar.

“Once more into the Fray ...

Into the last good fight I’ll ever know.

Live and Die on this day...

Live and Die on this day....”

During the days leading to the planned march, the students had engaged vigorously among themselves and their elders. During the engagements, they realised they had to be the masters of their own destiny. They had a fight a good fight ... so, they entered the fray. It may sound careless and pretentious to equate violence with good, but what the youth of that era did was indeed a good fight.

They got shot, some were arrested and others fled to join the ranks of the liberation movements in exile. Mothers lost their sons, fathers lost their daughters all because they wanted better education. Those who lived to tell the story of the good fight, now occupy important roles in our society.

The results of that day are well documented. June 16 is commemorated in the country as Youth Month, and museums and artefacts were commissioned to remember and honour this day. During these celebrations, young people are reminded of how brave the class of ‘76 was; how they were interested in the affairs of the country. There is nothing wrong with reminding

the youth of today of the bravery of the class of ‘76. It is important that their story is shared and celebrated so that we can learn. In the same breath, it is important that we realise that the freedoms that we are enjoying came with their own complications. The class of ‘76 had an identifiable enemy, “the apartheid system”. They could point to what they were not happy about. They had few opportunities and the only way to create a future was to engage in a good fight.

Now with the current crop of young people, opportunities are many. The advent of democracy presented South Africa with a global outlook and freedoms. We can now count ourselves as global citizens and compete in global markets. Actually, our dawn to democracy coincided with the rise of the global Internet in private communities; the rise of the worldwide web (www) ... imagine the possibilities, ignore the consequences.

In this democracy, you can be a Member of Parliament, a business person, a doctor, or whatever one’s heart desires. But are we equipped?

According to recent Statistics South Africa estimates, the population of South Africa grew from 51 770 560 in 2011 to 55 653 654 in 2016, and the youth (15-34) stands at 20,1 million.

That is around 36,2% of the country’s population. Furthermore, according to the Quarterly Employment Statistics for the first quarter of 2016, released by Statistics South Africa, employment in the country has reduced,

for instance, the formal non-agricultural sector of the South African economy decreased by 0,2% (15 000 employees) to 9 273 000 in the first quarter of 2016, compared with the previous quarter (fourth quarter, 2015).

It is time for the youth of today to take the baton and be part of the second face of the liberation, but how are the odds looking. Well the majority of us will say “YES”, unfortunately, the percentage of black African professional, managerial and technical workers aged 25 to 34 has dropped by 2% over the past 20 years, leaving this generation less skilled than previous ones – and less skilled than every other race and age group, according to Statistics South Africa’s “The Social Profile of Youth, 2009 – 2014”. With all the opportunities, this generation is less skilled than the previous one, why? Is it that the previous generations concentrated on “self” and ignored “them”? And when they do concentrate on “them”, are talking to “them” rather than listening to them.

With that said, the SA Government cannot be entirely accused of not doing anything for young people. The National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2009 – 2019 was drafted after looking at international best practices in youth empowerment. Five countries were targeted for this purpose and these included: United Kingdom, Canada (developed) and Nigeria, India, Uganda and Namibia (developing). Also, the National Youth Policy for 2015 – 2020 (NYP 2020) that is developed for all young people in

South Africa, focus on redressing the wrongs of the past and addressing the specific challenges and immediate needs of the country’s youth. All that is needed is proper engagement with young people and also an unshaken desire to implement as South Africa has developed great policies but when coming to realising them we have always come short.

One then is left wondering why the present generation has not actually taken to the opportunities. Are they comfortable with enjoying the privileges that have been provided by the past generation? Maybe they have taken their gloves off, thinking that there is no need to fight their parents who happened to be the past generation. The only problem is that the economy cannot sustain all of us if we don’t find new avenues of economic inclusion.

All of us must then be reminded of the story, “Who Moved my Cheese?”, because we cannot afford to be like “Hem” and “Haw”, the little people who got comfortable after finding the cheese, thinking they will never have to go seek other alternatives. The recent #feesmustfallmovement and other similar youth protests indicate that the cheese is no longer enough and the sooner the realisation of that the better. The urgent need to think of how we skill and educate this generation for economic liberation is now.

Collectively, we should enter into the last good fight for the upliftment of the 36,2% of South Africa’s population. 🌍

Creative Corner



Artwork by Sean Casale, Computer Applications Trainer, DTRD

“Still waters run deep”

This piece was drawn (pencil/charcoal) from a photo of a woman. I took it without her consciously being aware that she was being photographed (Often these are the best photographs. However, afterwards I had to ask her permission to keep it).

The lady appeared to be deep in thought and was obviously very preoccupied. I tried to capture her in this pensive state and mood – and thus tried to avoid any distracting attention to detail.

ZTE中兴

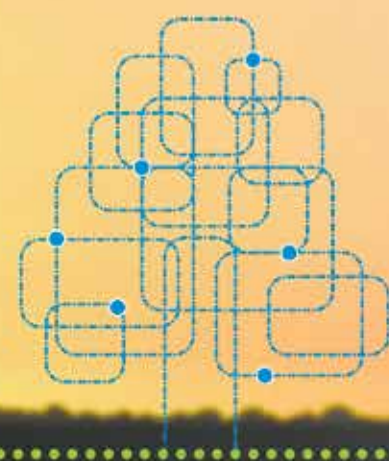
ZTE with Africa

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Tomorrow never waits





1. On 30 June, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) partnered with the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) to host a youth dialogue to celebrate Youth Month under the theme "Young South Africans Taking the Lead in Creating a Sustainable Future". The event was addressed by Deputy Minister Nomaindiya Mfeketo. After the conference, the young leaders presented a declaration to the Deputy Minister.

2. Youth capacity-building programme, including, peace negotiation skills. People present during the graduation: Amb Mathu Joyini; Amb Trine Skymoem from Norway; National Youth Development Agency CFO, Wassem Carrim; and former Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad.

3. The Department of Public Service and Administration hosted the Africa Public Service Day celebrations at DIRCO on 23 June 2016.

4, 5. On 8 June, the South Africa-European Union roundtable discussion took place, organised by the Policy Research and Analysis Unit, Branch: Diplomatic Training, Research and Development.

6. On 29 June, the Acting Director-General, Kgabo Mahoai, met with United Nations Secretary-General Candidate, HE António Guterres.

7, 8, 9. On 10 June, graduation ceremonies were held for the Foreign Affairs Attaché Course (National Certificate: Mission Administration), Mission Administration Course (Mission Corporate Services Management) and Diplomatic Training (Diplomacy).



LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE

ENGLISH

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS IN ENGLISH

Among, between: Use **among** for more than two people or things and **between** for two people or things. Exception: in the case of agreements, pacts or contracts, the correct idiomatic use is "between": The agreement was signed between the SADC member states.

Assure, ensure and insure: You **assure** (promise) a person that things will go well. You **ensure** (make sure) that work is done. You **insure** (guarantee or protect) something against loss or damage.



Biannual, biennial: **Biannual** something occurring twice a year or half-yearly. **Biennial:** occurring every two years.

Canvas, canvass: **Canvas** (noun): type of cloth. **Canvass** (verb): visit someone to ask for their vote.

Complement, compliment: To **complement:** add to or bring out the best in something: Fish and tartar sauce complement each other. **Compliment:** to praise, and **complimentary** means something given away for free.

Comprise: Use **comprise(s)** and not **comprises** of. Example: The Olympic team **comprises** 90 athletes.

Corporation, cooperation (American spelling of co-operation): **Corporation** is a large company or business organization. **Cooperation** (Co-operation): people or organisations work together to achieve a result that will benefit all of them.

Department, department: When referring to a specific department by its correct title, e.g. **Department** of Health, use uppercase initials. When referring to a department generically or in the plural, use lowercase: the justice department, the departments of labour and of education.

Dependant, dependent: **Dependant** (noun): a person who is **dependent** (adjective) on someone else.

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

Each other, one another: Two people talk to **each other**; more than two talk to **one another**.

Enquiry, inquiry: **Enquire** is a formal word for ask; **inquire** is used for an investigation.



Judgement, judgment: The driver's **judgement** was impaired by alcohol. The court's **judgment** is due in two weeks.

Lose (v.), loose (adj.): I often **lose** my keys. My shoelace is **loose**.



Minister: Capitalise when used as a title: the **Minister** of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane; but the finance **minister**.

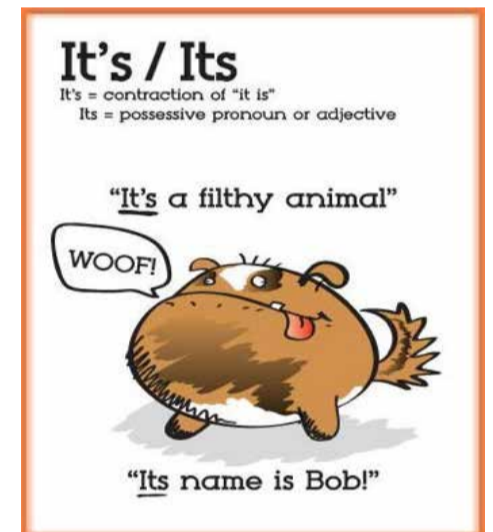
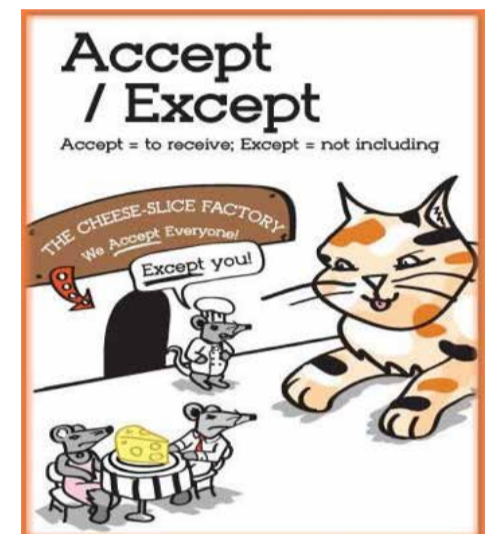
Numbers: Use words for one to nine; numerals from 10 onwards. Write out numbers at the beginning of a sentence.

Persons, people: Both are plural forms of "person", but persons belong more to legal or official documents and notices, e.g. Admission only to persons over the age of 18.

President, president: President Jacob Zuma; but our **president**, or the **president** of a company.

Programme, program: **Programme** (American spelling: **program**) is a plan of activities for an event. Programme on TV or radio, but computer program.

Who, that: Use **who** to refer to people; **that** to refer to animals and things: The person **who** committed the crime should be punished. It is behaviour **that** should not go unpunished.



Source: **Editorial Style Guide:** Government Communications. Department of Government Communication and Information System

FAREWELL

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL MOLOBI TO STAFF IN MILAN ON 30 JUNE 2016



"As I have completed my four-year mandate as Consul-General of South Africa in Milan, it is time for me and my family to return to South Africa.

My experience over the past four years in Italy has been very positive and enriching, not just from a professional point of view but also from a personal one. I have, indeed, had the opportunity to engage with many representatives of local institutions but also to meet and interact with many people who are genuinely interested in my home country, South Africa. The partnerships our Mission has established with both the public and private sector ensured the success of many key projects. In this regard, I am very grateful to all those who contributed to strengthening the

bilateral relations between Italy and South Africa at all levels.

I am confident that my successor, who will soon arrive in Milan, and the staff – my "crazy bunch" of excellent employees – will continue along this line with more economic and public diplomacy activities.

Though an official announcement will be made soon, I am honoured to be going back home to join a provincial economic development agency as head of a division that deals with trade and investment promotion. So, I hope to do coffee with many of you when you visit South Africa.

I wish you and your families a nice summer break and all the best in your future endeavours".





I was born and grew up most of my life in Pretoria. However, because of my father's work, who was a career diplomat, I also schooled abroad, which I believe helped to broaden my perspective on different cultures, religions and beliefs, hence I've always been comfortable adapting to different environments, and enjoy meeting new people. I enjoy drawing (portraits), photography and reading, mostly historical books. However, I also enjoy reading science-fiction and technology, while I spend a lot of my time researching computer applications (especially MS Office Suite 2013/16/ Office 365), as I like to keep abreast with the latest software development and advancements in this area (I'm always the first one to get the latest updated version of this software).

I was exposed to computers at an early age as my mother, being a school teacher, believed and encouraged me to always pursue intellectual/academic past times, and to develop my skills in line with the emerging computer age. As a result, one day she bought me (for my 10th birthday) a basic, inexpensive, computer which interfaced with one's home television set (does anyone remember the Commodore 64?). I spent endless hours designing basic programmes on it and was amazed at how effectively the computer could perform a long, laborious task instantly, which would take many hours of work to achieve "manually" or by hand. I was immediately fascinated with programming and the computers as powerful calculating tools.

I also attended Computer Science classes in high school (we worked on Apple 2 computers at that time), and I was fortunate to have had an inspirational teacher, and it soon became my favourite class.

I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree following high school and achieved many goals in the IT private sector. However, I eventually entered the Public Service in 2002. I applied my computer skills in as many areas of work that I could, while serving in the Department of Home Affairs, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the National Prosecuting Authority, and eventually achieved my ultimate goal of working for DIRCO in 2010. I served as a Senior Foreign Affairs Administrative Officer in the Directorate: Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges, which was an enriching experience as I enjoyed assisting the foreign diplomats and missions in our country with their diplomatic immunities and privileges (computerising the correspondence and file management) as well as networking (attending various functions hosted by the Diplomatic Corps).



In 2010, I was promoted to Assistant Director: Computer Applications Training and Quality Assurance, in the Branch: Diplomatic Training, Research and Development. I was in my element so to speak and was thrilled to be given an opportunity to train officials in computers and computer applications in the Microsoft Office Suite 2013, mainly, Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.

My daily routine keeps me constantly busy, with a range of activities which are listed below:

- After entering the office in the morning, I begin my day by firstly checking my Outlook app for mail and on Calendar (i.e. meetings and appointments I have scheduled for that day), together with Tasks (flagged reminders).
- I then synchronise everything above on my portable devices in order that I may view it, and amend it, any time while out of the office.
- I then process any new applications that I have received for the computer training programme advertised for that quarter (which consists of nine separate workshops), and the range of workshops offered currently has been expanded to 12 workshops (between intermediate, advanced and expert levels), in the MS Office Suite 2013.
- I then proceed to the Diplomatic Training Academy where I teach my scheduled training for the day. It's exciting for me to observe students discovering the potential of computers, which we all use on a daily basis, to do our work. Furthermore, seeing students' enthusiasm grow during training, as they begin to feel empowered, is so rewarding for myself as much as it is for them.
- In between training, I work on preparing training material and lesson plans while also preparing, what we call "mini-lessons", which are computer shortcuts/tips distributed online to officials in DIRCO, while I also provide support for officials on the computer apps mentioned.
- In addition, I work on many exciting projects with colleagues, in a team, to find MS Office Suite 2013 solutions to operational requirements in the office. It's exciting for both me and the colleagues, especially when we design a solution to a problem that enables officials to achieve more in less time.
- We live in dynamic technological environment, and a digital world that is continuously changing, and it is my belief that we, as a department, with the international presence of our work, must be abreast with these changes to function on par with the rest of the world. 🌐



1. OMANI PEOPLE HAVE MY FULL RESPECT

One's experience in any country is primarily driven by one's interaction with the people. The Sultanate of Oman is an enchanting, unique country. Not only does this relatively unknown state have the warmest, most hospitable people, it's essence of Arabia is filled with culture, history and beauty. I have found Omanis to be extremely cordial and helpful. All the stories I heard about the Middle East were dispelled the moment I set foot in Oman.

2. I LOVE SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said is a wise, kind and nurturing ruler. His compassion and vision are world-renowned. The people of Oman, both locals and expats, love and adore him.

Among the leaders of the Middle East today, there is perhaps no one more enigmatic or more adored than Sultan Qaboos. This is not surprising – during his 45 years of rule, he has used the Oman's oil wealth to transform the country from a territory with just 10 kilometres of road and a civil war, into a middle-income country and an oasis of peace and stability in a region torn by war and terror.

The cheer in the air comes National Day is awesome. You can't help but take part in the celebrations. From the cars and buildings to the people, everything is adorned in red, green and white! Patriotism here is contagious.

3. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Contrary to the stigmatised image of Middle Eastern countries, portrayed by the media, Oman's best attraction to me is that this country is virtually free from violence and distress.

I always feel safe. I have never been in a situation where I've felt insecure or intimidated. I can drive or walk around the place at any time of the day or night without being concerned for my safety. I've heard and read of the occasional case of burglary (houses/cars), but the general environment is safe. You can get spoilt living here!

4. IN ORDER TO BUY ALCOHOL YOU NEED TO GET A PERMIT

You must have a permit to purchase alcohol in Oman. Oman does not prohibit alcohol, but you must buy a permit that allows you to spend up to 10% of your income on alcohol. Otherwise, you'll remain sober unless you bring duty-free or visit the few hotels where alcohol is allowed to be served.

5. I LOVE COFFEE PLUS DATES



Coffee is superb in Oman and the country produces the finest dates in the world. Serving coffee in cute little cups, accompanied by dry dates, is a cultural tradition unique to the Omani hospitality. The little cups are never full. Traditionally, Omani people drink coffee in a thousand little sips, each served separately. It takes a lot of time but I was told that was the whole point of their amazing hospitality – to entertain guests while sipping delicious freshly made coffee with some of the best dry dates I have ever had in my life!

6. DOORS TO DIE FOR



The country is famous for its ornamented doors. Doors in Oman are unique, colourful and embroidered, no matter what the whole house looks like. Even a simple house has truly stunning doors.

7. PETROL IS STILL CHEAP!



A full tank of petrol is not a mythical creature in this part of the world. Petrol is much cheaper than water in Oman! Currently, the price of petrol (per litre) is at US\$0.42. Compare that with 0.81 in South Africa and a world average of 0.99. Imagine this: at a petrol station, you tell the attendant "full please" – every time, not only when you are taking a road trip to Dubai which, by the way, is four hours away on the most scenic roads.

Now you will understand why I was offended when the BP in Pretoria North asked me to pay R720 for a full tank. I'm used to R300, you see?

8. TURTLE BEACH



Among the most interesting things to see in Oman is a herd of green turtles in hundreds coming out of the ocean to breathe in the open air and lay eggs on Sharkiya Beach. Green turtles are hardly seen in any other part of the world.

For me, Turtle Beach in Sur was an awesome experience! Where else in the world can one see turtles in their natural habitat, watch them coming to land, laying eggs, baby turtles hatching and then running for their little lives into the sea.

9. MUSCAT IS WHITE AND CLEAN

This is because no official permission is required to paint homes white. People need to seek special permission to use other colours. Apparently, Sultan Qaboos has decreed that owners have a choice of five colours, ranging from white to beige to paint their buildings and houses. He has also ordered that no building can have more than 17 stories. It makes for a harmonious landscape with trees and beautiful flowers, despite being surrounded by desert.

I was pleasantly surprised to notice how clean Muscat is. All the streets are meticulously cleaned every morning and, at times even scrubbed (yes, scrubbed) ... and, wait for this ...

10. YOU PAY FINES FOR DIRTY VEHICLES IN OMAN!!



It is actually a crime to have a dirty car here in the Sultanate of Oman. If the traffic control officer (traffic cop) finds any vehicle seriously dirty (as in filthy), the owner may land a fine. When I first heard this, I thought it was a joke but actually it is completely true and fines can range from 10 Rials (R400) up to 50 Rials (R2 000) depending on how nice the police officer wants to be. Think "cleanliness is next to godliness".

11. THE GRAND MOSQUE



I had the opportunity to visit the beautiful Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque soon after my arrival in Oman (properly dressed, of course!). This is the only mosque in Oman that is open to non-Muslims and is the second-largest in the Gulf (after Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi).



Two things that fascinate me about the Grand Mosque: (1) The carpet covering the main prayer hall flooring is the world's second-largest and took 400 female weavers four years to create – the whole carpet that measures 60 x 70m, consists of 1,7 million knots and weighs 21 tonnes. (2) The bigger than big crystal chandelier in the centre of the hall is an astonishing 14 metres tall! I'm told it was claimed to be the largest in the world until the construction of an even bigger crystallised chandelier in Qatar, in 2010. As for the rest of the interior, breathtaking is an understatement! 🌍



Globe at a glimpse

South Africa's Ambassador to Turkey, Pule I Malefane, visits Mersin

Ambassador Malefane's programme included a courtesy call on the Governor of Mersin, Özdemir Çakacak, and Lord Mayor of Mersin, Burhanettin Kocamaz. He also attended the South Africa-Turkey Investment Seminar at Mersin Chamber of Commerce and Industry and visited the Mediterranean Exporters Union, Mersin Chamber of Shipping, Mersin International Ports and Mersin Free Zone, among other engagements.



Mersin International Port's new General Manager, Frans Jol, and Operation Group Manager, Mehmet Halit Bezek, informed Ambassador Malefane of the new strategies of the Mersin International Port



Mediterranean Exporters Union



Visit to the Chairperson of Mediterranean Exporters Union, Kemal Kaçmaz

Junior Rugby World Cup 2016, Japan

Congratulations to the Glenwood High School team that was crowned world champions recently following their sterling performance at the SANIX Junior Rugby World Cup 2016 in Fukuoka – making it twice in a row that a South African school has won the title.



The winning team with coaches and supporters



Japan Rugby Football Union (JRFU) Chairperson, Noriyuki Sakamoto, handing over the winning certificate to the Glenwood High School Captain Austin Brummer for the team's 45-6 win over Higashi Fukuoka High School



JRFU Vice President, Masayuki Takashima, congratulating a player



Youth Day Celebrations Milan, 16 June 2016



The event organised by the Mission in Milan to celebrate Youth Day had a threefold approach as it represented an opportunity to engage young entrepreneurs, promote tourism as well as South African food and wine. Youth Day celebrations took place at Bobino Club, where guests could taste wines and boerewors – South African

traditional sausage. The Mission partnered with South African Tourism, South African Airways and two companies importing South African products, namely Cape Best and Cape2Milano, which contributed to the successful outcome of the initiative.

South African Embassy in Athens celebrates culture



Jane Mmutlane, Vero Choma, staff member of the Moroccan Embassy and Mabel Mosana-Nixina

The Embassy in Athens took part in the 12th Byron College International Cultural Event "Let's Celebrate Culture" on 4 June 2016. At the event, parents, children and friends of the school community prepared national stands to showcase different cultural artefacts, costumes, music and food dishes to the visitors. Like the previous event, more than 1 000 visitors cramped the school yard with the active participation of 40 embassies.

Visitors were able to taste food from each of the 40 participating countries.

A "Parade of Nations" was held with pupils dressed in national costumes which they proudly presented to the audience. Children in national costumes greeted the guests and sent out messages of peace, friendship and respect.

Freedom Day celebrations in Nigeria

The South African Consulate-General in Lagos, Nigeria, held a successful celebration of Freedom Day that took place on 31 May 2016.

South Africa's High Commissioner to Nigeria, Louis Mnguni, and the Consul-General, Darkey Africa, both made statements. Prof. Ademola Abass, Special Adviser to the Governor of the Lagos State on Overseas Affairs and Investment, made a response statement representing the Governor of the Lagos State.

In his remarks, Consul-General Africa spoke about, among others, the freedom journey born out of a bitter struggle and a tomorrow inspired by the values of our Constitution and the spirit of our forebears. The Consul-General indicated frameworks and programmes that guide government to pursue development and prosperity, such as the National Development Plan, the Black Industrialists' Programme, the Nine-Point Plan, the Strategic Integrated Plans, the Integrated Development Plans and Operation Phakisa, to name a few. He further indicated that Nigeria and South Africa were both pillars of the Africa we wanted and both were central to the momentum of Agenda 2063.

In his statement, the High Commissioner indicated, among others, the indelible marks on the road towards freedom, such as the Sharpeville Massacre; 1976 Soweto Uprising; the role played by the University of Fort Hare; the role played by Nigeria and Nigerians; the Organisation of African Unity; and the African Union. The High Commissioner further spoke on the importance of South Africa and Nigeria working together and also referred to the volume of trade between the two countries, which rose from N43,6 billion (R20,6 billion) in 2010 to N1,3 trillion (R62 billion) in 2015.

Prof. Abass expressed his appreciation that South Africa recognised the role played by, among others, the Nigerian, Dr. Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe. He acknowledged that whereas the two countries could achieve much working together, South Africa had advanced infrastructure and technology and Nigeria had raw materials. He indicated that although the past was equally important, both countries needed to use the strong historical ties as a foundation to work together and carry each other along towards prosperity.



Consulate-General staff and invited guests dancing to South African songs by a local band



(From left to right) High Commissioner LL Mnguni; Prof. Ademola Abass, Special Adviser to the Governor of the Lagos State on Overseas Affairs and Investment; and Darkey Africa, Consul-General

Not producing sufficient thyroid hormone to keep the body running?

You could well be suffering from hypothyroidism ...

Hypothyroidism is a fairly common healthcare condition, particularly among women. It is estimated that approximately 6% of people suffer from thyroid disease with women estimated to be six to eight times more prone to thyroid disease than men.

The majority of those suffering from this ailment are completely unaware that they have the condition, as the symptoms of hypothyroidism can be so subtle that they are often overlooked and it is sometimes mistaken for other healthcare conditions.

• What is hypothyroidism?

The thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland in the neck which produces hormones that regulate almost every part of the body. If this little gland does not produce a sufficient amount of thyroid hormones, a condition known as hypothyroidism, which will disturb the normal balance of chemical reactions in the body, will develop.

Apart from a certain amount of tiredness and weight gain in the earlier stages of hypothyroidism, the condition does not initially cause undue health difficulties. However, if left untreated, it can over time cause a number of health problems including obesity, joint pain, infertility and heart disease.

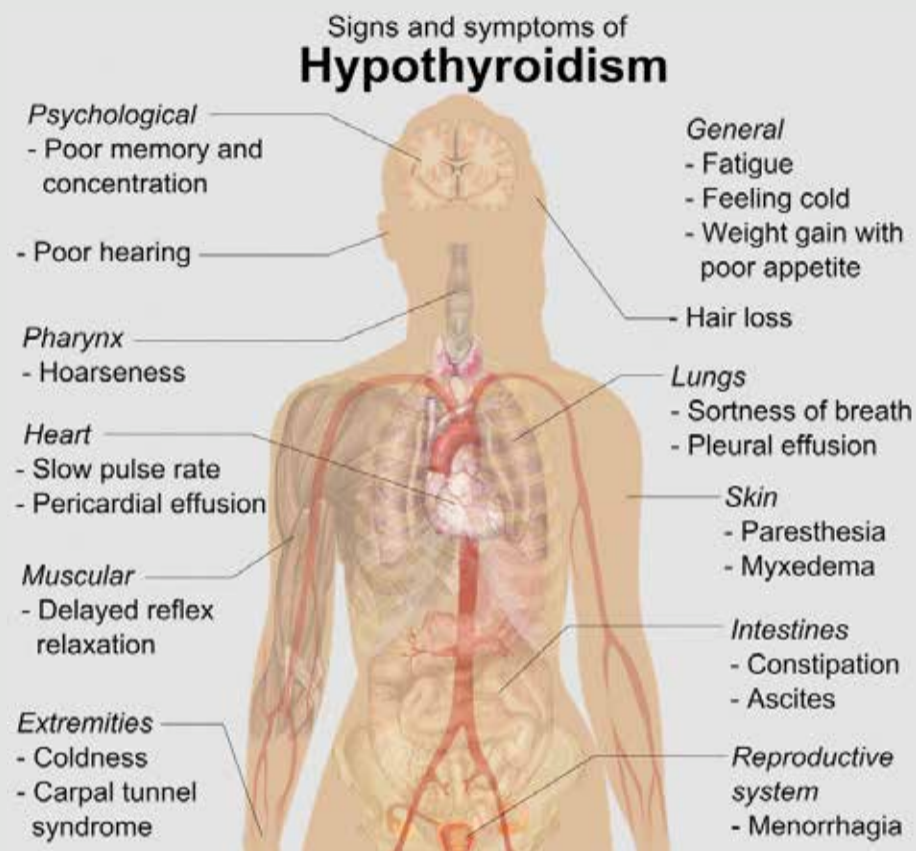
Accurate thyroid function tests are available to diagnose hypothyroidism, and treatment with a synthetic thyroid hormone is usually simple, safe and effective once you and your doctor have determined the correct dosage of medicine for you.

• Typical symptoms

Symptoms of an underactive thyroid may include lethargy or sluggishness, tiredness, mild weight gain with poor appetite, constipation, cold intolerance, poor memory and difficulty in concentrating, shortness of breath, a hoarse voice, muscle cramping and heavy menstrual periods.

Typical tell-tale signs of an underactive thyroid may include:

- thin, dry hair
- eyebrows which may curve straight down on outer edges
- hair that is missing on outer edge of eyebrows
- lower eyelashes missing or sparse
- dry skin.



• Treatment for hypothyroidism

Once your condition is diagnosed, you will find that the use of the medicine prescribed for you will restore hormone levels and will gradually reverse the signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism.

The most common medicine used to treat the condition is levothyroxine, a synthetic form of thyroid hormone. While it is an effective hypothyroidism treatment, it can also be somewhat tricky to manage as it can take weeks or even months to determine the ideal daily dosage that would be best served to each individual patient.

• Getting the most from your treatment

It is very important to closely follow your doctor's instructions and to take your medicine exactly as prescribed. If you do not follow instructions when taking your hypothyroidism medicine, your body may not be able to fully absorb the levothyroxine and this will result in a fluctuation in your hormone levels.

To ensure the effectiveness of your thyroid medicine, it is recommended that the medicine is always taken on an empty stomach immediately after waking up or at least three hours after dinner at night.

Be very careful of medicine interactions when using levothyroxine. For example, iron and calcium supplements can impact the absorption of levothyroxine as iron or calcium can bind with the synthetic hormone, thereby preventing your body from using the medicine properly. The hormone, oestrogen, on the other hand may interfere with the body's ability to use levothyroxine. This means that women who are taking birth control pills may need an increased dosage of thyroid medicine.

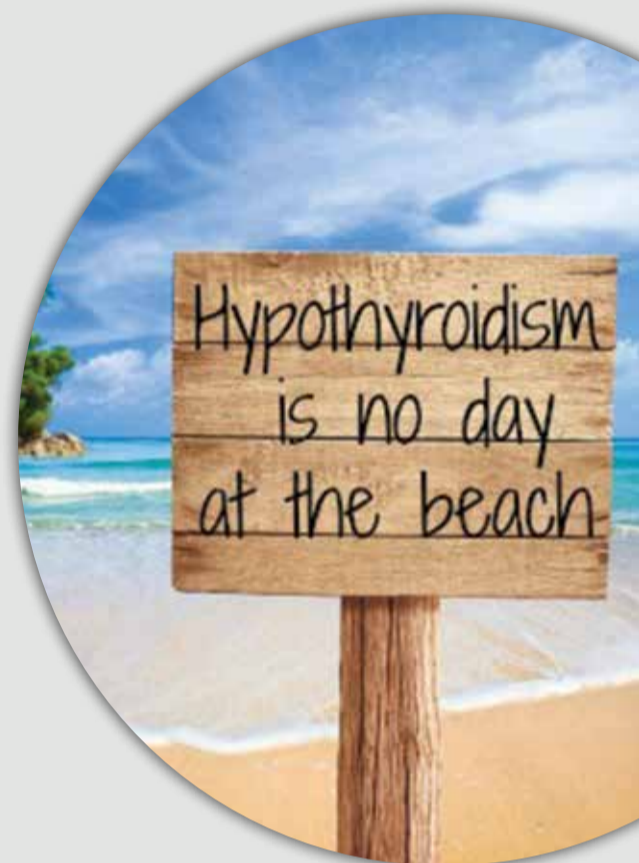
There are a number of other medicines like aspirin, certain antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs, arthritis medicine, beta-blockers and insulin that interfere with the absorption of levothyroxine.

Not taking levothyroxine the right way or drug interactions can impact on thyroid hormone

levels, thereby causing harmful side effects. For example, increased hormone levels can leave you feeling shaky, jittery and jumpy and you may notice your heart racing. You may even have difficulty sleeping at night and may lose some weight.

Hormone levels that are too low can cause tiredness and sluggishness. They can also slow down the heart rate, cause loss of hair, weight gain and depression.

If you establish and maintain a regular routine with your hypothyroidism treatment and work closely with your doctor until such time as the correct medicine dosage can be determined for you, the condition can be effectively managed, and you should experience no real further impact on your overall health and well-being. 🌍



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