

**Dr GNM Pandor Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**  
**Budget Vote Speech 2023**  
**‘Strengthening Partnerships to forge a more just and equitable global system’**  
**10 May 2023**

Chairperson

Deputy Ministers Mashego-Dlamini and Botes

Chairperson Mahumapelo, Chair of the Portfolio Committee

Members of the Executive

Honourable members and guests

Good afternoon and welcome to this debate on the 2022/2023 work of DIRCO and the budget for the new 2023/2024 financial year.

We are fortunate to have been given an opportunity to have our debate on such an important day. Twenty-nine years ago, on May 10, 1994, South Africans participated in the inauguration of the very first democratically elected President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. From that day South Africa took on the mantle of Mandela in the practice of international relations, which is to seek peace, justice, and equality wherever we may have a chance to make a difference.

Honourable members, the past financial year proved to be a tumultuous year for international relations. We had thought Covid-19 had put us through the most difficult time, but the conflict in Europe has introduced more difficulties for all of us who work in international relations.

Despite the many complicated challenges, our department continued its focus on our core tasks. These are to strengthen bilateral relations, play an effective role in Multilateral institutions, provide services to our citizens abroad and support our government in achieving the objectives of inclusive growth, peace, and development in South Africa,

Africa and the world. The past year has seen a significant expansion in the bilateral work of the minister, the deputy ministers, and officials, as well as a very active international diary for President Ramaphosa.

### **The Budget 23/24**

We are pleased to report on our budget in this debate. The department budget allocation for 2023/2024 has increased from 6.8 billion rand in 22/23 to 6.9 billion rand for this financial year. This is an increase of 1 per cent. The increase is largely for compensation of employees which increased by 5 per cent from 3 billion rand in the past financial year, to 3.2 billion rand in 2023/2024. The increase will allow the department to fill critical vacant positions. The goods and services budget increased by 4 per cent to 2.5 billion rand in 2023/2024. This welcome support will enhance our ability to implement our key programmes and improve the work of all our missions.

### **Economic Diplomacy**

Honourable Members may recall that last year we undertook to increasingly focus on economic diplomacy in the department and missions. Our missions have been playing a leading role in assisting our government in all spheres in their international cooperation efforts. A specific area of progress has been to provide government and the presidency economic diplomacy assistance for growing foreign direct investment into South Africa. We have made economic diplomacy a critical aspect of our mission work, and we are very pleased at the continuing interest many companies have shown in South Africa as an investment destination. I have held meetings with businesspeople in various countries, and many want to know more about South Africa and plan to establish new interests in our country. The work all our teams have done has produced very positive results and will continue to do so. I wish to thank our embassy teams for some really excellent work.

The past financial year continued government's success in increasing foreign direct investment, particularly through the annual Presidential Investment Conference. We are pleased that our missions working closely in partnership with the Department of Trade,

Industry, and Competition, have succeeded in achieving the goal of 1,4 trillion rand in investment commitments. We will continue our support for this work.

### **A fractured geo-political world**

Chairperson, our world has become increasingly fractured and complex. Relations in the globe are strained, worryingly divided, and diverted from the development goals we all committed to with the SDGs. The most powerful economies are in a fractious trade conflict that threatens all the smaller economies. There is armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and there are insufficient voices calling for peace or working to create a stable peaceful environment. The poor and marginalized are facing the greatest threat in that their plight is forgotten while the mighty fight. The result has been increased economic risks for the most vulnerable, low growth levels in much of the globe, and neglect of those in the greatest need. Food inflation and high energy prices have strained incomes and resulted in high debt costs and persistent uncertainty. This is not the world many hoped for when the Cold War ended. As DIRCO, we have urged a return to peace, multilateralism, and partnerships for development.

Our department has maintained its core focus on our goals, we have strengthened partnerships, and promoted peace and security in the region, the continent, and globally.

### **Peace and Security**

Last year we concluded our term as chair of the SADC Organ on Peace, Defence and Security. South Africa led the efforts to activate and support the mission in Mozambique and engaged with Eswatini to encourage efforts to establish national unity in that country. President Ramaphosa also concluded the SADC facilitation process in Lesotho and tabled his final report to the SADC Summit last August. Lesotho held successful elections last year and is actively implementing the reform agenda adopted by the National Reforms Authority.

We remain concerned about the war between Russia and Ukraine and want to encourage all parties involved to find a route to peace. We are convinced that negotiations are

imperative for ending this terrible strife and continue to urge all parties to pursue diplomacy. We will be serving in the AU Peace and Security Council for the next two years, and hope that intensified efforts will be given to finding peace in Sudan, Mali, Libya, Chad, and Burkina Faso.

### **South-South Cooperation and BRICS**

One of the ways in which a context of global collaboration could be advanced is through establishing influential formations that will work with the United Nations to advance an inclusive forward looking international development agenda. It is possible for BRICS to play such a transformative role. South Africa is Chair of BRICS for 2023, and we hope the BRICS leaders can assume a stronger role in bringing peace to Ukraine and Russia. We welcome the efforts of President Xi Jinping and those promised by President Lula da Silva.

BRICS has attracted great interest from a number of countries, and our Sherpas are engaged in conceptualising how BRICS could respond to such interest. It is vital to ensure that what is eventually agreed strengthens multilateralism, the UN, and our Non-Aligned Movement. We hope our leaders will provide definitive guidelines at the conclusion of the BRICS Summit. The growing interest in BRICS indicates that many countries are searching for a multi polar forum that is modern, inclusive, and oriented toward the good of all.

Our BRICS theme is *“BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism.”* BRICS is our partnership of emerging economies and developing countries that wish to play a role in world affairs, ensuring benefit to the global South. We are encouraged by the growth and resilience of the New Development Bank of BRICS and welcome the new members. The bank has assisted members to secure funding to address infrastructure needs, support the unblocking of regional value chains, and localisation of production capacity.

Our partnership with BRICS has resulted in tangible benefits for our country in a wide

range of sectors. Total trade with BRICS countries has increased from 487 billion rand in 2017 to 702 billion rand in 2021. We have received funding of over 5 billion dollars from the NDB for key infrastructure projects in renewable energy, water, and other sectors.

Our priorities for BRICS this year are to: develop a partnership towards an equitable just transition; transform education and skills development for the future; unlock opportunities through the AfCFTA; strengthen post pandemic economic recovery; and strengthen multilateralism.

BRICS countries support a strong multilateral system and reform of the UN Security Council. Our target this year is to ensure increased strengthening of BRICS, and the hosting of a successful Summit in August.

Chairperson, and Honourable members,

### **A progressive Agenda**

We have remained focused on the vision of peace set out by former President Mandela throughout his lifetime. We have committed to playing a full role in resolving international challenges and helping countries achieve peace and security. Working through the African Renaissance Fund we will support reconstruction efforts in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. We will use our three years in the UN Human Rights Council to promote peace and full enjoyment of human rights for all people, we will also continue work to realise the bold anti-racism initiatives of the Durban Plan of Action that was adopted at the Anti Racism Conference over twenty years ago. We will continue to argue for reform of the UNSC and for a greater focus on the values and principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

Our focus on BRICS will be implemented alongside continued work to retain and strengthen links with Africa, Europe, the United States, East Asia, and the Middle East. All these are important trading partners for South Africa and must not be neglected.

We are pleased that from this year the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will be chaired by Uganda. We will work closely with our sister country to strengthen NAM, and we congratulate Azerbaijan for the leadership they have provided through their Chairship.

We will continue our participation in the G20 and consistently profile the interests of South Africa and Africa. We are pleased that the G20 has agreed with us and the AU, that the AU must be a permanent presence at the Group, and we look forward to working closely with the AU to profile our development agenda. We believe more attention should be given to addressing post Covid liquidity challenges on the continent and call on the G20 to do more to assist.

It is worrying that the conflict in Ukraine has diminished world attention from challenges in Africa and left the marginalised even more vulnerable to the dangers of terrorism, food insecurity, climate change, and instability. Developing countries need a G20 focused on issues of development. The G20 should actively encourage wealthy G7 member states to honour their financial commitments to supporting developing countries in mitigation and adaptation. They should also play a leading role in entrenching peace and security globally.

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Last year our commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts was visibly illustrated in our country's support for peace in Ethiopia. South Africa was honoured to host the Pretoria peace talks. We thank the people of Ethiopia for trusting us, and we thank the facilitators and international partners for the wonderful work they did. President Olusegun Obasanjo displayed incredible leadership, ably supported by President Uhuru Kenyatta and former Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka.

South Africa will continue to support peace efforts and the entrenchment of human rights in the globe. We are grateful to have been elected to the Human Rights Council and will use our presence there to pursue a human rights agenda. That agenda will support our established and new global solidarity efforts - we will continue our support for a two-state

solution for Israel and Palestine. We know much has been done to make this improbable, but we must continue all efforts for peace and freedom for the people of Palestine and of Western Sahara, and our solidarity with the blockaded people of Cuba.

We must also improve our solidarity with South Sudan, Mali, Libya and Chad. We are still in the middle of the Nelson Mandela decade of peace declared for 2019 to 2028, and as the inheritors of his legacy we all have a duty to be activists for peace on our continent and worldwide.

Our focus on human rights must also be active in seeking full enjoyment of equality and justice for the women of Afghanistan. The South cannot be silent when girl children and women are denied rights that we regard as fundamental to our humanity.

I wish to thank the people of South Africa for their generous solidarity for the people of Turkey and Syria when they were struck by tragedy. Colleagues from both countries have expressed their gratitude to our rescue workers, NGOs such as our Gift of the Givers Foundation, SAPS K9 rescue unit, Medi Response, Search and Rescue South Africa, businesspeople, and many thousands of our people who held out a helping hand. We must do the same for the DRC and Malawi as they have faced devastating floods. It is this spirit of South Africa that has caused us to develop a forward-looking agenda and programme for the new financial year.

We will focus on BRICS, and we will focus on peace and security, especially in our membership of the AU Peace and Security Council. We will continue robust bilateral links as shown in President Ramaphosa hosting Belgium, Namibia, Finland, Uganda and other Heads of State this year. We will also continue our strong advocacy for implementation of the AfCFTA as a critical lever for the economic transformation of Africa. We will work with SADC to implement our regional development agenda and continue our support for progress in achieving the goals of our AU Agenda 2063.

With respect to our work in Parliament, I hope we will submit the South African

Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) bill to parliament as we must transform the African Renaissance Fund to play a more significant strategic role on our continent and elsewhere.

Our agenda and plans require increased resourcing. We are increasingly constrained by our budget even as our work grows. We have seen this expanded role in the incredible work being done by our State Protocol and Consular Services branch. They render non-financial assistance to our citizens abroad. In the past financial year consular services assisted 118 citizens in distress, assisted with extradition requests, assisted with the repatriation of mortal remains of 193 deceased, and assisted persons in correctional services abroad. They also authenticated over 50,000 legal documents and repatriated our stranded citizens and other nationals from Sudan. No country can exercise international influence by penny pinching. We are BRICS Chair this year and must showcase our country. We will be G20 Chair in 2025, and we intend on hosting a successful G20 and must have the resources to do that.

I am fully alert to the challenges facing government and confirm DIRCO's commitment to help grow our economy, create prosperity, and support the achievement of a better Africa and world through robust international partnerships and global cooperation.

I wish to thank the Deputy Ministers for their sterling work, our President for his support in our work, our DIRCO team, the DG and all officials. I also thank honourable members of the Portfolio Committee for the hard work they do in the domain of diplomacy and foreign relations.

Thank you.