

**Remarks by Hon. Alvin Botes, MP, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, on the occasion of the Debate on the Budget Vote of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Good Hope Centre, Parliament, Wednesday, 10 May 2023**

Honourable House Chair,  
Minister Pandor,  
Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini,  
Portfolio Committee Chairperson, Honourable Mahumapelo  
Fellow Members of Parliament,  
Director General, Mr Zane Dangor  
South African Foreign Service Personnel, Diplomats

South Africa's foreign policy has an indigenous African identity that is woven into and inspired by the struggles and aspirations of South Africans.

It is imperative to re-state what underpins our foreign policy, substantively outlined by Nelson Mandela, when he said 'the temptation in our situation is to speak in muffled tones about an issue such as solidarity. We can easily be enticed to read reconciliation and fairness as meaning parity between justice and injustice. Having achieved our own freedom, we can fall into the trap of washing our hands of difficulties that others face. Yet we would be less than human if we did so' (1997). South Africa's first democratically elected President held true to his inaugural oath on 10 May 1994, when he commits South Africans to 'oppose all that may harm it'. What constitutes 'harm' to South Africans and what continues to inspire our steadfast solidarity with the oppressed people, is that we mark 75 years since the mass displacement of Palestinians known as "the Nakba"; or the Palestinian Catastrophe by the State of Israel; the 61st year of the Cuban embargo and economic blockade by the United States of America and the 48th year of colonial occupation of the land of the Saharawi people by Morocco.

The White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy, entitled "Building a Better World: The Diplomacy of Ubuntu" (May 2011), contends that: "South Africa will work in partnership with countries of the South and the North to address the shared challenges of underdevelopment; promoting global equity and social justice..."

In my intervention, I will focus on the work we are doing with countries in the under-developed South and Industrialized North to 'address the shared challenges of underdevelopment; promoting global equity and social Justice', with a particular emphasis on economic diplomacy.

Honourable House Chair,

South Africa has preferential market access agreements with the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom.

The EU, US and UK account for R906 billion of South African exports.

A significant portion of exports are in value-added areas, namely manufacturing goods and of services, and support between 800,000 and 1 million jobs.

The EU, US and UK account for 38% of foreign pledges in the Investment Drive, and 78% of total FDI stocks.

In the SA Investment Conferences, the US, EU and UK pledged R315 billion in foreign investment across the five years of the investment drive, accounting for 38% of total pledges from outside South Africa.

President Cyril Ramaphosa undertook an official Working Visit to Washington, DC on 16 September 2022 at the invitation of President J. Biden.

The bilateral talks focused on a range of critical issues of national, regional, and global importance, where trade and investment, energy global peace and stability, food security health, climate change and the just energy transition and reform of the United Nations were discussed.

The visit appreciated the strong bilateral relations between the US and South Africa and that the US was the third largest trading partner for South Africa. Over an estimated 600 US companies were operating in South Africa.

As part of the outcomes of the visit, a joint task force on trade and investment is to be established to expand bilateral economic ties between South Africa and the United States. It will improve bilateral trade and investment volumes, which will create much needed jobs and economic growth in South Africa.

Together, the three accounted for a total of 78% of fixed foreign investment stocks in South Africa in 2020 and all five of our top investors were part of the group – namely: the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, the USA and Germany.

Over the past year, we were able to undertake official visits to a number of countries in Western Europe, including the United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal, and we hosted our counterparts from Austria, Spain, Belgium and Switzerland.

President Ramaphosa undertook a State Visit to the United Kingdom on the invitation of King Charles III.

President Ramaphosa also hosted Their Majesties the King and Queen of Belgium, as well as the President of the Government of Spain for an Official Visit.

A joint Belgian-South-African battery research project are being undertaken at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the first African-grown mRNA vaccine is being developed with Belgium non-state partners.

South Africa remains the only African country and one of ten countries globally that has a Strategic Partnership with the European Union (EU).

Honourable House Chair,

The Nordic region remains one of South Africa's 'ever-green' partnerships. President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa and Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre of Norway, co-

chairs the The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, facilitates increased collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. The President hosted your excellency Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland on a State Visit.

Honourable House Chair,

Co-operation between South Africa and the Central European countries has progressed extensively since 2016, and there were various other exchange programmes with Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Poland and Croatia.

We have held a number of Bilateral Political Consultations with our counterparts in Central Europe, including with the Bulgarians, Czechs and Polish; and Senior Officials Meetings with Hungary, Romania, Croatia and Slovenia.

Relations with the Baltics continues to expand and bilateral consultations were held with Lithuania and Latvia.

Honourable House Chair,

Regarding our relations with Canada, I wish to inform the House that Canada remains an important ally in helping address our domestic priorities, including support for our efforts to build a capable state.

We look forward to the imminent signing of the long-awaited Agreement between South Africa and Canada on Audio-Visual Co-production, which will benefit South Africa's creative sector.

Honourable House Chair,

The Russian Federation remains a strategic bilateral partner of South Africa. ITEC was convened and preceded by a Senior Officials meeting. The second Russian-Africa Summit is scheduled to be convened in St. Petersburg in July 2023.

Honourable House Chair,

In Latin America and the Caribbean, we convened political consultations and senior officials meetings were held with Brazil, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Honourable House Chair,

South Africa remains steadfast in her solidarity with the people of Cuba as they battle the effects of decades of sanctions and a protracted and devastating trade embargo. The Cubans stood with us in our darkest hour and continue to do so today.

Our solidarity with Cuba transcends politics. For example, in the education sector, more than 2,000 South African students have received medical training in Cuba; and the Henry Reeves Medical Brigade stands as an epitome of Ubuntu Diplomacy.

Honourable House Chair,

Oliver Tambo, on the occasion of the Olfe Palme Memorial Lecture in January 1987, Sweden reminded us that 'each day carries both the burden of its past and the seeds of its future'. The developed North 'carries the burden of its past and has a unique opportunity to carry the seeds of our future 'with us, as we jointly address the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality' in the developing South.

Minister Pandor,

Your leadership are indelible.

May you and the more than 20 million South African mothers, have a blessed Mother's Day on Sunday.

Malibongwe!

Thank you.