

MINISTER MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE DELIVERS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION BUDGET VOTE SPEECH

The Minister's speech coincided with Africa Day, the day on which Africans across the continent celebrated the founding in 1963 of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which has been transformed into the African Union (AU).



The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, delivered the Budget Vote Speech of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation to Parliament on Thursday, 25 May 2017.

The Minister's address outlined plans and programmes to be implemented in the financial year 2017/18 aimed at consolidating relations between South Africa and the world.

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said it was an honour to present this year's Budget Vote Speech of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation in the year of OR Tambo.

“The year 2017 has been declared by our government as the year of OR Tambo, one of the most outstanding leaders of the liberation struggle who mobilised international solidarity against apartheid and contributed to shaping the vision of a post-apartheid democratic South Africa.

“... OR as he was affectionately known, mobilised the largest truly global solidarity movement rooted on the African continent and extending to the global South and the North. His legacy continues to guide the values of South Africa’s foreign policy, namely: Patriotism, Loyalty, Dedication, Ubuntu, Equity, Integrity and Batho Pele. As we celebrate the centenary of OR Tambo we draw inspiration from his exemplary leadership and vision, which accorded him the accolade of an international statesman and an astute, consummate diplomat.”

Africa Day

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said that a conscious decision was taken to deliver this Budget Vote Speech on Africa Day to reaffirm government’s commitment to contribute to a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

“This year’s celebrations coincide with Ghana’s Golden Jubilee, that is, 60 years of Ghana’s independence. As the pioneer post-colonial state in Africa, Ghana paved the way for the decolonisation project on the continent. We remain eternally grateful to Ghana’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah who inspired Africans with his ideals of Pan-Africanism and championed the unity of Africa.



“Today, all of Africa is free except the people of the Western Sahara whose right to self-determination is being denied. In this regard, we would like to renew our solidarity with the people of the Western Sahara and call for the implementation of United Nations (UN) resolutions that would give effect to the right to self-determination of the Saharawi People as contained in the Charter of the UN.

“This year, we also commemorate 50 years of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. We wish to reaffirm our solidarity and support for the Palestinian struggle and urge the international community to expedite the resolution of this long-standing conflict.”

South Africa’s foreign policy

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said South Africa’s foreign policy was guided by the Government’s apex strategy, the National Development Plan (NDP), which sets out a long-term vision that seeks to address the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality, and put South Africa on a path towards long term development and prosperity.

“In this regard, Chapter 7 of the NDP envisions an active role for South Africa in the region, the continent and the world. We therefore seek to build strategic partnerships for development to advance our national interests and promote the enduring values that define our nation, namely: democracy, human rights and good governance.

“This enjoins us to continue pursuing regional political and economic integration and promote Africa’s development through sustained South-South solidarity and mutually beneficial relations with the North. We are conscious that this can be fully achieved within a reformed, just, fair and equitable global system of governance.

“Our international programme is executed in a volatile, uncertain, complex and an ambiguous global environment. This environment is characterised by the rise of nationalism and populism, fueled by growing inequality and unemployment.

“We believe that a people-centered development agenda based on the recently adopted sustainable development goals (SDGs) should be the basis for addressing the myriad of challenges that confront nations across the globe, instead of a retreat to short-term populist solutions. The onset of a multipolar world we live in today increases the prospects for an equitable diffusion of global power and for mutually beneficial relations among nations.

“The ever-changing environment requires us to constantly recalibrate the contours of our foreign policy in order to ensure the continued effective execution of our mandate. In this vein, we have consistently adapted our economic diplomacy strategies, which continue to yield tangible dividends that benefit all South Africans.”

Trade and exports

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane told the audience that in spite of the current subdued global economic environment, South Africa had managed to increase the volume of out-bound trade and inward investment, tourism, skills and technology transfers.

“For example, in 1994, trade between South Africa and the rest of our continent was R11,4 billion. As of December 2016, South Africa’s total trade with Africa stood at R436 billion, compared to 2015. In 2016, South Africa grew its exports to our continent by 4,67%, while total bilateral trade grew by 3,84%.

“Our immediate region, southern Africa, accounted for more than R336 billion or 77,17% of our total African trade, as the region remains the primary destination for South African exports.

“Our exports to African countries accounted for more than R316 billion, while imports accounted for around R120 billion, resulting in South Africa having a favourable trade surplus with the continent, of over R196 billion. This favourable trading environment with our continent is largely due to the exporting of value-added finished goods and services. Mindful of this trade imbalance, we will utilise the Department of Trade and Industry’s Trade Invest Africa strategy to contribute towards enhancing industrial and manufacturing capacities on the continent.

“Our relations with the Americas and Europe continue to grow and trade with these regions increased from R76,3 billion in 1994 to R857,9 billion in 2016. The European Union (EU) remains a strategic region for South Africa and a prominent dialogue partner from the global North.

“Apart from being the largest contributor of development assistance to South Africa since 1994, the region also continues to be South Africa’s largest regional source of foreign direct investment (FDI). We will continue to strengthen our trade and investment relations with the EU as a bloc and the United Kingdom bilaterally moving forward.

“The South Africa-EU Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for South Africa is €241 million (R4,3 billion) for the cycle 2014 to 2020. The EU also contributes €100 million (R1,8 billion) to infrastructure development for domestic as well as regional programmes. Bilateral trade between South Africa and Europe amounted to approximately R860 billion in 2016.

“We will continue to engage the new administration in the United States (US) with a view to enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation. President Jacob Zuma, during the 2017 State of the Nation Address, reiterated our commitment on the renewal and full implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. This agreement provides us with preferable market access for certain exports to the US. The expansion of business and technological networks continue to mutually benefit the two countries.

“Bilateral trade between South Africa and the US grew from R15,9 billion in 1994 to more than R73 billion in 2016. The US remains the largest single source of FDI in South Africa with over US\$50 billion. Development assistance from the US amounts to approximately US\$450 million, the bulk of which is directed at health cooperation.

“It bears acknowledging that these impressive trade and investment figures were in no small measure made possible by our global diplomatic footprint.”

Industrialisation efforts in the region

During the 2016 Budget Vote Speech, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane indicated that South Africa’s development was inextricably linked with that of the region and the African continent and therefore government placed strong emphasis on industrialisation efforts in the region.

“Accordingly, the process of boosting the productive capacity of the region’s economies is underway with a focus on developing and boosting its manufacturing capacity.

“As an incoming Southern African Development Community (SADC) Chair of the Summit for the 2017 to 2018 period under the proposed theme: “Partnering with the Private Sector in Developing Industry and Regional Value-Chains”, we will focus on harnessing the participation and involvement of the regional private sector in the implementation of the SADC Regional Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap.

“Efforts are also underway to accelerate the implementation of the SADC-Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa-East African Community Free Trade Area, which will enhance intra Africa trade and build towards the achievement of the Continental Free Trade Agreement.”

Peace and stability on the continent

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said that peace and stability on the continent was a prerequisite for development and prosperity.

“Notwithstanding the political stability experienced in the greater part of the continent, pockets of instability and insecurity remain a challenge in the following countries: South Sudan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Libya, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Lesotho, the Great Lakes, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

“In the past year, various Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives were undertaken and humanitarian aid delivered (i.e. Namibia, Malawi, Swaziland, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Burundi) in support of the consolidation of peace, political stability and constitutionally-based institutions, as well as building human capacities within partner governments and parliaments.

“We also continue with our mandate as SADC facilitator aimed at assisting the Basotho parties to resolve their political challenges. In this regard, we take this opportunity to wish the Kingdom of Lesotho free, fair and democratic elections on 3 June 2017.

“The peace and security efforts I have highlighted will contribute significantly in creating conducive conditions for the development of our continent and the welfare of her people, in line with the vision of an African continent that is free of war and conflicts, and at peace with itself, as encapsulated in Agenda 2063.”

Women empowerment

“We are delighted to welcome back Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma after the successful conclusion of her tour of duty as the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission. We are proud of the significant achievements recorded during her tenure, which include the conceptualisation of a long-term socio-economic vision in the form of Agenda 2063, the improvement of the working methods of the AU and giving prominence to women empowerment issues on the AU’s agenda.



“Agenda 2063 sets out a roadmap towards an Africa where women are empowered to play their rightful role in all spheres of life, and with full equality. This is in line with the AU heads of state decision to establish the Pan African Women’s Organisation (PAWO) as a legal entity and a specialised agency of the AU.

“We undertake to strengthen its support for the work of PAWO as a specialized agency of the AU.”

Youth development

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said that 2017 had been declared by the AU Heads of State and Assembly as the year of "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in the Youth".

“This provides an opportunity for the continent to leverage the youth bulge to propel its socio-economic development. There is a need for an integrated approach to improve youth development across the continent and to ensure their full participation in economic activities. In this regard, it is incumbent upon us to invest in young citizens to address the high levels of unemployment and poverty,

“For our part, we have been hard at work in sourcing educational opportunities for South African students abroad. I am happy to report that, among many others, we have secured in 2016, 200 fully funded scholarships for South African students in the Americas and Europe regions.

“Under the aegis of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), Africa Business Education (ABE) initiative, 80 South African students are currently studying for Master’s degrees in highly technical fields in Japan, which will be followed by internships at Japanese companies.”

Multilateral relations

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane told the audience that Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) membership had consolidated South Africa’s position globally and within emerging markets.

“This partnership is yielding fruitful benefits in which our people are already benefiting from the New Development Bank, which recently announced allocation of funds for renewable energy.

“South Africa will take over the Chairship of the BRICS from 1 January to 31 December 2018 and we will host the 10th BRICS Summit. During our tenure, we will focus on deepening BRICS cooperation for common development, enhancement of global governance to jointly meet our shared challenges, carrying out people-to-people exchanges to support BRICS cooperation, and institutional improvements, among others.

“Our participation in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation FOCAC is realising tangible results, as noted through the outcomes of last year’s Second Investing in Africa Forum held in China. The Memorandum of Understanding on exploration on various infrastructure development initiatives, which includes the Moloto Rail Development Corridor, will have a direct impact to the lives of our people.

“Moreover, we will assume the IORA Chairship in August 2017. IORA is a strategic formation that creates a platform for countries in the Indian Ocean Rim to deepen cooperation in areas such as ocean economy for shared prosperity.

“Our commitment to the pursuit of the African Agenda enjoins us to place it high on the G20 agenda. Through our co-chairship of the Development Working Group of the G20, we will continue to promote the principle of inclusivity for the benefit of our continent and the global South. Thus, our efforts are geared at ensuring that the trajectory of the support from the G20 is aligned to Africa’s development agenda.

“The UN with its near universal membership and vast agenda remains the most important multilateral institution and the centre of global governance. Our key priority is advancement of the reform agenda in order to strengthen the UN.

“In its current status, the UN has failed to curb unilateral actions by powerful nations who undermine its founding principles. These practices risk the reversal of gains made by the collective, including the implementation of the Paris Climate Change Pact.

“I mentioned earlier the dynamism of international relations, which enjoins us to revise and align our strategies and tactics at all times. The purview of our work requires a wide array of expertise and institutional knowledge. Consequently, I am grateful to the South African Council on International Relations SACOIR for their continued guidance and counsel on our international relations programmes.”

Discharging our mandate abroad

“We implement our mandate cognisant of the fiscal consolidation context within which our government operates. As such, we have implemented significant cost-cutting measures both at our Head Office and diplomatic missions, while maintaining optimum operations. The demands of the world we operate in coupled with the currency fluctuations are placing an enormous strain on our significantly reduced budget. We remain hopeful that appropriate adjustments will be made to our budget to enable us to fully carry out our mandate in the forthcoming Medium Term Expenditure Framework.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Honorable Chair and the Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation for their continued support and cooperation.

“Additionally, I would like to thank the Deputy Ministers of International Relations and Cooperation for their tireless efforts in ensuring the discharge of our mandate both at home and abroad.

“Finally, I would also like to express my sincerest gratitude to the Director-General, senior managers and staff of the department for their continued hard work in executing our mandate.

“We reaffirm that we shall spare no effort in contributing to a better life for all South Africans, a better Africa, in a better world.”

SABC AFRICA DAY DIALOGUE

Prior to the delivery of the Budget Vote Speech, Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane participated in a SABC Africa Day Dialogue.



BUDGET VOTE SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER NOMAINDIYA MFEKETO

“OR Tambo laid the foundation for our foreign policy and was passionate about our solidarity with oppressed masses of the South in general and people of the Asia and the Middle East regions in particular.”

In her Budget Vote, the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Nomaindiya Mfeketo reiterated that South Africa had never stood idle but continued to support the Palestinian struggle.

“We note the demands of the families of Palestinian prisoners, who have requested that the 24 hours they spend at checkpoints before they see their family members be significantly reduced. That the right to education in Israeli prisons be upheld and lastly that basic human dignity be restored for visitors who currently are not provided with basic services such as toilet facilities. In this context we continue to reaffirm our solidarity with the people of Palestine and call upon the international community to find a lasting resolution to this long standing conflict.



Supporting the people of Western Sahara

“Similarly, we will continue to advocate for freedom and justice in support of the people of Western Sahara. This foreign policy position to support Western Sahara is founded on our own experiences of struggle of colonialism and subjugation. When we took a decision to recognise the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), South Africa has continued to render support to and lobby for the Saharawi cause on all multilateral platforms such as the Southern African Development Community; African Union (AU); United Nations (UN); G77; Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa; and Non-Aligned Movement, among others, that we participate in.

“We acknowledge that it was through international support and solidarity that we could manage to free ourselves from the bondage of apartheid and colonialism. The people of Western Sahara shall not be failed in their cause for self-determination and freedom.

“As such, we wish to reiterate the urgent need for renewed efforts to facilitate an early resolution of the Western Sahara issue and call on the UN General Assembly to determine a date for the holding of the self-determination referendum for the people of Western Sahara. Equally we urge the UN Security Council to fully assume its responsibilities in restoring the full functionality of the UN Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). This MINURSO is vital for managing the ceasefire and the organising of the referendum in Western Sahara as well as addressing issues of human rights violations.

“We will continue to mobilise the international community to call for the acceleration of the referendum on self-determination.

“Furthermore, we will continue to assist and share our experiences in peaceful settlement of conflict because any further delay in finding a lasting solution has consequences for peace and security in Africa.

“Despite this challenge, we believe that the readmission of Morocco to the AU presents opportunities for all of us to work within the collective of this august body to resolve the Western Sahara issue.”

Strengthening relations with Asia

“In regard to Asian countries, we believe that it is in our best interest to continue strengthening our relations, specifically in the area of economic diplomacy. The International Monetary Fund classified the Asia-Pacific region as a global leader in economic growth, with a projected 5,5% in 2017 and 5,4% growth in 2018.

“The same, however, cannot be said about the Middle East region, which together with North Africa experienced a slow growth of up to 2,7% in 2016. What is important in this regard is to note that economic growth has been negatively affected by ongoing conflicts in Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq and as well as constraints in oil production. It is therefore crucial that we continue advocating for a sustainable and peaceful resolution of conflict in the Middle East.”

Indian Ocean Ream Association (IORA)

“We engage with partners in various regions at bilateral and multilateral levels; this is the basis of our membership of IORA. As you are aware, IORA is former President Nelson Mandela’s brain child. He viewed its establishment as a renewal of historic trade relations.

“South Africa will, in honour of our iconic leader, assume the IORA Chairship when the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation hosts the 17th meeting of the IORA Council of Ministers later this year in Durban. At this meeting, South Africa will take over the Chairship from Indonesia for a two-year period, and the United Arab Emirates will assume the Vice Chair.

“The Ocean (Blue) Economy is a strategic focus area for South Africa, the AU and IORA member states. To this end, we will prioritise and implement the outcomes of the recently held first IORA Leaders’ Summit that President Jacob Zuma attended in Jakarta, Indonesia, in March 2017.

“Furthermore, we will seek to align the activities of IORA to the “2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy” (the AIM Strategy) in areas such as maritime security, capacity-building, skills development, and technology transfer in the area of the Ocean Economy.

“We are also working in partnership with Oman to build the Port of Sohar in that country. This port will enhance economic connectivity and bolster trade and investment between countries in the Indian Ocean Rim.

“I must underscore that the Ocean Economy is a key component of Operation Phakisa and as such we will continue to source skills and technology, and direct investment in support of its Delivery Units. As such we are exploring alternative and additional formal bilateral arrangements in order to realise this objective.

“In the same vein, the Sixth South Africa-China Bi-National Commission, which was held in Cape Town on 22 November 2016, had agreed to establish an Ocean Economy Sectoral Committee to facilitate the ongoing Ocean Economy Forum on China-Africa Cooperation projects.”

Relations with China

“During the Second Investing in Africa Forum on 7 September 2016 in Guangzhou, China, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa and the China Communication Construction Company (CCCC) Ltd. was signed. This will enable us to explore various infrastructure development initiatives, including the Moloto Rail Development Corridor linking Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces.

“Furthermore, we have just concluded the South Africa-China High-Level People to People Exchange Mechanism this past month, which aims to deepen mutual understanding between the peoples of South Africa and China and to enhance people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.”

Relations with India

“This year marks the 20-Year Anniversary of the Signing of the Red Fort Declaration between South Africa and India. This declaration was signed by former President Mandela during his State Visit to India in 1997 and reaffirmed the Strategic Partnership between the two countries. A number of events are planned in commemoration of this celebration to highlight the strong bonds of friendship and shared history between our two countries.

“The previous year, 2016 witnessed the Official Visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to South Africa. The visit was successful in strengthening the bilateral relationship and both leaders agreed that scope existed to increase trade, investment and tourism.”

Foreign Service Bill

“In conclusion, we are committed to enhancing efficiency, accountability and cost-effectiveness through the implementation of the Foreign Service Bill. This Bill has been presented to Parliament and we welcome the comments and guidance in this regard. We will accordingly engage in further consultations in order to enhance key elements of the Bill to ensure that an enabling legislative framework is created during this financial year.”



BUDGET VOTE SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, LUWELLYN LANDERS

This session coincides with Africa Day, which is celebrated every year on 25 May to commemorate the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which is now the African Union (AU). We are also commemorating the centenary of the birth of OR Tambo. OR's legacy remains that of a founding father, and one of the greatest patriots and diplomats in the world, on our continent and in our country.



Deputy Minister Landers said that we were living in a geo-political and economic environment that was extremely fluid, unstable and volatile.

“The effects of this have been the emergence and rapid rise of right wing, extremists and demagogic political parties, movements and leaders globally. This is why South Africa needs to be more vigilant, resilient and committed to diversify our relations particularly with other emerging progressive countries and forces of the left if we want to continue OR's ideals.”

Relations with Cuba

“South Africa and Cuba have maintained long-standing relations, dating back to the struggle against colonialism, imperialism and apartheid in Africa.

“To this end, we remain resolute in our call for the immediate and complete lifting of the United States (US) economic blockade against Cuba. We remain grateful that Cubans have, under the most difficult circumstances, continued to provide support to us and the rest of Africa.

“Since May 2012, over 3 000 South African students have received medical training in Cuba and 520 South Africans have already graduated over the past years and are now providing critical healthcare services to our poor and rural communities. In addition, about 800 will be returning to South Africa in 2018 to finalise their last year of study in South Africa.

“As a small contribution of our gratitude, we entered into an Economic Assistance Package (EAP) with Cuba in 2012. I can confirm that we are making progress in its implementation and that our agreement has been extended until 20 November 2017.

Relations with Brazil

“We continue to strengthen our political and economic relations at a bi- and multilateral level with Brazil. In the last six years, total trade between South Africa and Brazil has grown by approximately 15,63%. We will continue to cooperate through the Joint Ministerial Commission; India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA); and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS); as well as within the Southern African Customs Union (SACU)/Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) Preferential Trade Agreement to strengthen our economic relations.”

Relations with the African Diaspora

“We have also consciously strengthened our relations with the African Diaspora and undertook high-level visits to El Salvador and Honduras early in 2017. We will continue to visit other diaspora communities later this year.”

Relations with the Americas

“We continue to monitor developments in the Americas, including the change in Administration in the United States (US) in January 2017 and its impact on the geo-political economy. Having said that, we remain committed to deepen our cooperation with the US in multilateral and bilateral issues.”

Relations with the European Union (EU) and non-EU partners in Europe

“We also continue to enjoy strong economic ties with the EU. Despite the challenges to our country's trade balance, exports to the EU have been increasing steadily over the years.

“We will forge ahead in strengthening relations with our non-EU partners in Europe such as the Russia Federation, Turkey and Azerbaijan, to name a few. In this regard, the South Africa-Russia Inter-governmental Trade and Economic Committee (ITEC) was convened in November 2016 to review progress in various areas of cooperation.

“In the current financial year, 2017/18, we will continue to explore opportunities in numerous areas in this region, including: skills development, vocational training and scholarships, off-shore oil and gas exploration, aquaculture, ocean governance, ports development, tourism promotion, alternative energy technology, water resource management and traditional trade and investment.”

Combatting all scourges of racism

“People of African descent continue to suffer from multiple forms of discrimination. As a result, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), proclaimed 2015 to 2024 the International Decade on People of African Descent under the theme: ‘Recognition, Justice and Development’. We commend the UN for this initiative.

“To this end, South Africa continued to lead UN efforts aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights of people of African descent. At the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), the HRC which includes South Africa, adopted a resolution calling on the UNGA to establish a forum on people of African descent. Going forward, South Africa through the G77 + China group, will lobby the annual UNGA to establish this forum.

“South Africa also continues to play its leadership role in combatting all scourges of racism. We led the process of the HRC, during its 34th Session earlier this year, in adopting resolutions renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; and the Elaboration of Complementary Standards to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination”.

A robust public diplomacy strategy

“In order to bring international relations closer to the people and to debunk the perception that diplomacy does not directly affecting the quality of life of our people, we will continue to implement a robust public diplomacy strategy which uses both traditional as well as modern mediums. This includes our radio show Ubuntu, our newsletters, consistent media interviews and statements, our website, our social media platforms and engaging directly with our three spheres of government, civil society and communities.”



Stay Connected with us



For back issues of Newsflash, visit: <http://www.dirco.gov.za/department/newsflash.html>

Editor: Delien Burger
Picture Editor: Yolande Snyman
Design and layout: Delien Burger