



MINISTRY  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## Media briefing on the Ministerial Panel Report

**PRESENTED BY MR AZIZ PAHAD  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE REVIEW PANEL**

**17 APRIL 2019**

**FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW:**  
*a strategic reflection and critical appraisal of the  
orientation and implementation of South Africa's  
foreign policy*

**A BETTER SOUTH AFRICA, A BETTER AFRICA AND A BETTER WORLD**



MINISTRY  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



DEPUTY MINISTER  
*Mr Luwellyn Landers*



MINISTER  
*Ms Lindiwe Sisulu*



DEPUTY MINISTER  
*Ms Reginah Mhaule*

***A better South Africa,  
a better Africa and  
a better world***

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media this is a summary of the work of the Review Panel which was introduced to the National Assembly by HON Minister Lindiwe Sisulu during the Budget Vote Speech on 15 May 2018. The Review Panel engaged a number of stakeholders and completed its work at the end of March 2019. In this summary of the report I deliberately left out a number of areas, especially the recommendations because they have an impact on other departments as well as all of DIRCO. Discussions and engagements are on-going and the Minister will decide on the way forward.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REVIEW PANEL

1. The Ministerial Review Panel was established by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms. Lindiwe Sisulu, MP, and introduced to the House of Assembly on the occasion of the Budget Vote of the same Ministry on the 15th May 2018 in Parliament.
2. Composition of the Ministerial Review Panel:
  - Chairperson – Mr Aziz Pahad
  - Deputy Chair – Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba
  - Ambassador Lindiwe Mabuza
  - Ambassador Welile Nhlapo
  - Ambassador Yvette Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini
  - Ambassador Gladys Sonto Kudjoe
  - Ambassador Sisa Ngombane
  - Dr Khulu Mbatha
  - Mr Siphon Pityana
  - Mr Enoch Godongwana
  - Mr Xhanti Payi
- 3 Support Staff:
  - Ambassador Mathu Joyini– Representing the DG’s Forum
  - Mr Percy Kumsha – Representing the DG’s Forum
  - Mr Titus Mafolo – Secretariat
  - Mr Thami Ka Plaatjie – Secretariat
  - Ms Boitumelo Sithole – Assistant Director: DTRD
  - Ms Izelle Fourie – Assistant to the Secretariat
  - Ms Sylvia Ndlovu – Seconded from the Minister’s Office

### RATIONALE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REVIEW PANEL INCLUDE:

- a. Part of the rationale for establishment of the Panel was the need to respond to changing domestic, regional, continental and global politics and socio-economic issues, challenges and demands. This must be done by enhancing South Africa’s capacity at all levels of government, but especially at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). Many of these local and international issues have a direct impact on the lives of South Africans.
- b. The task of the Panel was to assess strengths and weaknesses of South Africa’s current foreign policy trajectory, and advise, as appropriate, on

interventions necessary for us to make a contribution towards a world that is humane, just and equitable for all the people. This is done whilst simultaneously pursuing South Africa's national priorities, advancing the African Agenda and contributing to the maintenance of global peace and security.

- c. This had to be done as part of the efforts to help South Africa lift itself out of poverty, unemployment and inequality. At the same time, this had to help the country in strengthening its stature of being a critical player, on issues such as human rights, development, conflict resolution, nuclear disarmament, climate change and championing the Agenda for the countries of the South.
- d. To achieve all these and more, South Africa must reposition itself as a consistent moral compass and a principled voice of reason in a changing world that is increasingly characterized by selfish and narrow interests. The work of DIRCO and all its employees, at all levels, is to ensure that South Africa is part of the regional, continental and global motive forces for positive change. The main thrust will be to help transform the country to meet its national priorities, while simultaneously building a better Africa and the world.
- e. South Africa's foreign policy is predicated on the Constitution which has always been a guiding torch to transform the country and achieve sustainable growth of the economy that must help bring a better life to all. The Constitution is a critical roadmap for the country to deal with the legacies of apartheid. Thus, the country's foreign policy becomes an important part of measures that must help maintain the stability, security as well as strengthening the constitutional order and institutions. It must guarantee the peaceful, stable, prosperous and integrated Southern Africa, Africa and the world.
- f. It was noted that the context within which the Panel worked was given rise by specific milestones, especially the transition in February 2018 which led to the election of President Ramaphosa by the National Assembly.
- g. This marked the beginning of some reflection described by the President as a moment of renewal. In part, this helped to ensure a refocus, in some areas, particularly statecraft and governance as well as policy recalibration.

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Panel wishes to place on record its profound gratitude to the Hon Min Lindiwe Sisulu for the confidence she demonstrated in its members. This has afforded Panel members the opportunity to be of strategic service to the country at this important juncture as we grapple with the challenges of national renewal in a context of a very complex and unpredictable global environment.
2. A successful SA foreign policy is one that is deeply rooted in our constitution and national priorities. It requires a critical analytical understanding of the role and place of our country in regional and global affairs, global trends and attendant balance of forces. It also requires effective implementation machinery underpinned by supportive organizational structures, slick processes and appropriate behaviours and culture.
3. In the course of its work, the Panel had the benefit of exchanges with representatives of countries which have recently undergone similar reviews. Even though each review had its unique features and its own rationale, what is clear is that there are common themes. These include leveraging technology to improve both efficiency and effectiveness. This is particularly because of the opportunities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and the need to ensure continued relevance of foreign ministries and national coherence in an era where many national actors are involved in foreign policy. It also includes coordination between missions abroad and the Head Office as well as building capacity in emerging areas of foreign policy. All these are relevant for South Africa.
4. The work of the Panel could not be isolated from other important day to day strategic challenges to which the Ministry and DIRCO had to attend. Hence, the Panel had to provide ongoing advice and support to such critical initiatives as the hosting of the BRICS summit in July 2018, the country's Chairship of SADC as well as the lobbying and preparation for South Africa's assumption of its seat as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, to name but a few.
5. Both out of its own deliberations and in engagements with different stakeholders and parties, the Panel has sought at all times, to ensure some candid, frank and critical appraisal and interrogation of the current and past policy positions. These include analyses of actions and positions that have been adopted at various times with regard to regional, continental, global and multilateral issues.
6. The Panel highly appreciates the many inputs from DIRCO's senior management, NGO's, academics and counterparts from other countries who have undergone their own Reviews.
7. The Panel is indebted to the invaluable support it received from DIRCO staff, at all levels, and the insightful contributions that DIRCO senior management gave to the Panel. This includes support it received when engaging

numerous stakeholders and the practical assistance to both individual and collective members of the Panel.

8. DIRCO gave invaluable support on travel arrangements, secretarial support as well as engagements on UN, Africa, BRICS, bilateral and multilateral issues. These helped to inform and enrich the work of the Panel.
9. During the course of its work, the Panel became sensitized to a broad acknowledgement that in the recent past, South Africa has not lived to its earlier promise. That the country has not sufficiently played the role it was expected to play, or should have played in engaging a number of international issues. There is a general observation that there have been missteps which have reversed earlier gains that the country registered. As a result, strategic opportunities were missed resulting in decline of South Africa's influence regionally, continentally and globally.
10. This sentiment is also captured in the budget speech delivered by Hon Minister Lindiwe Sisulu on 15 May 2018 where she said.

*"We once were a giant in the world and our reputation was well known, because of what we represented. The world was richer for having given us support and for us having given them the miracle of 1994. In Mandela's memory, in his honour we have a responsibility to regain that stature that he left for us. That stature that allowed us to punch above our weight and succeed. We'll regain that stature and put all out efforts in making sure that we make the world a better place for all".*

11. There is a connection between the decline of South Africa's external influence and the negative tendencies that have bedevilled our national politics. At times, we became so internally focused to the extent of losing sight of the bigger picture that had inspired the democratic transformation. Needless to say, South Africa's external fortunes would always hinge on the extent to which the country advance its national renewal process.
12. There are some institution specific challenges at DIRCO that have contributed to South Africa's decline. This includes the tendency, within DIRCO to work in silos.
13. At the same time, South African diplomats had to work in an ever-changing dynamic regional, continental and global environment.

## METHODOLOGY

1. The Panel had a series of meetings to understand its brief and where it decided on how to conduct its work. This included a meeting with the Minister of International Relations, Hon Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, MP, who outlined to the Panel her broad expectations. It should be stated at the outset that given how policy evolves in our system of government, it could not be the brief of the Panel to make a complete overhaul of our foreign policy with a view to replacing it with something new. But rather, to reflect and assess its strengths and weaknesses, particularly in execution, as well as identifying gaps in the context of emerging regional, continental and global trends.
2. The Panel invited inputs from and engaged the senior management structure of the department, viz the Director General's Forum (DGF), as well as the different branches of the department. Throughout its work, the Panel attached a lot of importance to the strategic reflections and assessment of the current practitioners at DIRCO. This included being appraised on some work being undertaken under the auspices of the DGF on Organisational Renewal, Functional Organisational Structure Alignment and the Organisational Improvement Plan.
3. This Panel Report has taken into account on-going developments, including at the UN, AU and SADC. In particular, recent regular AU meetings and the SADC solidarity conference on Western Sahara, held in South Africa had a bearing on some of the observations and recommendations of the Panel.
4. The Panel conducted its work with the understanding that there is a lot of good work within DIRCO and thus there is a need to acknowledge the many areas of progress that the country has made in foreign relations since 1994.
5. The Panel further recognises and appreciates the wealth of experience, expertise and talent within DIRCO and the need, always to utilise and harness this rich body of human resource appropriately and to the fullest.
6. The Panel also hosted on the 4 to 5 October 2018, at the O.R Tambo building in Pretoria, a successful two-day Foreign policy review workshop that attracted around 200 participants engaged in foreign policy. This included NGOs, Research Institutions, Think-Tanks, Experts, Academics, past and current Diplomats. This provided a platform for some strategic reflection on our foreign policy from an outside DIRCO perspective.
7. This was followed by more engagements with some of these participants to further explore their areas of focus. The Panel is greatly indebted to all these for their candour and readiness to be of assistance in its work.
8. Flowing largely from the introduction of the work of the Panel to the Diplomatic community accredited to South Africa, the Panel also received offers to share insights from some of the countries which had recently undergone similar reviews.

9. The Panel engaged with senior government representatives from Canada, Germany, Ireland, Norway and Sweden. These were largely individuals from their capitals who had participated in their own country foreign policy reviews and who visited the Panel to exchange views.
10. The Panel greatly appreciates this support and benefitted significantly from the open exchanges of experiences and views. A key insight from these exchanges is how, in spite of the differences in the rationale for each review, the review process was also leveraged as an opportunity to engage the broader public beyond foreign policy elites. This is a step the Panel had wished for, but could not carry out and would suggest that DIRCO pays some attention to beyond the life of the Panel.



## Some Salient Observations of the Panel

1. Globalization has brought some benefits that include faster transmission of technology and innovation. Indeed, there is easier sharing of ideas, skills and technologies across borders. Globalization also has the potential to accelerate regional, continental and global economic integration and development.
2. However, the process of globalization has still not benefited a large number of developing countries, but has instead exacerbated the marginalization of poor countries, with many having become poorer in recent years.
3. There is a growing sense that only a few are reaping the promised dividends of globalization. Not only has the gulf between developed and developing countries widened, but the wealth of rich elites and the rest of society within many countries keeps growing.
4. At the same time, humanity is confronted by a number of political, security and economic realities that have created unprecedented uncertainties and a dangerous world order.
5. Among some of the political uncertainties is that there has emerged a serious trust deficit of politicians, politics and political institutions. This is manifested, among others by a drift into insular politics, such as BREXIT, the rise of right-wing populist movements, religious fundamentalism and Xenophobic tendencies.
6. In the West, there is a growth of nationalist and isolationist tendencies. This is coupled with a sense of impunity and 'going it alone attitude' – for example on issues of climate change.
7. Further, there is a growing tendency of powerful countries to reduce complex and interrelated problems of the world to narrow national interests, including militarist and transactional approach to diplomacy.
8. The immediate consequence of all these are trade wars, occasioning global market volatilities as well as the flagrant disregard of important international treaties. These have serious negative impact on the United Nations and the multilateral global governance system in general.
9. There has developed a series of political, social and economic dynamics that have opened major divisions in the traditional Western Alliance. This environment poses both threats but also opens up strategic opportunities for South Africa and developing countries.
10. The rise of China, India and others as well as dynamics within the Western powers have occasioned a restructuring of the global governance architecture, especially the Bretton Woods Institutions, but also other multilateral forums.
11. China has entrenched its foothold in Africa, increasing investment and trade

with the continent. Precisely because its economic growth rates have slowed down, China has refocused its economy towards outside regions, within its neighbors in Asia, across Europe and on the African Continent.

12. Because of its ubiquitous investments, accompanied by the voracious appetite for natural resources, China is having significant influence on the African continent. This is exercised energetically both at bilaterally and within the framework of the Forum for China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). In this regard, China has a clear strategy for engagement with the continent.
13. The existence of G20 Forum has also created another important multilateral forum that is critical to the global governance architecture.
14. Because South Africa is a member of these global forums, the question is whether the country is able to use these platforms consistently to advance national priorities, the interests of the SADC region, the African continent and the countries of the South.
15. Since the adoption of AGENDA 2063, there have been some modest but encouraging achievements towards the attainment of some of the goals. But the challenges are still huge because of the inherited negative legacies.
16. Generally, African institutions continue to be relatively weak and are still dependent on external funding. Africa's growth prospects nonetheless remain good.
17. There has been renewed commitment and some progress on conflict resolution and there are encouraging moves towards greater democratic governance. Yet, the agenda for wider African regeneration and renaissance remain broadly vulnerable and thus there is a need for ongoing vigilance.
18. The perennial challenge remains a better and unified continental approach on UN reform and for African states to intensify efforts to have permanent representation in this important body in line with Ezulwini Consensus.
19. South Africa supports the prolonged Palestinian struggle against dispossession and the fragmentation of the State of Palestine. The number of Palestinians in need of humanitarian assistance increases every day. It is therefore clear that the conflict between Palestine and Israel feeds into the wider regional dynamics by having a negative effect on peace, economic development, socio-political stability and security in the region.
20. In addition, the armed conflict in Yemen, the war in Syria and the general destabilization in the Middle East remains a challenge to the international community. South Africa must always be ready to assist all efforts aimed at finding lasting solutions to the conflict challenges faced by the people of the Middle East.
21. South Africa will assume the chair of AU from 2020. This will call for thorough preparation at all levels of government to ensure that the African

Renaissance would be the driving force for South Africa's Chairship. In particular, the strengthening of regional economic communities (RECs), the Pan African Parliament (PAP), PAWO and programmes such as Nepad and APRM should clearly be prioritised.

22. The Panel noted that from the beginning of this century and millennium, Africa had largely succeeded in taking ownership and leadership on challenges facing the continent in such critical areas as peace and security and through initiatives such as NEPAD, APRM as well as Peace and Security Council. This includes the Algiers and Lome Declarations on unconstitutional changes of elected governments and the Abuja Treaty and Lagos Plan of Action on continental integration.
23. The Panel further noted that one of the critical building blocks for the renaissance of the African continent is the integration, strengthening and optimal functioning of regional institutions and effective implementation of its programmes.
24. For a number of years, South Africa played an important role in pursuit of well-crafted programmes of African renaissance. South Africa also was a reliable partner in efforts towards regional integration, the role in NEPAD, APRM and work within the African Union. This was done through a close working relationship with other African states.
25. The manner in which the leadership of the continent was given audience and expected to provide leadership on interventions on the continent, in international fora such as the G8 and other platforms was eloquent testimony to this. This went beyond form and diplomatic protocol but there was, albeit at times grudgingly, respect for the intellectual and coherent logic of the content of these representations, grounded as they were, on carefully crafted and mandated continental positions.
26. There is a need to reconnect with the African Renaissance orientation, what its objectives and goals are and how to achieve them. There is also a need to articulate and propagate Pan-Africanism; how Pan-Africanism informs South African foreign policy and how South Africa can advance this in global forums such as the UN.
27. In the past, as part of ensuring that the African Diaspora is fully integrated into the AU and general continental programmes, the AU made the African Diaspora the 6th region of the organisation. South Africa was given the responsibility of regular contact and engagement with the region.
28. The result was a series of meetings in Jamaica, the USA and in South Africa where representatives of governments, NGO's, academics and others formulated programmes of engagements between the African continent and the African Diaspora.
29. South Africa believes in the reform of the UN and other multilateral global governance system so that these are democratic, inclusive and fully

represents the nations of the world, big and small. For the past two-and-half decades, South Africa, working with other countries of the South, continued efforts at ensuring that the entire global governance system is transformed.

30. The reform of the global governance system includes the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), so that they can play a more developmental role.
31. South Africa has also played an important role on the promotion of the rights of women as exemplified by the roles played by a number of South Africans in the UN and other multilateral bodies. This includes roles in the CSW, Beijing Conference, CEDAW, UN Women and in UN Peace Missions. The challenge is to ensure consistent and reliable support for all those working in global structures.
32. The Panel discussed and reflected on the role of South Africa's previous work in the UNSC and lessons that should inform the current participation in this important body. South Africa was a member of UNSC on two previous occasions – the first was the 2007 and 2008 and then also 2011 and 2012 periods.
33. Undoubtedly, the major controversy of South Africa's second term on the UNSC was its vote in March 2011 for Resolution 1973 which was abused by the P3 and its allies by attaching to the Resolution, the phrase: "by all means necessary," to justify launching military action against Libya. This was to effect regime change which included the brutal assassination of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi.
34. At the same time, however, South Africa played an important role in its previous terms, especially by championing a landmark Security Council decision on strengthening the strategic cooperation between the UNSC and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) in Resolution 2033 of 2012.
35. On 8 June 2018, South Africa was elected to serve on the UN Security Council for a two year period – 2019 to 2020 – having received 183 votes from UN Member states.
36. The Panel reflected extensively on lessons learnt during the previous 2 terms and what needs to be done now to strengthen South Africa's effectiveness during the current tenure.
37. South Africa has traditionally endeavoured to forge strong links with the countries of the South. This remains relevant. At the same time, the approach should ensure that South Africa responds appropriately to each region or country without adopting a 'one size fits all', approach.
38. There is also a lot of international relations engagements by different departments and spheres of government.
39. South Africa is endowed with many research and academic units that are

involved in a lot of work, particularly on the continent. These are important resources that DIRCO should positively harness. Engagements with these institutions is critical. This has the advantage of ensuring that those outside DIRCO are sensitized to the real challenges of the practice of Diplomacy as opposed to sometimes idealistic theoretical constructs that may not be grounded in reality.

40. South African diplomats are the main representatives of the country abroad. While they may not all be intimately engaged in arts and culture they are better placed to facilitate the promotion of spreading the message of what the country stands for, who we are, where we come from and the challenges as we move forward. Cultural workers are some of the best conveyers for such messages and DIRCO must fully integrate this work in all diplomatic activities.
41. Economic Diplomacy can be defined as a nation's promotion of its economic fortunes, interests and needs in the global environment.
42. It is how diplomats and other states' representatives negotiate for their countries interests in international relations. This is done with the aim of increasing trade, attracting investments and helping to grow and develop national economies.
43. This is also done in a manner that translates domestic economic policy into its international relations.
44. In assessing how South Africa's peers conduct their work in economic diplomacy, it became clear that the country is not using its economic potential and its inherent natural resources optimally.
45. Consultations with foreign representatives in South Africa, revealed that there are a number of key pillars and initiatives that could be leveraged to make sure that South Africa can better use its resources.