

EDITOR
Joyal Rantao
011 633 2180
joyal.rantao@inl.co.za

DEPUTY EDITOR
Japhet Ncube:
japhet.ncube@inl.co.za
011 633 2827

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
William Gumede
CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Nelandri Naranan
CHIEF OF EDITOR
Zenaida Jones:
zenaida.jones@inl.co.za
011 633 2587

SPORT
Morgan Bolton:
morgan.bolton@inl.co.za
011 633 2213

Address
47 Sauer Street, Johannesburg 2000
Tel: 011 633 9111
editor@afriicanindependent.co.za

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AFRICAN INDEPENDENT



MAITSE

NKOANA-MASHABANE

SA to continue fight against injustice and representation on the Security Council

SOUTH AFRICA will join other member states of the United Nations next week for the historic 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will take place under the theme: "The United Nations at 70: The Road ahead for Peace, Security and Human Rights."

This year's General Assembly session is significant as it will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and the establishment of the UN.

The 70th session also takes place in the context of other landmark anniversaries, which include the 70th anniversary of the use of atomic bombs, the 20th anniversary of the UN World Conference on Women, which adopted the historic Beijing Platform for Action, and the target date for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

As we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the UN, we should recall its charter aims to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of men and women and of nations large and small, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

In assessing the successes and failures of the UN over the last 70 years, we must examine not only whether the organisation has averted the scourge of another world war, but also whether it has been able to promote social and economic development, as well as human rights and equality for all.

In the year 2000, world leaders, meeting at the UN, adopted the Millennium Declaration, which resulted in the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

These MDGs were an unprecedented attempt to address poverty, health, education and other developmental challenges facing the world's poorest people. The MDGs provided a strong mobilising effect and a number of targets have been met. However, not all targets have been reached. The achievement of the MDGs has been uneven and most often it has been the poorest and those most marginalised and discriminated against who have seen the least progress.

At this 70th session of the UN, world leaders are scheduled to adopt the post-2015 Development Agenda outcome document titled: "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" at the UN's Sustainable Development Summit.

This development agenda builds on the Millennium Development Goals and would be the guiding global development framework for the next fifteen years. The outcome document constitutes a delicate political compromise that reflects the overall views of all member states. South Africa participated actively throughout the process, primarily in its capacity as chair of the group of 77 and China. The key aspect of the outcome document is the set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets that reflect global development challenges.

The Sustainable Development Goals are aligned to South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), as well as to the African Union's Agenda 2063, and also seek to address the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. It is widely recognised that the challenge



WORLD STAGE: Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the 69th United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York in September last year. PICTURE: REUTERS

UN MUST STILL BE RELEVANT 70 YEARS ON

of climate change threatens to reverse the development gains that we as developing countries have made in recent years.

Developing countries are likely to suffer the most from the effects of climate change, despite the fact we have contributed the least to the pollution of the atmosphere.

In December at the UN Climate Conference in Paris, we hope to adopt a new legal agreement, which is currently being negotiated in terms of the agreements that were reached under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action.

South Africa believes the UN is the pre-eminent international organisation entrusted with a global political, economic and social governance role. We remain faithful to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and strongly advocate for the centrality of the UN in a rules-based multilateral system.

We continue to support the work of multilateral fora, but also advocate for the restructuring of these bodies to ensure a fairer world.

In pursuance of this objective, we will use the 70th session to continue our relentless

work to achieve reform of the UN and its principal organs, specifically the Security Council, which has a key role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security, and the selection and appointment process of the UN secretary-general, amongst others.

The historic injustice against Africa in the composition of the UN Security Council must be corrected. The African Union has called on its member states to continue to speak with one voice on Security Council reform, in keeping with the "common African position" as contained in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration.

During the 70th session, we will thus reiterate our renewed commitment towards efforts to reform this august organisation so that it becomes fit for purpose and remain relevant. In this, we will seize this historic moment to work with other progressive states to ensure the representation of the developing world and Africa in the principal organs of the UN Organisation is increased.

Maitse Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Co-operation