



OFFICIAL GUIDE TO South Africa 2020/21

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the President is ultimately responsible for the foreign policy and international relations of South Africa. It is the President's prerogative to appoint heads of mission, to receive foreign heads of mission, to conduct state-to-state relations, and to negotiate and sign all international agreements.

International agreements that are not of a technical, administrative or executive nature bind the country only after being approved by Parliament, which also approves the country's ratification of or accession to multilateral agreements. All international agreements must be tabled in Parliament for information purposes.

Over the medium term, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation's (DIRCO) will focus on: strengthening the African Agenda; active participation in the United Nations (UN); and developing and managing state-owned properties in foreign missions.

During the 2021/22 financial year, the DIRCO aimed to focus on the following objectives, in line with the government's 2019-2024 Medium Term Strategic Framework:

- Increase Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into South Africa and Africa;
- Improve South African access to foreign markets;
- contribute to increased tourism arrivals to South Africa; and
- Improve investor confidence.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation is entrusted with the formulation, promotion, execution and daily conduct of South Africa's foreign policy.

The department's overall mandate is to work for the realisation of South Africa's foreign policy objectives by:

- coordinating and aligning South Africa's international relations;
- monitoring developments in the international environment;
- communicating government's policy positions;
- developing and advising government on policy options, and creating mechanisms and avenues for achieving objectives;
- protecting South Africa's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- contributing to the creation of an enabling international environment for South African businesses;
- sourcing developmental assistance; and
- assisting South African citizens abroad.

The DIRCO's strategic objectives are to:

- protect and promote South African national interests and values through bilateral and multilateral interactions;
- conduct and coordinate South Africa's international relations and promote its

foreign policy objectives;

- monitor international developments and advise government on foreign policy and related domestic matters;
- contribute to the formulation of international law and enhance respect for its provisions;
- promote multilateralism to secure a rules-based international system;
- maintain a modern, effective department driven to pursue excellence; and
- provide a world-class and uniquely South African state protocol service.

The department's five-year strategic plan strives towards:

- a united and politically cohesive continent that works towards shared prosperity and sustainable development;
- enhanced regional integration with increased and balanced trade within Southern African Development Community (SADC) and on the continent by supporting the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent; and
- using South Africa's membership and engagements in various international forums to advance the African Agenda.

The DIRCO is committed to multilateralism as enshrined in the UN Charter, and is active in multilateral institutions, including the Group of Twenty (G20), the G77+China, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM).

South Africa's National Interest displays a people-centred, progressive and developmental outlook evidenced in its foreign policy, particularly as this has been expressed in the post-liberation canon of promoting pan-Africanism, South-South solidarity and cooperation, North-South cooperation and multilateral cooperation.

Strengthening the African Agenda

Africa remains the focal point of South Africa's foreign policy. Accordingly, the department will continue to play an active role in the structures and processes of the African Union (AU) to advance peace, security and conflict prevention in Africa.

In 2020, South Africa assumed the chair of the AU with the clear purpose of making a difference on the continent by ensuring that linkages exist between development, good governance, peace and stability.

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic has forced South Africa, in its capacity as chair, to take a different approach in ensuring that the threats and challenges posed by the disease are dealt with in a multifaceted way.

This includes establishing the COVID-19 Response Fund, which is aimed at raising additional funds for the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; and lobbying for a comprehensive and robust economic stimulus package for

Africa to alleviate the economic impact of the pandemic. South Africa continues to be one of the largest contributors to the AU's budget through its membership fees.

Active participation in the UN

With its near-universal membership and vast agenda, the UN remains the most important multilateral institution and global governance centre. As such, engagements with the UN, and active participation in its processes, are of vital importance to South Africa and the advancement of the country's foreign policy priorities. Over the period ahead, South Africa continues to honour its membership fee obligation to the UN.

Developing and managing infrastructure projects and properties

Over the period ahead, the DIRCO planned to continue managing its international property portfolio, which comprises 127 state-owned properties and more than 1 000 rented properties. To reduce its rental portfolio and the associated operational costs, the department will focus on developing state-owned vacant land and the renovation and maintenance of the portfolio to extend its lifespan.

Property renovations, repairs and maintenance will continue to be informed by annual property condition assessments. Over the medium term, the department planned to commence with building four properties on state-owned land (two in Luanda, Angola; one in New Delhi, India; and one in Gaborone, Botswana).

The DIRCO also planned to conduct condition assessments of all state-owned properties over the medium term, beginning with those in Europe, followed by those in Africa, then those in the Americas and Asia. The outcome of these assessments will inform the need for accelerated maintenance and repairs to each property.

State-owned properties in Mbabane (Eswatini), the Hague (Netherlands), Windhoek and Walvis Bay (Namibia), and Brasilia (Brazil) will be renovated for state use. Professional condition assessments of properties in London (United Kingdom), Paris (France), Vienna (Austria), Rome (Italy), Brussels (Belgium), Madrid (Spain) and Copenhagen (Denmark) will be undertaken to inform decisions on future holding and use.

Reduction of missions

Cabinet has endorsed the DIRCO's decision to close 10 out of 122 diplomatic missions abroad in an effort to reduce costs, in response to the country's fiscal constraints, exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The missions, which include embassies, high commissions and consulates, were being closed systematically during the 2021/22 financial year. The following missions were earmarked for closure: Minsk, Belarus; Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; The Holy See, The Vatican; Helsinki, Finland; Milan, Italy (consulate); Muscat, Oman; Suva, Fiji; Bucharest, Romania; Lima, Peru and Chicago, USA (consulate).

International relations

The DIRCO aims to strengthen political, economic and social relations through structured bilateral agreements and high-level engagements to advance South Africa's national priorities, the African Agenda and South-South cooperation on an ongoing basis.

- **Africa** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in Africa, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 47 diplomatic missions in Africa. A better Africa continues to be the key foreign policy focus of South Africa.
- **Asia and Middle East** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in Asia and the Middle East, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 32 diplomatic missions in Asia and the Middle East.
- **Americas and Caribbean** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in the Americas and the Caribbean, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 16 diplomatic missions in the Americas and the Caribbean.
- **Europe** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in Europe, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 28 diplomatic missions in Europe.

African Union

The AU is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in Durban in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Africa Day

Africa Day is celebrated annually on 25 May within the African continent to mark the formation of the OAU on 25 May 1963 and the AU in 2002, as well as chart the progress made by the continent since then to advance democracy, peace, stability and socio-economic development.

The day is an opportunity to promote African unity, deepen regional integration and recommit Africa to a common destiny.

South Africa marked Africa Month 2021 under the theme: “Year for Arts, Culture and Heritage in the Year of Charlotte Maxeke”. The 2021 Africa Month programme, among other objectives, sought to promote regional integration by strengthening people-to-people contact and harmonise policies, and share skills and expertise.

International bodies

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

BRICS is an association of five major emerging countries, which together represent about 42% of the global population, 23% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 30% of the territory and 18% of the global trade.

South Africa’s membership of BRICS enables the country to employ additional and powerful tools in its fight to address the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality through increased trade, investment, tourism, capacity building, skills and technology transfers.

India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA)

The IBSA Dialogue Forum brings together three large pluralistic, multicultural and multiracial societies from three continents as a purely South-South grouping of like-minded countries committed to inclusive sustainable development, in pursuit of the well-being of their peoples and those of the developing world.

The principles, norms and values underpinning the IBSA Dialogue Forum are participatory democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and the strengthening of multilateralism.

The realisation of the trilateral alliance between IBSA stems from three commonalities between the three countries, namely: all three countries are vibrant democracies, they share common views on various global issues and are substantial emerging economies within their sub-regions.

UN General Assembly (UNGA)

Established in 1945 under the Charter of the UN, the UNGA occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.

Comprised of all 193 members of the UN, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. The UNGA meets from September to December each year.

UN Security Council (UNSC)

The UNSC has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 members, and each member has one vote. Under the Charter of the UN, all member states are obligated to comply with UNSC decisions.

The UNSC takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement.

In some cases, the UNSC can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorise the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. The year 2021 was the third year as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent member countries. Membership is diverse and includes both developed and developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the South Pacific.

Since rejoining the Commonwealth in 1994, South Africa has interacted closely with the work of the Commonwealth contributing politically, financially and in terms of capacity and expertise to the work of the organisation.

Non-Aligned Movement

The NAM, consisting of 120 members, is the largest political grouping of countries outside the UN, making it an important lobby group of developing countries in global affairs.

South Africa formally joined the movement in 1994 and has played a leading role in NAM deliberations and meetings ever since.

Group of Twenty

South Africa has been a permanent member of the G20 since its inception in 1999 following the Asian financial crises. The G20 was established to increase multilateral cooperation for the recovery of the global economy, to bring stability to the global financial system, to promote long-term sustainable growth and to strengthen global economic governance.

The G20 economies account for 85% of the global GDP, 80% of world trade and two-thirds of the world's population. South Africa also works together closely with the following international bodies and organisations to ensure that it benefits from trade, investment, industrialisation and innovation to address the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment, as espoused in the National Development Plan:

- World Trade Organisation.
- World Economic Forum.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- International Labour Organisation.
- World Intellectual Property Organisation.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

South Africa is one of the 194 member states that constitute the WHO. The country takes part in the annual World Health Assembly (WHA), which is the WHO's supreme decisionmaking body.

South Africa also participates in the WHO's annual Regional Committee for Africa, which reflects on the decisions taken at the WHA, particularly those relevant to the continent.

New Development Bank (NDB)

The NDB was established in 2014 to strengthen cooperation among the BRICS group of countries, and complements the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global development.