

**Input by Hon. Alvin Botes, 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 (DIRCO), Parliament, Cape Town, 11 July 2024**

**Honourable Deputy Speaker Lotriet,**

**Minister Lamola,**

**Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee,**

**Director General of DIRCO and Members of South African Foreign Service**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Karl Marx once wrote in 1835 that history bestows glory and greatness to those men and women who have ennobled themselves by working for the common good of their society.**

**As the 7<sup>th</sup> Executive Authority of DIRCO, we will ennoble ourselves to work for the common good of our society.**

**The deepening of our foreign policy priorities centred on four concentric circles should become more urgent and critical, encapsulating (i) Pan Africanism, (ii) Global South Solidarity, (iii) Cooperation with the Northern Hemisphere and (iv) Transformation of Global Governance institutions.**

**Honourable Deputy Speaker,**

**Over the past year, the Department has been hard at work to consolidate our relations with the countries from the group of Latin America and the Caribbean, GRULAC.**

**South Africa shares a special bond with Cuba as our strategic, historical and development partner in the Caribbean region, centred on shared values of freedom, solidarity, and progressive internationalism.**

**South Africa, unequivocally opposes the continuation of the USA economic blockade against Cuba and will continue to support the annual resolutions in the UN General Assembly on the “Necessity of Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Blockade against Cuba” and the removal of Cuba from the US State Department list of States sponsoring Terrorism.**

**Deputy Speaker,**

**South Africa shares a common history and cultural heritage with Brazil, who is our biggest trading partner and home to the second largest African Diaspora in the Americas region.**

**Brazil will host the 6<sup>th</sup> Region African Diaspora Conference in August 2024, which we will participate in.**

**Deputy Speaker,**

**The world has evolved from one characterised as being led by one hegemon and being subjected to unilateral conduct, to one of multipolarity, which ordinarily should imply**

**the deepening of multilateralism. We are living in an emerging pluriversal multipolar world. South Africa's doctrine of universality- the right to relate with as many countries in the world, irrespective of political or economic orientation, is a doctrine which we inherited from the forefather of our democracy, Nelson Mandela.**

**It is therefore imperative to continue to pursue the deepening of cooperation with the more industrialized North, particularly with members of the G7 in accordance with the principles of equality and universal respect for international law.**

**The USA strategy towards sub Saharan Africa identifies the region as critical to advancing the global priorities of the US. It is within this context that the USA remains our most important strategic partner in the northern hemisphere. It continues to be a leading source of development assistance through its Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).**

**Deputy Speaker,**

**Western Europe remains the largest market for exported goods and services from South Africa. In 2023 South Africa's total exports reached R1.8 trillion of which R468bn (25%) went to the countries in Western Europe.**

**Deputy Speaker,**

**The European Union (EU) remains a crucial Strategic Partner in addressing South Africa's national priorities. South Africa is the only African country, and one of ten countries globally, that has a strategic partnership with the EU.**

**South Africa is preparing to host the 8<sup>th</sup> South Africa-EU Summit, building on the successful 7<sup>th</sup> Summit held in November 2018 in Brussels.**

**Deputy Speaker,**

**South Africa remains seized with the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, through the Africa Peace Initiative.**

**Deputy Speaker,**

**Eastern Europe has played a key role in terms of youth development, particularly scholarship opportunities.**

**It goes without saying that our relations with the MENA REGION (Middle-East-North Africa), remains vital. We cannot hope to address the Israel-Palestinian question, and genocide in Palestine without co-operation from countries like Egypt, Qatar, UAE, Turkey and other major actors.**



**The Asia and Middle East region represents 54% of the global economy and South Africa's total trade with the region amounted to approximately R1.2 trillion last year.**

**South Africa has a comprehensive strategic bilateral partnership with China, premise on the One China Policy.**

**It is anticipated that the State Visit to China this year will provide President Ramaphosa with a strategic opportunity to build on the State Visit undertaken by President Xi Jinping during 2023 and in addition unlock further strategic political opportunities during FOCAC.**

**The South Asia region remains of critical importance to South Africa and presents opportunities to increase trade volumes, investment and tourism. The South Africa-India relationship is defined by the Strategic Partnership that exists between the countries and is anchored by a deep and shared history of friendship and solidarity. India is currently also one of South Africa's largest trading partners in Asia.**

## **Honorable Members**

**With Japan, the Republic of Korea and Australia, South Africa enjoys healthy positive trade balances which result in surplus gains for our exporters, as well as increased high-**

**profile investments in the automotive sectors resulting in more jobs and business growth. Japan is a substantial investor in the South African economy with investments of over R100 billion, creating around 200,000 local jobs.**

**Deputy President Mashatile visited the South East Asia Region (Singapore and Vietnam) in December 2023 to further strengthen bilateral relations with both countries. Our presence in the region has also been improved through entering a Sectoral Dialogue Partnership with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).**

**Honourable Members**

**South Africa enjoys cordial bilateral relations with the Middle East region, underpinned by traditional ties of solidarity and cooperation. The current genocide being perpetuated by the Israeli state against the Palestine people will continue to present significant challenges to the Middle East Peace Process. The Arab League and Gulf States has a unique responsibility to ensure the resolution of the self determination by the Palestine people.**

**We take exception to statements made by the SAJBD head Krengel who characterised South Africa's former DIRCO's Minister as 'antisemitic'. In addition, 'The Times of Israel's' Tim Flack sought to ridiculed South**

**Africa's stance of solidarity with the Palestine by stating that 'it turns out that the keffiyeh was merely an election prop'. These two gentlemen and their constituencies should full appreciate that South Africa's solidarity with the Palestine is embedded in our 1996 Constitution which the Founding Provisions define the South African Republic as a sovereign democratic state founded on the values of Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism, within and beyond our borders.**

**Several high-level engagements have provided a solid framework to expand bilateral cooperation such as President Ramaphosa's**

**State Visit to Qatar in November. Deputy President Mashatile participated in the inaugural Africa-Saudi Arabia Summit and paid a working visit to the UAE in May 2024.**

**South Africa has increased its frequency of engagement with countries from the Levant region and is in the process of expanding our legal frameworks of closer collaboration with countries like Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.**

**In Conclusion,**

**South Africa's foreign policy is Afro-centric and pan-African in outlook, pledging to advance the interests of the Continent on**

**international platforms where it has a presence.**

**Contributing to Africa's Pan Africanism will be a key feature in South Africa's foreign policy repository.**

**I thank.**