

SPEECH BY THE MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL, HONOURABLE S E LUCAS ON THE OCCASION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET VOTE,

Date: 22 July 2024

Time: 14h00

Venue: Parliament

**Speaker of the National Assembly
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly
House Chairpersons
Members of the National Assembly
Distinguished Guest
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Introduction

South Africa's foreign policy is an expression of the country's domestic public policy, which projects the democratic values of nation. These values are entrenched in the provisions of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which affirms the right of the South African society to live in human dignity, equality, democracy and freedom.

In this light, the South African Parliament's international engagement supports and reflects the values enshrined in the South African Constitution.

These values also find expression in the aspirations of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 strategy, the Southern African Development Community Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (SADC RISDP) and South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030.

Honourable Members, Parliament's Strategic Plan has over the years, placed prime importance on increasing its capacity to represent the interests of South Africa in the international arena.

The evolving geo-political landscape globally, has also enabled the South African Parliament to play a critical role, in repositioning and advancing national interests, on the global arena.

Through our work on the global arena, we have further sought to promote and facilitate the transformation of undemocratic governance structures and participate in rule-based systems, which seek to democratize multilateral institutions processes.

As we have done in the past, we must continue to focus on building strategic partnerships around mutual interests, while promoting internationalism and solidarity.

We must ensure that we place at the centre of our work, the interconnectedness of challenges amongst African countries specifically and developing nations, to find African solutions for African problems.

We must therefore place at the core of our work, the importance of Economic Diplomacy, as an important lever to advance inclusive economic growth amongst nations of the global South, while using inter-Parliamentary Diplomacy as a tool to advance engagement and partnership.

We must continue to provide leadership on matters that seek to entrench democratic values, social justice, the rule of law and fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, gender equality, women development and youth development, are equally important priorities, as we continue to engage on international platforms.

On the African Arena and Agenda, we must ensure continued strategic participation in the **Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) and The Pan African Parliament (PAP).**

We must also deepen participation in Inter-parliamentary multilateral relations processes, which includes:

South – South Cooperation and North – South Relations, as manifested by the South African Parliament`s engagements in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Furthermore, in the context of the IPU, we must ensure that we strategically prioritize the importance of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), as a critical instrument of coordination amongst the nations of the Global South.

ICJ Recent Ruling

Honourable Members, The ICJ's recent ruling that Israel's long-term occupation of Palestinian territory as "unlawful" and further declaring that it amounted to de facto annexation, is indeed an overwhelming victory for the people of Palestine. It also affirms South Africa's position on this matter, which we have consistently raised on the IPU Assembly platforms.

Honourable Members, Further engagements on international fora platforms, includes our participation in:

- **The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).**

- **The Africa, Caribbean, Pacific - European Union (ACP-EU), as well as parliamentary Bilateral Relations.**

As we deepen Parliamentary Diplomacy and Multilateralism in the Seventh Parliament, we must continue to do so, guided by the imperative to advance South Africa's national interests.

Hosting of the BRICS PF

Honourable Speaker, the hosting of the 9th BRICS Parliamentary Forum saw the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate efforts aimed at developing and strengthening the inter-parliamentary relations of BRICS Member States, concerning issues of common interest, among other things.

Parliamentary Diplomacy Focus Groups

In building on the progress that we have made in the past, it would be important to ensure that we revive our Parliamentary Diplomacy Focus Groups, to ensure that we consistently assess the efficacy and impact of our engagements, to ensure sustained and strategic alignment to South Africa's interests on the global arena.

Conclusion

The future of South Africa's effective parliamentary diplomacy will require Parliament to be more proactive in advancing South Africa's national foreign policy objectives, at the bilateral and multilateral parliamentary forums of engagement.

This will require structured processes and procedures to ensure that Parliament's international engagements are also processed in a streamlined way, as is done with all domestic engagements.

This would also assist Parliament in ensuring that resolutions emanating from international meetings are implemented in an organised manner.