



**INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

**OFFICIAL GUIDE TO
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International Relations

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, receive foreign heads of mission, conduct state-to-state relations, and 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.

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 is mandated to work for the realisation of South Africa's foreign policy objectives by:

- coordinating and aligning South Africa's international relations;
- monitoring international developments;
- 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.

Over the medium-term period, the department planned to continue focusing on advancing the African Agenda, participating in global forums, and enhancing its infrastructure portfolio in foreign missions. The department operates mainly through the 116 diplomatic missions in 102 countries in which South Africa has representation.

Advancing the African Agenda

In its efforts to advance peace and security and prevent conflict in Africa, the DIRCO planned to continue playing an active role in the structures and processes of the African Union (AU). Accordingly, South Africa will continue to advance the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the AU's Agenda 2063.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a major vehicle for South Africa's pursuit of regional development and integration. As such, the department planned to produce four reports per year on the outcomes of South-South engagements reflecting South Africa's participation and interests, such as enhancing trade relations and reducing conflict in Southern Africa.

As a member of the SADC, South Africa will continue to ensure that its interests and those of other members are advanced.

Participating global forums

South Africa advances its interests at the global level through its membership of and participation in United Nations (UN) programmes and forums. Accordingly, over the medium term, South Africa planned to continue promoting and advancing its foreign and domestic policy imperatives, which include advancing the African Agenda on peace and security, human rights, and economic and social development, as well as supporting the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Managing infrastructure projects and properties

In an effort to strengthen its property portfolio over the medium-term period, the department planned to purchase properties for office and residential purposes to cut down on rental costs, and repurpose underused state-owned properties in its global portfolio. Repurposing involves converting offices or large official residences into staff quarters.

By mid-2023, plans were in place to build on state-owned vacant land in New Delhi, India, and Luanda, Angola, over the medium-term period, and refurbish, renovate and maintain 24 existing properties across the world in accordance with the outcomes of conditional assessments to preserve and prolong the department's property portfolio.

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 by focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 47 diplomatic missions in Africa.
- **Asia and Middle East** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual countries in Asia and the Middle East, with a focus on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 30 diplomatic missions in Asia and the Middle East.
- **Americas and Caribbean** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual countries in the Americas

and the Caribbean, particularly through increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 13 diplomatic missions in the Americas and the Caribbean.

- **Europe** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual countries in Europe, focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has representation in 23 diplomatic missions in Europe.

Entity:

African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF)

The ARF was established in terms of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund Act of 2000 to enhance cooperation between South Africa and other countries, particularly African ones; promote democracy and good governance; prevent and resolve conflict; encourage socio-economic development and integration; provide humanitarian assistance, and develop human resources.

Over the medium-term period, the entity planned to continue focusing on supporting projects that will enhance African trade, goods exchange, economic development and integration.

Regional body:

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 July 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), 1963-1999).

In May 1963, 32 Heads of independent African States met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to sign the charter creating Africa's first post-independence continental institution, the OAU.

The OAU was the manifestation of the pan-African vision for an Africa that was united, free and in control of its own destiny and this was solemnised in the OAU Charter in which the founding fathers recognised that freedom, equality, justice and dignity were essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples.

The AU is guided by its vision of "An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena."

International bodies:**Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS)**

The BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) group was renamed as BRICS after South Africa was accepted as a full member at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York in September 2010. Accordingly, South Africa attended the 3rd BRICS Summit in Sanya, China on 14 April 2011.

Over a period of time, BRICS countries have come together to deliberate on important issues under the three pillars of political and security, economic and financial and cultural and people to people exchanges. BRICS serves as a champion of the needs and concerns of the peoples of the Global South, which include the need for beneficial economic growth, sustainable development and reform of multilateral systems.

South Africa assumed the Chair of BRICS on 1 January 2023 under the theme: "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism" and the Russian Federation's term was to start on 1 January 2024.

The DIRCO hosted the Sixth BRICS Sherpas Meeting from 30 November to 3 December 2023 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of the meeting was to reflect on South Africa's tenure as Chair of BRICS for the year 2023 and to prepare for a handover to the next Chair, the Russian Federation.

South Africa hosted the XV BRICS Summit in Johannesburg from 22 to 24 August 2023. As part of its expansion process, BRICS invited the Argentine Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to become full members of BRICS. The membership took effect from 1 January 2024.

India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA)

IBSA is a unique forum which brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents, facing similar challenges. All three countries are developing, pluralistic, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious nations.

The grouping was formalised and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia on 6 June 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration. India is current IBSA Chair.

Brazil was IBSA Chair from 2 March 2023 and it aimed to strengthen IBSA in its three pillars: political coordination, trilateral cooperation and cooperation with other developing countries, through the IBSA Fund.

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 (NAM)

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 (G20)

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.

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 decision-making 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. WHO works with all Member States to support them to achieve the highest standard of health for all people.

New Development Bank (NDB)

The NDB, formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, 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.

The NDB finances projects and innovates tailored solutions to help build a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future for the planet. In line with its General Strategy, the NDB prioritises financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects that contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change.