



SOUTH AFRICA YEARBOOK 2023/24

International Relations

International Relations

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the President is ultimately responsible for the country's foreign policy and international relations. 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 must be 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.

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 of International Relations and Cooperation's (DIRCO) overall mandate, which is codified in the Foreign Service Act, 2019 (Act 26 of 2019), is to work for the realisation of South Africa's foreign policy objectives. This is achieved by:

- coordinating and aligning South Africa's international relations abroad;
- monitoring developments in the international environment;
- communicating government's policy positions;
- developing and advising government on policy options to create mechanisms and avenues for achieving objectives;
- protecting South Africa's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- promoting South African trade and tourism;
- 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 National Development Plan (NDP) is the overarching apex policy framework that guides the work of government. In the area of international relations, the NDP states that in order for South Africa to achieve its national goals of eradicating poverty, lowering inequality,

creating jobs and making the transition to a resilient carbon economy, foreign relations must be driven by the country's domestic economic, political and social demands, as well as regional, continental and global obligations. In pursuance of this injunction, the DIRCO has translated the NDP goals into a strategic programme that seeks to:

- sustain political, economic and social relations;
- strengthen political and economic integration and development of the Southern African Development Community (SADC);
- consolidate the African Agenda;
- strengthen and consolidate South-South relations;
- leverage relations with the North in the advancement of national and continental priorities and the agenda of the South; and
- advocate for the reform and strengthening of the global system of governance.

South Africa's international diplomatic footprint consists of diplomatic missions in 115 countries in which the country has representation, and through the accreditation of more than 160 countries and international organisations resident in South Africa. The country's diplomatic and consular missions implement its foreign policy to enhance its international profile and serve as strategic mechanisms for the achievement of national interest.

In addition, training and policy analysis remain of strategic importance for the execution of the DIRCO's mandate. Chapter 7 of the NDP details a vision for facilitating South Africa's broad-based socio-economic development and fostering strong international ties. This articulation is supported by Priority 7 (a better Africa and world) of government's 2019 – 2024 Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF).

South Africa will continue supporting peace efforts and the entrenchment of human rights on the globe. The country is a current member (2023 – 2025) of the Human Rights Council and intends to renew its candidature. South Africa will use its presence in the council to promote the work of the council and pursue its objectives and priorities in the context of a human rights agenda.

That agenda, informed as it is by the core values and principles enshrined in the Constitution including the Bill of Rights, which protects and preserves the rights of all people in the country, affirming the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom, will support South Africa's established and new global solidarity efforts.

It will continue its support for a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. South Africa continues with all efforts for peace and freedom for the people of Palestine and Western Sahara, and in solidarity with the blockaded people of Cuba.

Advancing the African Agenda

In its efforts to advance peace and security and prevent conflict in Africa, the department will continue playing an active role in the structures and processes of the African Union (AU). Accordingly, South Africa will continue advancing the implementation of the African

Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the AU's Agenda 2063. To support these activities, the department anticipates spending R952,2 million over the medium-term on AU membership fees. This expenditure is in the Membership Contribution subprogramme within the International Transfers programme.

The SADC is a major vehicle for South Africa's pursuit of regional development and integration. As such, the department intends 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. An amount of R477,2 million over the MTEF period is set aside in the Membership Contribution subprogramme in the International Transfers programme for South Africa's membership contributions to the SADC.

Participation in 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 will continue to promote and advance 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.

The department plans to spend R624,4 million over the next three years on membership fees. This expenditure is in the Membership Contribution subprogramme in the International Transfers programme.

Managing infrastructure projects and properties

In an effort to strengthen its property portfolio over the MTEF period, the department plans to purchase properties for office and residential purposes to cut down on rental costs and re-purpose underused state-owned properties in its global portfolio. Re-purposing involves converting offices or large official residences into staff quarters.

Plans are in place to build on state-owned vacant land in New Delhi, India and Luanda, Angola, over the MTEF 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.

To carry out these activities, R633,3 million over the medium-term is allocated in the Foreign Fixed Asset Management subprogramme in the Administration programme.

Peace and security

As a member of the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) from April 2022 to March 2024, South Africa has, during the 2023/24 financial year, consistently advocated for implementation of the council's decisions without fear or favour. South Africa has ensured that the AUPSC delivered on its mandate in line with the AU Constitutive Act and Protocol relating to the establishment of the AUPSC. For example, ensuring that countries involved in unconstitutional changes of government were suspended with immediate effect in line with the AU normative frameworks.

South Africa played a key role in contributing towards peace and stability on the continent by participating in the 11th Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes Region (May 2023), the AU Ad hoc Committee on South Sudan (C5) and the inaugural edition of the Lomé Peace and Security Forum of October 2023.

In addition, South Africa deployed and maintained troop presence in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province and the eastern DRC. All these efforts were aimed at achieving the Agenda 2063 flagship project of "Silencing the guns in Africa by 2030". South Africa depoloyed the largest number of troops in Mozambique under the auspices of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM).

In addition, more than 1 000 troops were deployed in the DRC under MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade. South Africa further deployed more troops under the auspices of the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) in December 2023. All these efforts were aimed at improving peace and stability on the continent.

Development issues on the continent

On continental development issues, the AU Development Agency, also known as AUDA-NEPAD, is the implementing agent for "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want". With the recent adoption of the Second 10-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) by African Heads of State and Government at the AU Summit in February 2024, the programme activities of AUDA-NEPAD become even more crucial for continental economic growth.

As the host country to AUDA-NEPAD, South Africa played a continental leadership role in shaping active implementation of Agenda 2063 across Africa, inclusive of addressing regional needs through the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and national needs through the NDP. Implementation of Agenda 2063 will also feed into meeting the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

South Africa served a two-year term (2023 – 2025) as the 2nd Vice Chair of the AUDA-NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) and the AUDA-NEPAD Steering Committee. Both bodies are responsible for overseeing the strategic and political

direction of AUDA-NEPAD programmes and projects in Africa in support of Agenda 2063. In February 2024, South Africa successfully participated in the 41st Summit of the AUDA-NEPAD HSGOC.

African Peer Review Mechanism

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a specialised agency of the AU established in 2003. The APRM is considered a tool for sharing experiences, reinforcing best practices, identifying deficiencies and assessing capacity-building needs to foster policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration.

In December 2023, South Africa hosted the 20th anniversary celebrations of the APRM in Sandton. During this meeting, the launch of South Africa's 2nd Generation Country Review Report took place, thereby further highlighting the country's commitment to the essence of good governance in Africa. In February 2024, South Africa successfully participated in the 33rd Summit of the APRM Forum of Heads of State and Government.

During the period under review, South Africa continues to serve as one of the 15 member states of the High Committee in charge of the Agenda for the AU Decade for African Roots and Diaspora, representing the Southern Africa Region, alongside Angola and Namibia. South Africa's engagement within the High Committee provides an opportunity to re-focus and inject a new impetus into the diaspora's thematic issue at a strategic level.

South Africa actively participates and contributes to advancing the agenda towards the realisation of the objectives and vision of the Decade of African Roots and Diasporas. In this context, the country successfully hosted the Southern Africa Regional Preparatory Conference to the 9th Pan-African Congress from 4 to 5 December 2023, under the theme: "Pan-Africanism, Science, Knowledge and Technology". The conference adopted a declaration that will serve as input to the 9th Pan-African Congress to be held in Lomé, Togo in 2024.

In discharging its obligations as the host country to the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), South Africa successfully facilitated the hosting of the requisite sessions of the PAP during the 2023/24 financial year, which saw the successful election of the Bureau of the PAP to direct the operations of the organ.

AU Champion for Pandemic Preparedness, Prevention and Response (PPPR).

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government at its 37th Session held in February 2024, successfully realigned President Cyril Ramaphosa's title to now serve as the AU Champion for Pandemic Preparedness, Prevention and Response (PPPR). This is in recognition

of the key role that South Africa played in terms of its COVID-19 response within the continent, including local vaccine manufacturing.

Agenda 2063

South Africa actively participated and influenced the development of the STYIP of Agenda 2063, launched during the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU in February 2024. The launch of the STYIP marks the ten-year anniversary of Agenda 2063 and will infuse momentum towards acceleration of the implementation of Agenda 2063 and its flagship programmes.

The African Continental Free Trade Area

South Africa successfully hosted the AfCFTA Business Forum from 17 to 18 April 2023, which brought together governments, labour and the private sector to explore opportunities and benefits that the AfCFTA offers and ways of collaboration in addressing the challenges confronting the AfCFTA.

South Africa demonstrated its commitment towards the full and effective implementation of the AfCFTA by launching the first shipment under the AfCFTA regime on 31 January 2024, thereby joining nine other countries already trading under the AfCFTA. It must be underscored that the implementation of the AfCFTA will go a long way in increasing intra-Africa trade and the enhancement of industrialisation and regional value chains.

Furthermore, the AU Assembly re-appointed the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA, Mr Wamkele Mene, for another four years as a demonstration of his sterling leadership of the AfCFTA Secretariat. South Africa worked tirelessly within the region and beyond to ensure that Mr Mene's tenure was extended.

South Africa contributed to strengthening the AU and its organs through its assessed contribution of more than R300 million towards the AU regular budget, as well as towards the Peace Fund endowment. The AU budget is critical to keeping the organisation afloat and to ensure that it executes its mandate of the maintenance of peace and security, deepening socio-economic growth and development in Africa, and the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law throughout the continent.

South-South cooperation and BRICS

Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) is a partnership of emerging economies and developing countries that wish to play a role in world affairs, ensuring benefit to the Global South. South Africa was the Chair of BRICS for 2023 and its theme was, "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism".

BRICS has attracted great interest from a number of countries, and our Sherpas are engaged in conceptualising how it can respond to

such interest. It is vital to ensure that what is eventually agreed on, strengthens multilateralism, the UN and our Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The growing interest in BRICS indicates that many countries are searching for a multipolar forum that is modern, inclusive and oriented towards the good of all.

One of the ways in which a context of global collaboration could be advanced is through establishing influential formations that will work with the UN to advance an inclusive, forward-looking international development agenda. It is possible for BRICS to play such a transformative role, and the hope is that BRICS leaders can assume a stronger role in bringing peace to Ukraine and Russia. We welcome the efforts of the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s President, Mr Xi Jinping and those promised by Brazil's President, Mr Lula da Silva.

South Africa is encouraged by the growth and resilience of BRICS's New Development Bank (NDB). The bank has assisted members to secure funding to address infrastructure needs, support the unblocking of regional value chains and localisation of production capacity. South Africa's partnership with BRICS has resulted in tangible benefits for the country in a wide range of sectors. Total trade with BRICS countries has increased from R487-billion in 2017 to R702-billion in 2021. The country has received funding of over \$US5-billion from the NDB for key infrastructure projects in renewable energy, water and other sectors. The country's priorities for BRICS in 2023 were to: develop a partnership towards an equitable, just transition; transform education and skills development for the future; unlock opportunities through the AfCFTA; strengthen post-pandemic economic recovery; and strengthen multilateralism.

BRICS countries support a strong multilateral system and reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Legislation

The DIRCO derives its mandate from the following legislation:

- Foreign States Immunities Act, 1981 (Act 87 of 1981), which regulates the extent of the immunity of foreign states from the jurisdiction of the South African courts and provides for matters connected therewith;
- Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges Act, 2001 (Act 37 of 2001), which provides for the immunities and privileges of diplomatic missions and consular posts and their members, Heads of State, special envoys and certain representatives of the UN and its specialised agencies, and other international organisations and certain people;
- African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF) Act, 2001 (Act 51 of 2000), which establishes cooperation between South Africa and other countries, in particular African countries, through the promotion of democracy, good governance, the prevention and resolution of conflict, socio-economic development and integration, humanitarian assistance and human resource development; and

- International agreements (multilateral and bilateral): International agreements concluded by South Africa in terms of sections 231 (2) and 231 (3) of the Constitution.

Entity

African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund

The African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF) was established in terms of the ARF 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 next three years, the entity will continue to focus on supporting projects that will enhance African trade, goods exchange, economic development and integration. These include constructing a modular school in Western Sahara, deploying election observer missions in the SADC region, refurbishing schools in Mozambique, and providing humanitarian help in Malawi, Syria and Turkey.

Total expenditure is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 5.1%, from R49.9 million in 2023/24 to R58 million in 2026/27. The entity is set to derive 98.4 per cent (R163.6 million) of its revenue over the period ahead through transfers from the department, increasing at an average annual rate of 4.5%, from R49.9 million in 2023/24 to 57 million in 2026/27. The remainder is set to be generated through interest income.

Programmes

International Cooperation

The purpose of the programme is to participate in initiatives of international organisations and institutions in line with South Africa's national values and foreign policy objectives.

Subprogrammes within the International Cooperation programme include the:

- Global System of Governance—provides for multilateralism and an international order based on rules. This entails participating in and playing an active role in all forums of the UN system and its specialised agencies, and funding programmes that promote the principles of multilateral activity;
- Continental Cooperation—provides for the enhancement of the African Agenda and sustainable development;
- South-South Cooperation—provides for partnerships with countries of the South in advancing South Africa's development needs and the needs of the African Agenda; and creates political, economic and social convergence for the fight against poverty, underdevelopment and the marginalisation of the South; and
- North-South Dialogue—provides for South Africa's bilateral and

multilateral engagements to consolidate and strengthen relations with organisations of the North to advance and support national priorities, the African Agenda and the developmental agenda of the South.

Public Diplomacy and Protocol Services

The purpose of the programme is to communicate South Africa's role and position in international relations to domestic and international arenas and provide state protocol services. It ensures a better understanding of South Africa's foreign policy by providing ongoing strategic public diplomacy direction and state protocol services nationally and internationally.

Its subprogrammes include:

- Public Diplomacy—promotes a positive projection of South Africa's image; communicates foreign policy positions to domestic and foreign audiences; and markets and brands South Africa by using public diplomacy platforms, strategies, products and services; and
- Protocol Services—facilitates incoming and outgoing high-level visits and ceremonial events; coordinates and regulates engagements with the local diplomatic community; provides protocol advice and support to the various spheres of government; facilitates the hosting of international conferences in South Africa; and manages the state protocol lounges and guesthouses.

International transfers

The objective of international transfers is to promote multilateral activities that enhance South Africa's economic and diplomatic relations on the continent and with the world by providing for:

- South Africa's annual membership fee contributions to international organisations such as the UN, the AU and SADC.
- annual transfers to recapitalise the ARF as a contribution to its operations.

Enhancing economic diplomacy

In anticipation of growth in the African and Asian regions, South Africa took a conscious decision to expand and strengthen its diplomatic missions in the two regions. As South Africa consolidated its political relations on the continent by expanding its diplomatic footprint through 47 embassies, high commissions and consulates general, the country has also rapidly advanced its economic relations in Africa through the expansion of its trade volumes, investment portfolio and economic relations across the length and breadth of the continent.

This has resulted in Africa becoming a prime destination of South African-originated goods and services, especially value-added goods, which assists in contributing to the R198-billion trade surplus, creating much needed jobs and opportunities in the manufacturing, retail, fast-moving consumer goods, financial services and transport/logistics sectors. It is also worth noting that the SADC accounts for

approximately 80% of South Africa's total trade with the continent. With regard to Asia and the Middle East, South Africa's trade and investment in these regions have grown considerably and continue to do so.

In 1994, trade with Asia and the Middle East combined was approximately R45-billion and has increased to approximately R760-billion for Asia and R122-billion with the Middle East. There is a direct correlation between the growth of South Africa's diplomatic missions and the phenomenal expansion of its trade and investment relations on both the African continent, Asia and the Middle East. The same applies to the Americas and Europe.

As South Africa explores new markets, it continues to maintain close economic ties with the industrialised economies of the North, which provide among others, preferential market access to some of South Africa's exports. Enhancing the economic and political dialogue is an important part of South Africa's economic diplomacy strategy, as they remain a primary source of foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance flows into South Africa.

The DIRCO also uses international summits such as the BRICS, Group of Twenty (G20), the SADC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as well as state visits and bilateral consultation mechanisms to promote the trade and investment case for South Africa. Government created a significant footprint in Asian markets as part of efforts to return the country to pre-COVID-19 economic growth. In 2021, government intended to identify new opportunities and expand those that have benefit for South Africa.

In order to intensify efforts to stimulate growth, government is working tirelessly to raise the country's global visibility by promoting South Africa as the best place to do business, visit, work, study and to live. Government is also responding to new opportunities and harnessing the collective capabilities of DIRCO's resources both at home and abroad.

Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control

A primary goal of South Africa's policy on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control includes reinforcing and promoting the country as a responsible producer, possessor and trader of defence-related products and advanced technologies. In this regard, the DIRCO continues to promote the benefits that disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control hold for international peace and security.

As a member of the Supplier's Regimes and of the Africa Group and the NAM, the importance of non-proliferation is promoted, considering that export controls should not become the means whereby developing countries are denied access to advanced technologies required for their development.

In seeking solutions to intractable disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control challenges in the international arena, a bridge-building approach has been followed to seek realistic and achievable

solutions. While dealing with challenging issues from a pragmatic perspective, due recognition has been given to the role that civil society can play in partnership with the governments of the world, especially in the context of seeking solutions to the divergent views that often characterise international negotiations.

South Africa is a signatory of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to the UN in New York. The country signed the treaty at a ceremony held on the margins of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). It aims to contribute towards achieving the objective set out in the very first resolution adopted by UNGA in 1946 to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction.

The treaty complements other international instruments by contributing towards fulfilling the nuclear disarmament obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the various nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties, such as the Pelindaba Treaty that already banned nuclear weapons in Africa. South Africa believes that efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons should be matched by a concurrent effort to eliminate all nuclear weapons in a verifiable and irreversible manner.

The TPNW does not spell out all the details of such a process, but rather allows for further negotiations on these arrangements to be agreed upon when states possessing or hosting nuclear weapons are ready to accede to it. While the doors into this treaty have always been open, some chose to abdicate leadership and not participate in it.

Global governance and continental agenda

South Africa's foreign policy is formulated and executed in a constantly evolving global environment, therefore it requires frequent recalibration through comprehensive reviews of various foreign policy levers, tools and instruments to remain relevant and in line with the department's mandate.

Global governance

South Africa participates in a rules-based multilateral system to achieve global political and socio-economic stability and security. Multilateralism, and by implication, the commitment to an international law, rules-based, just and equitable international order, remains a focal point of South Africa's foreign policy. Consequently, South Africa will continue engaging the multilateral system, particularly the UN, through its agencies, funds, programmes and processes to advance its foreign policy priorities.

These engagements consider that the multilateral system still does not fully reflect global political and economic realities and needs reform. A key priority for South Africa is to accelerate the reform of the UNSC, revitalise the UNGA and to advance the reform of the broader global governance architecture with a view to improve its representivity and focus its responsiveness to the needs of, and challenges faced

by developing states. The current unpredictable global environment poses a number of risks to the UN and the global governance system, particularly as it relates to, among others, the dynamics within the UNSC on issues of peace and security (including the situation in the Middle East), promotion and protection of human rights, funding for multilateral processes and honouring commitments to enable national implementation of multilateral decisions such as the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which for the first time brings all nations to a common cause of undertaking ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so.

Ensuring sustainable development in the current global environment will require concerted engagement in the UN system and other multilateral structures, such as the G20, in promoting access to vaccines, post-COVID-19 economic recovery, debt sustainability and liquidity, economic growth and the improvement of social well-being and infrastructure through increased trade and investment as well as the fair and equitable movement of goods and services. This will include addressing systemic issues to enhance the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development.

The follow-up and review to commitments made in the International Financing for Development conferences, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, seeks to mobilise much-needed resources for the implementation of the SDGs.

Furthermore, in the wake of numerous terror attacks across the world, countering international terrorism remains a priority on the agenda of the UN, particularly regarding the abuse of cyber platforms for propaganda, recruitment and planning of attacks, radicalising the youth and inciting extremism leading to terrorist attacks. Development, human rights, security and international law are promoted through international forums such as the UN and its agencies.

United Nations

The UN occupies the central and indispensable role within the global system of governance. South Africa was one of the 51 founding members of the UN in 1945. Since then, UN membership has grown to 193 states. After being suspended in 1974 owing to international opposition to the policy of apartheid, South Africa was re-admitted to the UN in 1994, following its transition to democracy.

As a UN member state, South Africa has demonstrated its commitment to multilateralism and the central role of the UN in the system of global governance. South Africa has consistently proposed steps towards a stronger and more effective UN, including enhancing its role within the limitations of the charter in the maintenance of international peace and security, promotion of human rights and the emphasis on sustainable development. In addition, South Africa has been actively involved in the reform processes of the UN, especially

the UNSC. After 75 years in existence, the UN has made strides in terms of reforms; however, the reform of the UNSC still remains elusive. South Africa has called for urgent and comprehensive reform of the UNSC, and continues to participate in processes to revitalise the UNGA by ensuring that it fully dispenses with its role as envisioned in the United Nations Charter.

President Ramaphosa led the South African delegation to the UNGA General Debate and the 78th Session of the High-Level Week (UNGA78), which took place in New York from 18 to 26 September 2023. The theme of the session, chosen by the President of the General Assembly, Mr Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago, was “Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its sustainable development towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all”.

South Africa’s speech delivered at the UNGA78, and its overall participation in key high-level meetings and side events, provided an opportunity to outline the country’s foreign policy priorities and to reflect on challenges facing states in the international system.

Based on current geopolitical challenges, President Ramaphosa reiterated South Africa’s commitment to promoting multilateralism, the peaceful settlement of conflict and the necessity for “developed countries to support the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially relating to the need to focus on the means of implementation such as financing for development.”

UN Security Council

South Africa concluded its non-permanent membership of the UNSC in December 2020, after serving for two years. This was South Africa’s third term on the UNSC. Its term was defined by the theme: “Continuing the Legacy: working for a just and peaceful world”, drawing on the legacy of former President Nelson Mandela following the centenary of his birth as well as the legacy of South Africa’s two previous terms on the council. Going into the council, South Africa’s priorities were on refining advances made in its previous terms on the council and focussed on the implementation thereof, including UN-AU cooperation, the Women Peace and Security, and Youth Peace and Security agendas, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

South Africa’s last year in the council coincided with its Chairship of the AU. This presented the country with a unique opportunity to advance the African Agenda in both institutions and harmonise its priorities of promoting UNSC decisions in support of the AU initiative of silencing the guns across Africa. During its time on the UNSC, South Africa continued to promote a multilateral approach to addressing issues relating to international peace and security in order to ensure global sustainable peace.

The importance of a proactive approach to the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in the form of drawing greater attention to preventative diplomacy mechanisms, as well as

post-conflict reconstruction and development, underpinned much of South Africa’s engagement on the council.

Furthermore, South Africa strived for consensus and unity of the UNSC in its attempts to play the role of a bridge-builder and to improve proactive actions on issues on the agenda of the council and thus the integrity of the UNSC. South Africa pursued collaboration with all council members and thus continued to identify opportunities for cooperation with like-minded countries. In this regard, as an elected member, the country forged close links with the other two African countries serving on the council, the so-called A3.

South Africa also worked with other developing countries that are part of the NAM and with other elected ten members, as well as like-minded countries on issues of mutual interest. In terms of continental issues on the agenda of the UNSC, South Africa advanced the approach of the AU in addressing the African conflicts on the council’s agenda. South Africa continued to advance the partnership between the UN and the AU in the prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes, continuing the legacy of its first two terms on the UNSC. For South Africa, this cooperation is strategic for promoting the principles of comparative advantage, complementarity, subsidiarity and burden-sharing.

South Africa’s commitment to an international rules-based order based on international law is exemplified by its close collaboration with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, established by UNSC Resolution 1966 of 22 December 2010, to carry out a number of essential residual functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia following their closure. Information gained through collaborative efforts between the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) and South Africa, led to the arrest of a fugitive who had been indicted for crimes committed during the Rwandan genocide.

International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the UN. South Africa has been consistently active in the work of the ICJ, which has grown markedly in the last year. In 2023, DIRCO successfully led the campaign for the election of the first South African to be elected to the ICJ, Judge Dire Tladi.

South Africa has additionally been active in providing written and oral submissions in advisory opinions before the ICJ, notably the advisory opinion on Palestine and Climate Change.

Among the cases before the ICJ drawing considerable international attention is one that was instituted by South Africa against Israel in December 2023, namely the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel). DIRCO’s active involvement in the work of the ICJ reflects South Africa’s commitment to international law and justice,

protecting human rights, advancing peace and security, multilateralism and a rules-based international order based on international law. It is a clear example of the implementation of Chapter 7 of the NDP, which is positioning South Africa in the world.

Sustainable development

During the reporting period, the DIRCO engaged with multilateral international organisations, of which South Africa is a member state on sustainable development, with the objective to promote integrated implementation of the NDP, the UN 2030 Agenda, the AU’s Agenda 2063 and the SADC revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP).

South Africa participates in the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the five-yearly review held under the auspices of the UNGA. The policy approach is to advance all three pillars of sustainable development—economic, social and environmental and to accord priority to all 17 SDGs. The DIRCO supports the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, as the lead department, on South Africa’s multilateral engagement on climate change, environmental conservation, safe and sound management of chemicals and terrestrial pollution, as well as marine and Antarctic issues in relevant forums under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

The objective is to promote the national interests and interests of Africa and other developing countries, and to ensure improved implementation and multilateral governance in these areas. This includes contributing to negotiations, providing foreign policy advice and supporting line function departments, making policy proposals to principals and facilitating South Africa’s relations with negotiating and development partners within relevant multilateral processes and bodies.

In partnership with lead departments, which are the departments of Communications and Digital Technologies, Science and Innovation (DSI) and Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic), the DIRCO supports matters related to civil aviation, maritime transport, science, technology and innovation from a socio-economic perspective at a multilateral level. Key international engagements are within the International Civil Aviation Organisation, International Maritime Organisation, International Telecommunication Union, Universal Postal Union, the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer and the Internet Governance Forum. These engagements bolster South Africa’s influence in this arena to support the country’s economic and social growth to increase employment, gender and youth empowerment.

UN Economic and Social Council

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is a premier organ of the UN responsible for economic and social development matters of the world. South Africa regards sustainable development as a collective opportunity and responsibility that can be achieved through multilateral cooperation and will continue its active role in the ECOSOC-mandated processes to address the follow-up and review of financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all of which are crucial to the realisation of the SDGs.

South Africa further actively participates in the functional commissions of the ECOSOC, such as the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women.

UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

South Africa joined the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) on 12 December 1994 and is an active participant in key UNESCO governance structures such as the General Conference and the World Heritage Committee. The country currently serves as a member of the organisation's Executive Board for the term 2021 – 2025.

Through its participation in UNESCO meetings and conferences, including those of the World Heritage Committee (WHC), South Africa utilises UNESCO to advance its socio-economic development and to contribute towards building peace through international cooperation in the fields of education, science (human, natural and social), culture, communication and information.

South Africa also contributes to the organisation's programme of work and budget allocations and ensures that Africa and gender equality remain the key priorities for UNESCO. South Africa acceded to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (December 2003) and the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (May 2015). Since South Africa ratified the World Heritage Convention on 10 July 1997, UNESCO has inscribed several sites in the country as world heritage sites, namely the:

- Fossil Hominid Sites of South Africa (1999);
- Robben Island Museum (1999);
- iSimangaliso Wetland Park (1999);
- Maloti-Drakensberg Park (2000);
- Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (2003);
- Cape Floral Region Protected Areas (2004);
- Vredefort Dome (2005);
- Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape (2007);
- Khomani Cultural Landscape (2017);
- Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains (2018);

- Human Rights, Liberation and Reconciliation: Nelson Mandela Legacy Sites (2024); and
- The Emergence of Modern Human Behaviour: The Pleistocene Occupation Sites of South Africa (2024)

World Health Organisation

South Africa is one of the 194 member states that constitute the World Health Organisation (WHO). The country takes part in the annual World Health Assembly (WHA), which is the WHO's supreme decision-making body, as well as in its executive board meetings. South Africa also participates in the WHO's Regional Committee for Africa, which convenes annually after the WHA to reflect on decisions taken at the assembly (particularly those relevant to the continent) and plan for the following year's WHA.

Through its participation in these structures, South Africa contributes to setting international norms and standards on key issues regarding global and public health, such as:

- the implementation of international health regulations;
- addressing antimicrobial resistance;
- the fight against HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria;
- building resilient healthcare systems in developing states;
- ensuring access to medicines;
- achieving Universal Health Coverage (National Health Insurance in South Africa); and
- contributing to economic growth through health employment.

International Renewable Energy Agency

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is an intergovernmental organisation mandated to facilitate cooperation, advance knowledge and promote the adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy. The agency was established in 2009, with South Africa as a founding member. Since its inception, the organisation has become the leading actor in facilitating international energy cooperation within the context of driving the global energy transition towards the increased employment of renewable energy.

The NDP identifies energy as a catalyst for economic growth and development and these can be realised through adequate investment in energy infrastructure. South Africa has maintained proactive steps in transitioning to a low-carbon economy and participation in the IRENA meetings is integral to this transition.

Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development Centre

The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) serves as a catalyst to generate discussions on the global economy, the international financial architecture, financial regulatory reform and global economic governance, with the aim of creating a strong

platform for influencing global economic policy. Although South Africa is not a member of the OECD, it is one of five countries that have "Key Partner" status with the OECD alongside Brazil, China, Indonesia and India.

Engagement with the OECD has the potential to relate directly to three overarching development objectives, ensuring that inclusive economic growth is a critical condition for addressing South Africa's triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality; sustaining a skilled and capable workforce in order to support the delivery of the NDP targets and advancing the African Agenda.

South Africa's relationship with the OECD is governed by the South Africa-OECD Engagement Framework (2017 – 2021), approved in 2017. In 2020, both parties concluded negotiations for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Cooperative Activities which sets out a Joint Work Programme for collaboration over a period of five years in:

- inclusive growth and competitiveness;
- the development of small, micro and medium enterprises;
- trade investment;
- skills development and a capable workforce; and
- stronger institutions, fiscal matters and good governance. The MoU was expected to be signed in 2022.

South Africa participates in the following OECD committees:

- Working Party on Private Pensions,
- Regional Development Policy Committee,
- Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions,
- Mutual Acceptance of Data,
- Base Erosion and Profit Shifting,
- Development Centre,
- Competition Committee,
- Steel Committee,
- Tourism Committee,
- Joint Meeting of the Chemicals Committee and Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology,
- Public Governance Committee,
- Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy,
- Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy;
- Committee for Agriculture,
- Committee on Digital Economy Policy, and
- Local Economic and Employment Development.

International Labour Organisation

South Africa was a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) from 1919 to 1966 when it was suspended due to the apartheid policy, and was re-admitted in 1994. South Africa's objective in its engagement with the ILO is geared towards influencing global debates on labour issues as well as to exchange experiences towards resolving its challenges. In November 2021, South Africa ratified the ILO Convention on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of

Work, as it is consistent with the domestic and international objectives of promoting women's rights. South Africa is the 10th member state of the ILO to have ratified the convention. Convention Number 190 was expected to enter into force for South Africa on 29 November 2022, one year after its ratification.

The convention was first adopted during the 108th International Labour Conference (ILC), the ILO Centenary Conference, held in Geneva in 2019. The convention recognises that violence and harassment in the world of work “can constitute a human rights violation or abuse—a threat to equal opportunities, is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work” and thus aims to encourage member states to come up with measures to protect workers and employees from violence and harassment.

It reminds member states that they have a responsibility to promote a general environment of zero tolerance. The convention covers violence and harassment occurring in the workplace, during work-related trips, work-related communications, in employer-provided accommodation and when commuting to and from work.

World Trade Organisation

South Africa has been a World Trade Organisation (WTO) member since 1995 and a member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) since June 1948. It participates in WTO negotiations with a view to carve global trading agreements in the area of agriculture, trade facilitation and fair and equitable trading systems through Special and Differential Treatment for the Least-Developed Countries. The country pursues diplomatic strategies that seek to project its own trade policy interests, with a key priority being increased market access, particularly in agriculture within the neoliberal agenda.

The country stresses the need for an export-led growth strategy and so it has a keen interest in supporting the WTO's trade liberalisation agenda. Since 2006, the Doha Developmental Round of Negotiations has not made substantial progress in issues affecting developing countries. After 15 years of talks, members of the WTO have effectively ended these negotiations. The WTO remains a vital international forum for both the projection of South African foreign policy as well as its international status in the post-apartheid era.

It provides a world platform on which South Africa can project and perhaps increase its power at international levels as well as increase its international status by constructing a positive image of good citizenship and responsible leadership to contrast with the pariah state image of the apartheid era.

The WTO is facing challenges emanating from regional agreements and the move towards plurilateralism, which will see like-minded countries agreeing on issues of mutual interest like e-commerce and renege on traditional issues like the halting of subsidies, market access to agricultural commodities, and special and differential treatment to assist in levelling the playing fields.

World Intellectual Property Organisation

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) is mandated to manage intellectual property services through a global partnership and collaboration. Through its various committees, the WIPO advocates for the promotion of intellectual property (IP) rights and enforcement in trademarks, industrial designs, patents, trade secrets, copyright and related rights.

The WIPO further provides a forum for its members to forge ahead with its developmental agenda, which is a critical component to assist in a balanced system of IP enforcement and development. It further assists developing countries with capacity building and technical assistance to assist them to embrace IP for small and medium enterprises, and prepare for digital economy and international trade.

South Africa became a member of the WIPO on 23 March 1975. The country participates in the WIPO committees to advance issues pertaining to IP and development. South Africa's participation in WIPO is guided by its IP Policy. Government regards IP as an important policy instrument in promoting innovation, technology transfer, research and development, industrial development and more broadly, economic growth.

South Africa believes that the WIPO's efforts to advance IP, creativity and innovation, serves the country's objective for a people-centred development agenda based on the adopted SDGs and our continental vision through the AU Agenda 2063.

World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is an independent international forum that brings together senior leaders in business, as well as in political and academic spheres for high-level discussions on how to accelerate global growth and development. Ordinarily, the annual meetings are organised in Davos, Switzerland during January, in addition to a series of regional summits in Africa—WEF on Africa, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

South Africa's objective in dealing with the WEF is to promote the country as an attractive investment destination and to influence discussions pertaining to global and continental issues.

Group of Seven

The Group of Seven (G7) was formally established in 1975, following the financial crisis brought about by the 1973 oil crisis. In an attempt to improve the coordination of global economic and financial policy, the initial meetings were held by the Finance Ministers of the world's five most industrialised and developed countries—France, Germany, Japan, the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK), who were later joined by Canada and Italy at a presidential level, to form the G7. The Russian Federation (RF) joined the group in 1998,

when it was known as the G8, until its suspension from the group in 2014 due to the situation in the Crimea.

South Africa is not a member of the G7, but some G7 presidencies invite the country as a guest to the outreach part of the Leaders' Summit as a key voice from Africa and the Global South. The country's engagement with the group is aimed at leveraging resources and capacity of the G7 countries to facilitate Africa's socio-economic development.

South Africa has also utilised the forum to advance its economic agenda, and particularly to promote South Africa as a major investment destination; to further the interests of the AU; and collaborate with other invited developing countries in order to advance the developmental agenda.

Financial Action Task Force

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body that was established by the G7 in 1989 to set international norms and standards to promote the effective implementation of measures for combatting money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

It comprises 37 jurisdictions, two regional organisations and nine associate regional groupings. Its recommendations are intended to be of universal application. South Africa became a member of the FATF in 2003. The country is also a member of a FATF-style regional body, the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG). One of the features of FATF and ESAAMLG is a mutual evaluation exercise.

Group of Twenty

South Africa has been a permanent member of the Group of Twenty (G20) since its inception in 1999, following the Asian financial crisis. 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 gross domestic product (GDP), 80% of world trade and two-thirds of the world's population. Since the escalation of the G20 to Leaders' Summit level in 2008, the agenda has significantly expanded to include issues of geopolitical, development and trade significance. South Africa's participation in the G20 has sought to provide strategic foresight in establishing an economic and financial international policy platform that will drive and negotiate the best possible outcomes for South Africa, Africa and the developing world.

South Africa has been the permanent co-chair of the Development Working Group since 2010 for the promotion of national and continental priorities. Addressing the scourge of illicit financial flows has the potential to unlock billions of dollars that could be utilised to

fund Africa and the developing world's development. In addition, South Africa has consistently advanced G20 support for industrialisation in Africa and least developed countries, the implementation of the G20 Partnership with Africa and enhanced G20 support to developing countries by providing the means of implementation for achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

These initiatives are aimed at positively impacting the development trajectory of Africa and the developing world and contribute positively to achieving the global commitment of leaving no one behind. The G20 is unique in its composition of countries of the North and South, and therefore as a collective body, tends to carry significant profile and influence. South Africa, as the only permanent African member of the G20, has used its participation to advance national priorities, the African Agenda of sustainable development, inclusive growth, the reduction of inequality and the promotion of a just economic world order.

In the future, the strategic trajectory of the G20 is anticipated to transform from a crisis response mechanism focussing on short-term policies to one of long-term governance that shapes medium- to long-term policies and will solidify its role as the premier forum for international economic governance.

South Africa will continue its participation in the G20 and consistently profile the interests of South Africa and Africa. The G20 has agreed that the AU must be a permanent presence at the group, and we look forward to working closely with the AU to profile our development agenda. We believe more attention should be given to addressing post-COVID-19 liquidity challenges on the continent and call on the G20 to do more to assist.

It is worrying that the conflict in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine have diminished world attention from challenges in Africa and left the marginalised even more vulnerable to the dangers of terrorism, food insecurity, climate change, and instability. Developing countries need a G20 focused on issues of development.

The G20 should actively encourage wealthy G7 member states to honour their financial commitments to supporting developing countries in mitigation and adaptation. They should also play a leading role in entrenching peace and security globally. South Africa assumes the G20 Presidency from 1 December 2024 to November 2025, and has adopted as the theme for its G20 Presidency: 'Solidarity, Equality and Sustainable Development'.

Humanitarian affairs

South Africa actively contributes to humanitarian diplomacy by engaging with the UN and other humanitarian agencies tasked with alleviating and addressing humanitarian needs across the globe. Among others, South Africa engages with and contributes to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Central

Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Food Programme (WFP). South Africa also participates in multilateral platforms that discuss and chart a way forward on the global responses and coordination of humanitarian action, such as the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment.

The Branch Global Governance and Continental Agenda (GGCA), as part of South Africa's humanitarian commitments, annually makes humanitarian contributions to humanitarian organisations, which allow the organisations to respond to the various complex humanitarian situations across the world. During the 2023/24 financial year, the Branch GGCA made humanitarian contributions totaling R12 million to the following:

- Central Emergency Response Fund of the United Nations (CERF), an amount of R3 142 696. CERF is often the first funding source in new and rapidly escalating emergencies and one of the few in underfunded emergencies.
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), an amount of R3 142 696. OCHA is the main UN agency responsible for coordinating the UN's humanitarian work and requires funding for its operations as well as to support the humanitarian needs.
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an amount of R3 142 696. The ICRC has appealed for 2.1 billion Swiss francs to help bring humanitarian protection and assistance to millions of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence in 2024.

Moreover, South Africa is actively involved in multilateral forums dealing with food security through primarily the meetings of the Rome-based agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). These agencies also have country and/or regional offices based in South Africa, which form part of ensuring that the internationally agreed-upon norms and standards on food security and humanitarian assistance are implemented at a national level through collaboration.

South Africa, through its Ambassador in Rome, is the Chair of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) for the period 2023 – 2025. CFS is the global committee entrusted to ensure coordination of global efforts to end hunger and ensure food security for all.

South Africa also actively participates in forums dealing with migration, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, as well as international humanitarian law. South Africa's participation in these forums, which include the UNHCR Executive Committee and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), is informed by the goal of influencing norms and standards aimed at ensuring protection for the above categories of people and creating a policy space to engage on these issues.

South Africa often advocates for responsibility and burden-sharing to ensure that there is also support for host countries. South Africa

further advocates for the respect for and compliance with international humanitarian law in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

Continental agenda

African Union

The establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 by 32 countries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was intended to continue the fight against colonialism and apartheid on the African continent, promote unity and solidarity, safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states and coordinate and intensify cooperation for development.

Following the realisation of the objectives that were set during the advent of the OAU, particularly the mission to emancipate the continent from the shackles of colonial and apartheid rule, the AU was formed and brought into force in 2002, wherein 54 countries agreed to chart a new path for the continent, more specifically its economic development.

This new path, which was set in 2002 by the AU, was underpinned in the determination to tackle and address the multifaceted social, economic and political challenges through forging an integrated continent that can ultimately realise its full economic potential and play its rightful role in the global economy.

To this end, the AU is making progressive strides and moving in the right direction in its mission to address the longstanding challenges of underdevelopment, and consequent poverty, unemployment and inequality on the continent. The AU recognised the need to develop a long-term strategy, resulting in the adoption of Agenda 2063 in 2015 by the Heads of State and Government during the 24th Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Agenda 2063 has identified seven cardinal aspirations, which provide an indication of what the continent should achieve by the year 2063:

- a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- an integrated continent, politically united based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance;
- an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;
- a peaceful and secure Africa;
- an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics;
- an Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth; and
- Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner.

Appreciating the need that the realisation of the objectives set by Agenda 2063 should be fulfilled, there was a formulation of its first 10-year implementation plan. Thus far, there has been progress in this regard, as evidenced by:

- the adoption of the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in Africa,
- member states having committed to the AfCFTA; and
- the Single African Air Transport Market being launched.

These flagship programmes of Agenda 2063 are the catalysts that will ensure the acceleration of integration within the continent and will further enable African countries to maximise economic opportunities, particularly trade amongst them.

The objective of the AfCFTA is to promote intra-African trade and offer an opportunity to create larger economies of scale, a bigger market and improve the prospects of the African continent to attract investment. In addition, the AfCFTA will bring together the 55 member states of the AU, covering a market of more than 1.2 billion people, including a growing middle class and a combined GDP of more than USD\$3,4 trillion.

Furthermore, the AU has noted that in order to successfully move the continent forward, it has to transform the manner in which it conducts its business. Currently, the AU is undergoing a rigorous process of reviewing how it has been operating, through engaging the recommendations made during the institutional reform process. The successful implementation of the agreement borne out of this process will ensure that the AU becomes more effective and efficient in carrying out its mandate. South Africa, as a member of the AU, remains committed to the organisation and it has demonstrated its desire to ensure that the organisation succeeds.

Currently, South Africa is hosting the PAP, the APRM and the AUDA-NEPAD, among others. Additionally, the country continues to play a steering role in matters relating to peace and security on the continent. South Africa is a member of the AU Committee of Five on South Sudan, and through Deputy President David Mabuza, was involved in mediating the agreement that led to the establishment of the Transitional Government of National Unity in South Sudan on 22 February 2020.

South Africa is a member of the AU High-Level Committee on Libya. Through these initiatives and its active involvement, South Africa continues to contribute towards the realisation of the aspiration of silencing the guns in Africa.

Peace and Security Council

South Africa continues to promote peace and stability on the African continent through preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts. In this context, the country's approach to peacekeeping resonates strongly with the AU's aspirational goal adopted by the AU Assembly of African Heads of State and Government on 25 May 2013 in Addis Ababa of "Silencing the Guns by the Year 2020". The AU's flagship project on addressing peace and security issues in the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is built around structures, objectives,

principles and values, as well as decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction and development on the continent.

Furthermore, the Peace and Security Council of the AU remains the main pillar of the APSA and is supported by various structures including the AU Commission, the Panel of the Wise, continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force and the Peace Fund.

The relationship between the AU and the regional economic communities/regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution remains crucial for the success of the APSA. South Africa has actively participated, through both bilateral and multilateral efforts, to resolve some of the continent's pressing conflict areas.

These countries include Lesotho, the DRC, Madagascar, Burundi, South Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali and Libya. South Africa also remains engaged in the peace and security dynamics of the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, the Great Lakes Region and the Lake Chad Basin. South Africa will continue to play its part in conflict resolution in these countries and respective regions.

In addition, South Africa reaffirms its continued solidarity to assist the people of Western Sahara in pursuit of their inalienable right to self-determination and decolonisation. South Africa remains steadfast in its rejection of all acts of terrorism and extremism that have increasingly affected Africa, contributing to internal instability.

AU regional economic communities

The AU is the principal institution responsible for promoting sustainable development at economic, social and cultural level, as well as integrating African economies. Regional economic communities are recognised as the building blocks of the AU, necessitating their close involvement in formulating and implementing all AU programmes.

To this end, the AU must coordinate and take decisions on policies in areas of common interest to member states, as well as coordinate and harmonise policies between existing and future regional economic communities, for the gradual attainment of the AU's objectives.

Seven specialised technical committees are responsible for the actual implementation of the continental socio-economic integration process, together with the Permanent Representatives Committee. South Africa's development is intertwined with that of the southern Africa region and the African continent at large.

The country's efforts at ramping up industrialisation should be viewed within the overall framework of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, as approved by the SADC Extra-Ordinary Summit in April 2015. South Africa seeks to industrialise the regional and continental economies in order to develop its own manufacturing capacity.

In addition, the country seeks to radically alter the colonial and postcolonial pattern where Africa was a supplier of raw materials. It is

of the view that Africa should produce value-added goods for exports into the global economy. It is only in this way that Africa can address the paradox of a rich-resource continent inhabited by a poverty-stricken population and make a decisive break with the past.

Southern African Development Community

The SADC developed from the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which was established in 1980. It adopted its current name during a summit held in Windhoek, Namibia, in August 1992. Before 1992, the aim of the SADCC was to forge close economic cooperation with southern African countries, excluding South Africa, to bolster their economies and reduce their dependence on the South African economy.

From 1992, when the organisation became SADC, its mandate changed to:

- promoting and defending peace and security;
- evolving common values, systems and institutions;
- establishing an open economy based on equality, mutual benefit and balanced development;
- breaking down tariff barriers;
- promoting trade exchanges and mutual investment;
- realising the free movement of goods, personnel and labour services;
- achieving the unification of tariffs and currencies; and
- establishing a free trade zone.

The initial member states were Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Eswatini, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. South Africa became a member after 1994. South Africa has consistently sought to nurture regional integration at three levels: the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the SADC and the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement between the SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and East African Countries (EAC).

In particular, South Africa has championed a "developmental regionalism" approach that combines market integration, cross-border infrastructure development, as well as policy coordination to diversify production and boost intra-African trade.

Development partners

One key feature that distinguishes the AU from its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) is its vision of an integrated, prosperous, equitable, well-governed and peaceful United States of Africa, effectively managed by its own citizens and representing a creative and dynamic force in the international arena.

The last component of this vision establishes the need to cooperate strategically with other regional groupings, international organisations and states to promote Africa's interests, acquire support to enable the attainment of her objectives, increase Africa's international stature and obtain the global leverage that would enable the continent to maximise

its impact in the geopolitical arena. Consequently, South Africa through the AU, has entered a number of structured strategic partnerships around the world in line with the clear vision and development strategy of the AU.

The partnerships emphasise the implementation of industrialisation and technology transfer, infrastructure development, trade and investment, development of human capital, social investment, and sustainable and inclusive growth policies, programmes and projects of continental, regional and national dimension.

These relations include continent-continent partnerships such as the Africa-EU partnership, the Africa-South America Summit and partnership between Africa and the Arab World, and country-continent partnerships such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), the Africa-India Forum, the Africa-Turkey partnership and the Africa-Korea partnership.

These partnerships are established and covered or governed by strategic partnership agreements, MoUs, declarations and frameworks of cooperation and various senior officials meetings, ministerial meetings and summits have been held over the years to review these partnerships. These strategic partnerships enable African partners to take advantage of the continent's anticipated growth, its growing consumer market, demand for industrial products, demand for engineering, procurement, construction services, and supply of basic raw materials, natural resources and strategic industrial inputs.

Previously, the partnerships involved commitments to provide assistance in agricultural and technological development, human capital development, industrialisation, infrastructural development, as well as military expertise for the peacebuilding and peacemaking efforts of the AU.

However, the emerging trend is that partners are aggressively promoting their respective private sectors to the fore and trade, investments and market access are acquiring prominence. Relations with countries of the South remain strong and the BRICS membership has yielded benefits for the country and is expected to do so for the rest of the continent.

Efforts continue within BRICS on common objectives, including addressing challenges in respective regions and the world at large. BRICS also continues to provide alternative market access as well as strategic political support in pursuit of a just and equitable world. In the same vein, South Africa continues to support the consolidation of the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum. The forum serves as an intimate platform that coordinates matters of common interest and concern and promotes development through the IBSA Fund for the alleviation of poverty and hunger.

The Indian Ocean region is of vital importance and of growing geostrategic significance. South Africa views the IORA as the preeminent regional organisation linking Africa, the Middle East and

Asia via the Indian Ocean. The association is growing in stature and prominence.

Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa

Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) is an association of five major emerging countries, which together represent about 42% of the global population, 23% of the 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.

These objectives are further realised through BRICS's financial institutions like the NDB and the Africa Regional Centre (ARC). The Johannesburg-based ARC plays a catalytic role in providing financial and project preparation support for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in South Africa and Africa. At an institutional development level, South Africa derives crucial benefits through Track II institutions, such as the BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Think Tank Council, as well as the creation of the BRICS Inter-Bank Cooperation Mechanism.

Furthermore, the establishment of the BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation Funding Mechanism and Framework Programme is an example of the vital support for capacity building, as well as skills and technology transfer. BRICS cooperation in the fields of digitalisation, industrialisation and innovation was further enhanced through the establishment of the BRICS New Partnership for Industrial Revolution.

The objective of the partnership is to address challenges and maximise opportunities arising from the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) by strengthening policy coordination, promoting human skills development in cutting-edge technologies, sharing best practices in digitalisation and initiating joint infrastructure projects. South Africa continues to make concerted efforts to place Africa and the global South on the agenda of BRICS and to harmonise policies adopted in regional and international forums with those pursued in BRICS – the Africa's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The exponential institutional development of BRICS has yielded institutions including the NDB, ARC and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, amongst others, all of which are intended to make tangible and impactful contributions toward the development objectives of South Africa and BRICS.

South Africa's term as BRICS Chair ended on 31 December 2023 and the DIRCO hosted the 6th BRICS Sherpas Meeting from 30 November to 3 December 2023 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal to reflect on South Africa's tenure and to prepare for a handover to the next Chair, the RF, which took over Chairship on 1 January 2024. The countries that were invited to join BRICS (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia,

Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE) participated in the Sherpas Meeting. BRICS leaders attended the XV BRICS Summit in South Africa from 22 to 24 August 2023, hosted at the Sandton Convention Centre (SCC) in Johannesburg, Gauteng, where they engaged with business during the BRICS Business Forum and engaged with the NDB, BRICS Business Council and other mechanisms. South Africa also continued its outreach to leaders from Africa and the global South, and held a BRICS Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue during the XV BRICS Summit.

IBSA Dialogue Forum

The IBSA Dialogue Forum brings together three large pluralistic, multicultural and multi-racial 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 people 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 they are substantial emerging economies within their sub-regions.

The IBSA Fund is a flagship programme of the dialogue forum that has successfully delivered impact-driven projects in developing and least developed countries. The IBSA Fund has made it possible for South Africa to contribute in a meaningful and substantive manner towards international efforts to alleviate extreme poverty and hunger in developing countries. In 2023, Brazil took over as the new President of IBSA with a promise to invigorate the IBSA formation. The IBSA Fund has achieved great strides in uplifting the most vulnerable in some African countries, particularly women and children.

The fund has made available over 4 million dollars, which will be rolled out to projects in countries such as Mozambique, Lesotho, Senegal and the Gambia. The engagement process of the IBSA countries takes place on a number of levels, including Summit (Heads of State and Government), the IBSA Trilateral Ministerial Commission meeting (Ministers), and Senior Officials and Technical (through various working groups).

Indian Ocean Rim Association

The IORA is a charter-based regional multilateral organisation of 23 member states around the Indian Ocean and 12 Dialogue Partner countries. It seeks to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation through a consensus-based, evolutionary and non-intrusive approach. The IORA was established on 7 March 1997, and it is an initiative that came into existence through former President

Mandela's visionary leadership during his official visit to India in 1995.

The IORA region is a huge market of more than three billion people. South Africa views the IORA as an important platform for the implementation of its economic diplomacy objectives as well as the articulation of its foreign policy, which upholds the importance of multilateralism and global collaboration in resolving the intricate challenges facing the world.

South Africa's membership of the IORA provides an important platform to pursue the country's domestic imperatives as well as other regional and global programmes, such as the AU's Agenda 2063; the 2050 African Integrated Maritime Strategy; the AUDA-NEPAD, Agenda 2030; and the AfCFTA. The IORA member states vary considerably in terms of their areas, populations and levels of economic development.

They can also be divided into a number of sub-regions: Australasia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia and Eastern and Southern Africa, each with its own regional groupings (such as the ASEAN, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Gulf Cooperation Council and the SADC). Despite such diversity and differences, these countries are bound together by the Indian Ocean.

The IORA is making significant strides as a platform for Indian Ocean states. The endeavours of IORA through its working groups have achieved substantial contributions to skills enhancement, technology transfer, technological simulations and industrial simulations. This work is important for unlocking the Oceans Economy through localisation and value chain creation.

Commonwealth

The modern Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent member countries. Membership is diverse and includes 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.

South Africa remains an active member of the organisation and attends all high-level meetings, including the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting and the biannual Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The 2024 CHOGM will take place in Apia, Samoa, from 25 – 26 October 2024 to hand over the position of Chair-in-Office from Rwanda to Samoa, elect the new Commonwealth Secretary-General and reaffirm the Commonwealth's common values and agree on actions and policies to improve the lives of all their citizens.

Non-Aligned Movement

With its 121 member states, the NAM is the largest grouping of countries outside of the UN, making it an important role player in global and multilateral affairs. Since its inception in 1961, the movement has

played a crucial and highly visible political role in representing the interests of developing countries, particularly in the eradication of colonialism, supporting struggles for liberation and self-determination, the pursuit of world peace and the search for a more equitable and just global order.

South Africa remains an active member of the movement and attends all high-level meetings, including the monthly meeting of the NAM Coordinating Bureau (CoB) in New York, the NAM Ministerial Meeting, the NAM Committee on Palestine, and the NAM Summit. The NAM Summit is the highest decision-making authority of the movement and meets every three years.

South Africa attended the NAM Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau (CoB) that was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 5 and 6 July 2023 to prepare for the NAM Summit. In 2024, South Africa attended the NAM Summit held in Kampala, Uganda from 15 to 20 January 2024. At the summit, the Chair of the Movement rotated from Azerbaijan to Uganda until 2026.

The NAM remains an important role player in the multilateral system and continues to play an active role on issues pertaining to development, UN reform, disarmament, human rights, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, among others.

Group of 77 (G77)

The G77 was established on 15 June 1964 by 77 developing countries' signatories of the Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries issued at the end of the first session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Beginning with the first Ministerial Meeting of the G77 in Algiers (Algeria) from 10 to 25 October 1967, which adopted the Charter of Algiers, a permanent institutional structure gradually developed, which led to the creation of chapters of the G77 with liaison offices in Geneva (Conference on Trade and Development), Nairobi (UN Environment Programme), Paris (UNESCO), Rome (Food and Agriculture Organisation/International Fund for Agricultural Development), Vienna (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation) and the Group of 24 in Washington, DC (International Monetary Fund and World Bank).

Although members of the G77 have increased to 134 countries, the original name was retained due to its historic significance. The G77 is the largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries in the UN. It provides the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the UN system and promotes South-South cooperation for development.

The functioning and operating modalities of the work of the G77 in the various chapters have certain minimal features in common, such as a similarity in membership, decision-making and certain operating methods.

A chairperson, who acts as its spokesperson, coordinates the group's action in each chapter. The Chairship, which is the highest political body within the organisational structure of the G77, rotates on a regional basis (between Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean) and is held for one year in all the chapters.

West Africa

Senegal

Senegal and South Africa are bound by their historic ties of friendship established during the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. Full diplomatic relations were established in May 1994.

Senegal is a bastion of stability in Francophone West Africa. It is a strong constitutional democracy and one of the only African countries that have never experienced a coup d'état or any type of violent transition since its independence from France in 1960.

South Africa and Senegal enjoy cordial bilateral political, economic and social relations underpinned by strong historical ties dating back to the years of the liberation struggle.

The Dakar Talks are widely considered to have paved the way towards a negotiated settlement between the African National Congress and the then-government of South Africa. South Africa and Senegal conduct their bilateral relations through a Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation.

Mali

South Africa and Mali established bilateral relations in May 1994. Bilateral relations between the two countries are conducted through the Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) signed in December 2000. South Africa assisted the Government of Mali in the preservation of the Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Learning and Islamic Research in Timbuktu through a contribution to the ARF.

Peace, security and stability remain a challenge in Northern and Central Mali. South Africa supports the current peace process in Mali and encourages all parties involved to remain committed to the implementation of the Peace Agreement in an effort to ensure lasting peace.

The Gambia

South Africa and The Gambia established formal diplomatic relations in August 1998. The South African Ambassador in Dakar, Senegal, is accredited to The Gambia on a non-residential basis.

Guinea-Bissau

South Africa and Guinea-Bissau established formal diplomatic relations in October 1994, even though relations between the two countries date back to the common struggle against apartheid and colonialism.

Cabo Verde

South Africa and Cabo Verde exchanged notes to establish diplomatic relations in 1994, followed by the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of a Mechanism for Bilateral Consultation during an AU summit in 2015.

Liberia

Formal diplomatic relations between South Africa and Liberia were established in 1997. The Liberian government opened its embassy in Pretoria in October 1997, while South Africa opened a resident diplomatic mission in Monrovia in October 2010. South Africa and Liberia have maintained good diplomatic and political relations since the attainment of freedom and democracy in South Africa.

South Africa and Liberia signed an Agreement on Visa Exemption for Holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports in May 2018. The two countries have also, since the establishment of diplomatic relations, signed a General Cooperation Agreement and an MoU on Economic and Technical Cooperation.

These agreements allow the two countries to engage in a number of areas of possible cooperation, including agriculture, energy, infrastructure development, capacity, institutional building, trade and the health sector.

Sierra Leone

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Sierra Leone were established in 1998 through the exchange of diplomatic notes.

Niger

Diplomatic relations were established in May 1994. In March 2008, South Africa opened an embassy in Niamey, headed by a chargé d'affaires. Niger opened its embassy in Pretoria during the last quarter of 2012. An agreement on the establishment of a JCC was concluded on 8 May 2007 and the inaugural session of the commission took place in October 2013.

Côte d'Ivoire

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire were established in May 1992. The agreement on the establishment of a JCC was concluded in December 2015.

At a political level, given South Africa's firm commitment to the African Renaissance and its attendant features of stability and democratisation on the continent, the country previously played an important role in assisting to find a peaceful resolution to the stalemate that followed the disputed presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire. Bilateral trade between South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire has experienced an upward trend and South African investors are present in the banking, transport and telecommunications sectors.

Nigeria

As the continent's two largest economies, South Africa and Nigeria enjoy good political, economic and social bilateral relations formally established in 1994, immediately after South Africa's first democratic elections.

Formal relations between the two countries have been conducted through the Bi-National Commission (BNC), established in 1999 as a structured bilateral mechanism to promote political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation between the two countries.

Through eight successful biennial sessions over the years, the BNC has deepened and solidified the relations between the two countries and laid the foundation for increased bilateral political and economic cooperation. There are a number of signed bilateral agreements between the two countries, which cover various areas such as arts and culture, education, agriculture, trade and investment, mining, defence, policing, immigration, taxation, science and technology, health, tourism, environment and energy.

There are over 120 South African companies currently doing business in Nigeria in various sectors, mainly in telecommunications, banking, retail, hospitality, mining, tourism, agriculture and construction. They include MTN, MultiChoice, Stanbic Bank, Shoprite Checkers, South African Airways, Sasol and Bon Hotels.

Ghana

South Africa and Ghana established a permanent JCC in May 2007 as a structured bilateral mechanism to provide for political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation between the two countries. In 2018, the commission was elevated to become a BNC at Presidential level.

The permanent JCC essentially oversees the implementation of more than 20 bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding, which cover various fields including trade and investment, avoidance of double taxation, information and communication, transport, electricity, oil and gas, tourism, environment, science and technology, and arts and culture.

The majority of the South African investment projects are in the services sector, with a total of over 100 projects valued at over USD\$780 million. Other sectors that South Africa has invested in include agriculture, building and construction, manufacturing and tourism.

Benin

South Africa and Benin established formal diplomatic relations in May 1994. South Africa opened an embassy in Cotonou in 2007, and Benin opened its embassy in Pretoria in January 1999. The agreement for the establishment of a JCC was concluded on 14 June 2015.

Burkina Faso

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Burkina Faso were established in May 1995. South Africa has had an embassy in Ouagadougou since February 2007, and Burkina Faso opened an embassy in Pretoria in June 2007. An agreement to establish a JCC was concluded in April 2007.

South Africa and Burkina Faso work closely through regional bodies, the SADC and the Economic Community of West African States, as well as the AU, to address all challenges that hinder Africa's development and to ensure that the set objectives in relation to Agenda 2063 are achieved without fail.

Togo

Relations between South Africa and Togo were established in 1997. The South African Ambassador in Benin is accredited to Togo on a non-residential basis. South Africa and Togo are currently negotiating a framework agreement for cooperation. The agreement will establish cooperation in a number of fields, including agro-processing, port management, mining and energy.

Nedbank and the Public Investment Corporation are the second- and third-largest shareholders, respectively, in the Lomé head-quartered West African Bank, Ecobank.

East Africa

Burundi

South Africa's relations with Burundi are sound and cordial. South Africa participated as the mediator in the AU-led Burundi Peace Process, which was first led by former President Mandela, followed by former President Thabo Mbeki and by the-then Deputy President Jacob Zuma. The process led to the Arusha Peace Accords in 2000 – 2005, that brought an end to the long civil war.

South Africa has invested significantly in Burundi's peace and stability and it closely follows developments in Burundi, a small but key role player in the Great Lakes region.

Peace and stability in Burundi are seen as crucial factors to the achievement of peace in the entire region. South Africa is ready to assist and support the mediation process, if and when it is called upon. The country continues to stand by the people of Burundi in their search for sustainable peace, security and development.

Djibouti

South Africa and Djibouti enjoy excellent relations. Current infrastructure development programmes, including free development zones, provide fertile ground for active investment by South African companies.

Eritrea

Eritrea serves as one of the fastest-growing economies in the Horn of Africa, with a GDP growth rate of 8.5%. The country is rich in mineral resources, including copper, gold, granite, marble, oil and gas reserves. The promotion of trade and investment between South Africa and Eritrea is important, especially in the fields of tourism and infrastructure development.

Ethiopia

Bilateral economic relations with Ethiopia, which were revived in 1995 when South Africa opened an embassy in Addis Ababa, remain strong. The two countries have a number of bilateral agreements in place that establish a regulatory framework to facilitate political, economic and social interaction, such as an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation. The umbrella agreement provides for the establishment of a Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC).

Ethiopian Prime Minister, Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali, visited South Africa on 11 and 12 January 2020 for bilateral discussions on matters of mutual national development, regional and continental issues, as well as international developments. The objectives of the visit were to further strengthen and deepen bilateral relations and cooperation between the two nations and to consolidate political, economic and social cooperation. The visit also explored potential areas of trade and investment for the benefit of both countries in industries such as telecommunications, road infrastructure, mining, agro-processing and manufacturing.

Indian Ocean Islands

South Africa's political, economic and diplomatic relations with the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles remain strong. Greater emphasis is being placed, in terms of South Africa's Operation Phakisa, on building partnerships with the islands in respect of the Oceans Economy to enhance trade and investment in areas such as marine manufacturing and transport, aquaculture, offshore oil and gas exploration, and marine protection and governance.

South Africa and the Seychelles established formal relations in 1992. The relationship has been progressive, with a display of support for strategic tourism events hosted in each country and a shared vision for regional tourism development and integration.

Madagascar

Madagascar and South Africa have strong bilateral relations and currently have an MoU on Regular Diplomatic Consultations, covering various areas of cooperation such as political, security, economic and social issues of mutual interest.

Kenya

South Africa and Kenya enjoy strong bilateral relations, with the two countries' Heads of State meeting on the margins of various

international and multilateral engagements to discuss matters of mutual interest. South Africa and Kenya enjoy cordial relations since the signing of a bilateral agreement in 2004, which was implemented by the then Department of Science and Technology and Kenya's Ministry of Education, National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.

Rwanda

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1995 between South Africa and Rwanda, the two countries continue to have close interaction at a high political level.

Rwanda is an important partner in the advancement and the championing of the African Agenda, by being among the first countries to volunteer for the APRM and actively contributing troops to African peacekeeping missions in Sudan and the CAR.

South Africa and Rwanda have signed over 20 bilateral agreements in various fields and continue to enjoy cordial relations.

Sudan

Relations between South Africa and Sudan remain cordial. South Africa is also playing a key role in the resolution of conflicts and the post-conflict reconstruction efforts in that country. Moreover, Sudan serves among key African countries with the potential for increased trade and investment.

South Sudan

Deputy President, Mr Paul Mashatile, paid a successful working visit to the Republic of South Sudan from 28 to 31 August 2023. The purpose of the visit was to assess the latest developments and progress in the implementation of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) and discuss challenges and solutions to the peace process with all stakeholders. A second, but critical objective of the Deputy President's visit was to strengthen long-standing bilateral relations between South Africa and South Sudan.

During his visit, the Deputy President, as President Cyril Ramaphosa's Special Envoy to South Sudan, met with His Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit. President Salva Kiir raised concerns regarding the implications that the ongoing conflict may have in neighbouring countries and the region at large. He outlined the challenges hindering the implementation of the R-ARCSS and re-emphasised the need for South Africa to be more involved in the peace process by assisting the various parties to resolve their disputes.

Deputy President Mashatile also held talks with four of South Sudan's five Vice Presidents: Dr Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon, Dr James Wani Igga, Taban Deng Gai and Hussein Abdelbagi. The Vice Presidents acknowledged remaining gaps and challenges to the full implementation of the R-ARCSS, including a lack of required

financial resources, the arms embargo and sanctions imposed on the Government of South Sudan by the UN.

Despite this, the Vice Presidents also appreciated that notable milestones had been achieved on the road to lasting peace. A key milestone to the achievement of peace in South Sudan was the holding of the country's first democratic elections since its independence in 2011.

Holding this founding election is a goal whose importance is acknowledged by all the participants in South Sudan's ongoing national dialogue. Additionally, the Deputy President had engagements with various ministers of state in charge of critical portfolios such as Humanitarian Affairs; Information, ICT and Postal Services; Justice and Constitutional Affairs; as well as Cabinet Affairs and the High Level Standing Committee for the Implementation of the R-ARCSS.

In addition to the South Sudanese stakeholders, Deputy President Mashatile held extensive consultations with regional and global multilateral formations with a role to play in resolving the conflict in the country. Among these were the African diplomatic corps in Juba; the Intergovernmental Authority on Development-East Africa Regional

Economic Community; the Troika Ambassadors in South Sudan (US, UK, Norway); the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission; and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Deputy President Mashatile commended South Sudan on the progress made thus far and reaffirmed South Africa's support for the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU). Additionally, he called on strengthened commitment by the RTGoNU and all other relevant parties to the R-ARCSS to implement its outstanding provisions, particularly the security arrangements.

These include community disarmament, demobilisation of ex-combatants and their re-integration into peaceful civilian life, and the integration of remaining combatant forces into a national force with a single command structure, among others. Failure to find common ground on these and other contentious points will keep South Sudan in limbo, and its economic development as well as the development of its people will be stillborn.

During his three-day stay, the Deputy President also took time to lay a wreath at the Dr John Garang Mausoleum in honour of South Sudan's founding leader, and bestowed medals on the South African Police Service (SAPS) contingent stationed in that country as part of the UN Peacekeeping Mission. In his last act before departure, the Deputy President paid a courtesy call on two of South Sudan's elders and veterans of liberation: Mr Abel Alier Kwai and Mr Josephu Lagu.

In conclusion, Deputy President Mashatile assured both of his and South Africa's enduring commitment to the peace and reconciliation process in South Sudan. He called on all parties to adhere to the revised deadlines of the roadmap to a peaceful and democratic end to the current transitional period and the holding of national elections

by December 2024 as envisaged. Bilateral relations between the two countries are conducted under the General Cooperation Agreement of 21 September 2011, which entails the following areas of cooperation: agriculture/agribusiness, water, education, infrastructure development, transport, mining, energy, electricity, oil and gas.

Uganda

South Africa and Uganda have enjoyed good political and economic relations since 1994. The relations were cemented when the South Africa-Uganda JCC was inaugurated in Pretoria in November 2012. The two countries continue to cooperate closely and coordinate their positions on issues in a number of regional and multilateral forums, such as the AU and the UN, and share similar perspectives, particularly on the political and economic integration processes on the African continent.

President Cyril Ramaphosa hosted his Ugandan counterpart, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, for a State Visit to Pretoria on Tuesday, 28 February 2023. President Museveni's visit was directed at consolidating bilateral relations between the two countries, with discussions between the two Heads of State encompassing political, economic, regional, continental and international issues. President Museveni was accompanied by several Cabinet Ministers and a business delegation who participated in a business forum held from 27 to 28 February 2023.

President Ramaphosa and President Museveni addressed the second day of the business forum on 28 February 2023 at the Gallagher Convention Centre. The forum offers the private sector in South Africa and Uganda a platform to explore trade and investment opportunities. The Republic of Uganda is South Africa's 15th-largest trading partner on the continent and the second-largest in East Africa.

Between 2017 and 2021, total trade between the two countries reached a peak of R3 billion, which both countries agree is well below potential. South Africa's exports to the Republic of Uganda increased from R2,18 billion in 2017 to R3,12 billion in 2018. The value of South Africa's imports from Uganda increased from R127 million in 2017 to R323 million in 2020. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa had more than 70 companies operating in Uganda. Businesses in the two countries are keen to expand their presence in one another's markets.

The two Heads of State witnessed the signing of the MoU on Cooperation between the Industrial Development Cooperation (IDC), Uganda Development Corporation (UDC) and the Uganda Development Bank Limited; and MoUs on Cooperation in Tourism, Transport-Related Matters, Information and Communication Technologies, Cooperation in the field of Correctional Services and Prisons, and Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

North and Central Africa

Egypt

South Africa and Egypt have a Joint Bilateral Commission (JBC), convened at Ministerial level, for enhancing and strengthening bilateral relations. South Africa is committed to forging closer strategic cooperation with Egypt, focussing in particular on economic and security cooperation, and to continue working together in pursuance of continental integration, peace and security, as well as the fight against all forms of terrorism and extremism.

Libya

South Africa is deeply concerned over the prevailing political and security situation in Libya, which has gravely affected peace and security in the region. At the same time, South Africa has noted, with satisfaction, the positive developments regarding the UN Political Agreement to establish a Government of National Accord in Libya.

In this regard, South Africa has urged the Libyan people and its leaders to set aside their differences and unite in the interest of peace, stability and prosperity.

Furthermore, South Africa is ready to assist the Libyan people by sharing its experiences on democratic transition and reconciliation.

Algeria

South Africa enjoys historic and cordial relations with Algeria and regards it as a strategic partner in the region and continent. Since the establishment of the Presidential BNC in 2000, bilateral political trade and economic links have been growing steadily. Algeria's relations with countries of the Maghreb, the Mediterranean, the Arab Peninsular and the Sahel regions serve as a platform to promote joint Algeria-South Africa partnerships/ventures in the mutual interest of all parties.

Morocco

South Africa and Morocco enjoy cordial diplomatic relations. Morocco recalled its Ambassador to South Africa in 2004, following South Africa's recognition of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Bilateral relations have since been maintained at the level of a chargé d'Affaires en titre (Morocco) and chargé d'Affaires ad interim (South Africa).

Western Sahara is Africa's longest-running territorial dispute and an issue of continental and international law and diplomatic controversy, having been on the decolonisation agenda of the UN and AU for more than 50 years. Morocco contends that the Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony, is an integral part of its kingdom. On the other side, the Polisario Front, which is campaigning for the territory's independence, demands a referendum on self-determination.

The SADR is a full member of the AU, while Morocco withdrew from the then OAU, in protest to the SADR's inclusion. Morocco was re-admitted as a member of the AU in 2017. Throughout the years,

South Africa has maintained the same position on the right to self-determination for the Saharawi people, as enshrined in the UN Charter and the AU Constitutive Act.

Western Sahara

Formal diplomatic relations were established at Ambassador level in 2004. South Africa continues to render political support and humanitarian assistance to the SADR. Through the ARF, South Africa supports projects that aim to benefit the Saharawi population.

South Africa's international solidarity and support for the self-determination

of Western Sahara is based on:

- the principles of multilateralism and international legality in seeking a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara;
- the centrality of the AU and UN in the resolution of the conflict;
- the Constitutive Act of the AU, in particular the principle of the sanctity of inherited colonial borders in Africa and the right of peoples of former colonial territories to self-determination and independence;
- respect for international human rights law in the occupied territories, notably the right to freedom of association, assembly, movement and expression;
- respect for international humanitarian law and support for the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Saharawi refugees in a way that is predictable, sustainable and timely;
- an end to the illegal exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara in the illegally occupied territory and the discouragement of the involvement of foreign companies in such activities; and support for the integration and stability of the Maghreb Union as a building block of the AU.

Mauritania

South Africa made a constructive contribution in Mauritania in support of the implementation of the democratic road map undertaken by the military transitional government following the coup d'état of August 2005. These efforts contributed to the restoration of constitutional order and stability in Mauritania, leading to South Africa's support for the lifting of the AU suspension of the country in April 2007. In terms of economic relations, progress has been recorded between the two countries in the areas of fisheries and mining.

Tunisia

The South African Embassy in Tunisia was officially opened in 1994. South Africa and Tunisia enjoy a very healthy and mutually beneficial political and economic relationship. Relations between the two countries are based on a JBC launched in 1996.

Chad

South Africa and Chad established diplomatic relations in 1994, but it was only in 2013 that both countries appointed resident ambassadors. Chad is a member of the Economic Community of Central African States, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (ECCAS), the Group of 5 of the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, member and host of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (in the fight against Boko Haram) and is the designated Chair of the ECCAS. In 2017, South Africa signed a Bilateral Air Services Agreement with Chad.

Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe

Following its independence in 1975, São Tomé and Príncipe expanded its diplomatic relationships. Since the establishment of full diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1994, the relations between the two countries have grown significantly.

Republic of the Congo

Bilateral cooperation between the two countries takes place within the framework of an agreement signed in 2003, which established a JCC. The deepening of bilateral relations between the two countries has seen the signing of a number of agreements. The Joint Trade Committee (JTC) is playing an important role in facilitating trade and investment.

Equatorial Guinea

South Africa and Equatorial Guinea enjoy cordial relations that were formally established in 1993. The two countries have entered into a number of bilateral cooperation agreements, including a General Cooperation Agreement and two agreements on defence cooperation.

The two countries are also formulating draft agreements to enhance cooperation in education and energy. South Africa and Equatorial Guinea serve as non-permanent members of the UNSC and have committed themselves to work together to champion Africa's quest for peace and stability in line with the collective vision encapsulated in the AU's Agenda 2063.

Cameroon

South Africa and Cameroon enjoy cordial bilateral relations. Cameroon is the economic hub of the CAR. The seaport of Douala in Cameroon is used to import goods to landlocked countries in the region, including Chad and the CAR.

Central African Republic

South Africa opened its embassy in Bangui in 2017 and the two countries enjoy cordial relations.

Southern Africa

Angola

South Africa and Angola continue to work together in maintaining peace, stability and regional integration and promoting the SADC Agenda. Angola is one of South Africa's major trading partners in Africa with almost 90% of Angolan exports to South Africa being petroleum-related products.

Namibia

South Africa and Namibia enjoy strong and fraternal relations characterised by regular and increasing interaction at all levels. The economies of South Africa and Namibia are interlinked, with South Africa being one of Namibia's major trading partners.

Namibia imports 80% of its consumables from South Africa. South African companies have a large presence in Namibia and are involved in various sectors such as housing, food and beverages, construction, hotels and leisure, banking and medical services.

South Africa and Namibia have an agreement to work together in various matters within the fisheries space as both countries share a common border. This means that there is transboundary of fishing species in both countries and co-management between the two countries has always been important.

South Africa, Namibia and Angola share one of the most productive Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystems (BCLME). The collaboration of the three countries is historic, where international partners have funded a number of significant projects in the BCLME region. The collaboration was later formalised through the Benguela Current Commission, now ratified into a convention.

Lesotho

South Africa's bilateral relations with Lesotho remain strong and are based on shared language, history and culture. Lesotho is landlocked in South Africa, creating a unique dependence. South Africa supplies nearly 90% of Lesotho's total imports and is critical to the economic success of the kingdom.

The strong cooperation that exists between the two countries covers a wide range of areas such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, the Metolong Dam Project and the revamping and upgrading of the Mokhotlong Road and the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier.

Eswatini

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Eswatini, reflected in the JBC for Cooperation Agreement, are amiable and informed essentially by historical and cultural affinities, including the geographical proximity between people of the two countries.

Zambia

South Africa and Zambia maintain solid economic cooperation, as evidenced by the presence of several South African companies in

Zambia. Improved cooperation in a variety of areas, such as air services and infrastructural development, present economic opportunities to the South African private sector and parastatals.

South Africa and Zambia continue to work together on the region's common agenda relating to, among others, peace, security and economic integration. Structured bilateral cooperation between South Africa and Zambia formerly took place under the framework of a JCC that was signed in October 2005.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

South Africa and the DRC maintain good diplomatic and political relations. The highest expression of the quality and significance of these diplomatic relations is the annual BNC, co-chaired by the Heads of State.

The General Cooperation Agreement, signed by South Africa and the DRC in January 2004, is the principal agreement establishing bilateral cooperation between the two states in the form of a BNC, which provides the basis for political, economic and technical cooperation.

Zimbabwe

South Africa and Zimbabwe enjoy historic political and fraternal relations that also incorporate regional affiliations and cultural ties. Zimbabwe is one of South Africa's main trade partners in Africa, and several South African companies operate in Zimbabwe in sectors such as mining, tourism, agriculture, banking, manufacturing and retail.

Relations between South Africa and Zimbabwe are conducted through a BNC established in 2015. The two countries are signatories to 45 agreements, which cover a wide range of fields including trade and investment, health, labour, migration, defence, taxation, tourism, scientific and technological cooperation, water and the environment.

Malawi

South Africa and Malawi enjoy cordial and fraternal bilateral relations inclusive of political, economic and cultural relations and within the context of regional integration and intra-Africa trade. These bilateral relations are conducted under the framework of a JCC.

Mozambique

The composition of South African exports to Mozambique includes, among others, mineral products, machinery and mechanical appliances, base metals and articles of base metal, prepared foodstuffs, vehicles, aircraft, vessels and associated transport equipment and vegetable products. The basket of South African exports to Mozambique is made up of value-added goods.

Tanzania

Bilateral relations have been characterised by high-level interactions between the two countries aimed at consolidating and strengthening

political, economic and social cooperation. Economic relations between South Africa and Tanzania have, since 1994, grown significantly and continue to expand. The two countries have elevated their bilateral relations by signing a BNC Agreement in 2011, thus increasing the scope of areas of cooperation.

Botswana

South Africa and Botswana cooperate in a wide range of areas including transport, trade and investment, health, education, environmental affairs, water, science and technology, agriculture, justice, immigration, energy, finance, culture, security and sport.

Relations with Asia and the Middle East

The People's Republic of China

South Africa and PRC first established formal ties in January 1998. Since then, the two countries have achieved a significant number of bilateral cooperation agreements in areas such as trade, investment, tourism, economic and people-to-people relations, oceans and coastal environment, as well as the environment.

South Africa and the PRC share mutual aspirations in promoting economic growth, development and prosperity, and South-South cooperation, as well as a rules-based international order based on the principle of internationalism and enjoy strong diplomatic and trade relations. China is South Africa's biggest trading partner and the second-biggest economy in the world. The two countries share membership of, and participate as partners in numerous international bodies including BRICS, the G77 and the G20.

South Africa's bilateral relations with the PRC are guided broadly through mechanisms such as the Beijing Declaration, establishing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the BNC, the Joint Inter-Ministerial Working Group (JWG) on Cooperation, the Strategic Dialogue Mechanism and the Five to 10-Year Strategic Framework on Cooperation, signed in 2014. The latter was replaced by the 10-Year Strategic Programme for Cooperation (2020 – 2029). South Africa-China bilateral relations have grown from a partnership to a strategic partnership, and subsequently to a comprehensive strategic partnership, which the 10-Year Strategic Programme of Cooperation will bolster.

South Africa and the PRC have committed to building, developing and strengthening relations based on shared principles of friendship and mutual trust; equality and mutual benefit; coordination; mutual learning; and working together for development. Bilateral relations are managed through structured mechanisms including the BNC, the JWG on Cooperation and the Strategic Dialogue. These mechanisms are chaired at the level of Deputy President, Minister and Deputy Minister, respectively.

Both countries continue to improve the structure of bilateral trade by encouraging trade in high value-added manufactured goods,

especially from South Africa, and increasing China's investment in the country, particularly in infrastructure development, science and technology, health, higher education, and digital communications. South Africa and the PRC will continue deepening their cooperation in infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, railways, ports, power plants, airports, and housing, as this has the potential to contribute towards South Africa's economic growth by way of strengthening production and transport capacity.

It should be noted that the current bilateral trade volume is skewed in favour of China and, through numerous high-level engagements, the leaders have sought to redress the trade deficit through the signing of agreements and MoUs, providing further opportunities for increased exports to China. On the economic front, South Africa and the PRC also enjoy strong relations.

South Africa remains the PRC's number one trading partner in Africa. The two countries have implemented various mechanisms aimed at addressing the trade imbalance. Following the successful opening of the Chinese market for exports of South African wine and beef, market access for various fruit and dairy products is now being negotiated.

As a sign of the strong relations between the two countries, South Africa donated medical supplies to the PRC to assist its citizens in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic; the donations were warmly accepted. Furthermore, China facilitated the successful repatriation of 114 South African citizens from Wuhan City in Hubei Province, the epicentre of the outbreak. South Africa's relationship with the PRC is underpinned by the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and the Ten-Year Strategic Programme on Cooperation (2020 – 2029).

The two countries hold regular high-level political engagements, including on the margins of global multilateral fora such as the G20 and UN. This year we celebrate 26 years since the formal establishment of diplomatic ties in 1998. South Africa and China cooperate in multilateral affairs, defending multilateralism and safeguarding an open and inclusive global trading system. South Africa and China continue to reinforce mutual aspirations of promoting South-South cooperation and development through BRICS and FOCAC.

The PRC remains South Africa's largest global trading partner in terms of total volumes of bilateral trade, with total trade for 2022 topping R614 billion, up from R544 billion in 2021. However, a growing trade deficit of R154 billion remains a concern for South Africa, which must be addressed through more aggressive exports of value-added goods from South Africa, and by negotiating greater market access into the PRC for more diverse South African products.

North-East Asia and Oceania

Japan

South Africa and Japan enjoy well-established relations, which are particularly strong in the fields of trade and investment, science and technology cooperation, and skills or capacity development

assistance. Since 2010, the relations have been upgraded to a strategic cooperation partnership.

South Africa and Japan cooperate within the framework of a structured bilateral mechanism called the Partnership Forum, which is convened at a Ministerial level.

The 13th South Africa-Japan Partnership Forum Meeting was co-chaired by the two countries' Foreign Affairs Ministers in October 2022 in Tokyo, and the successful deliberations enhanced bilateral relations.

Japan is one of the major investors (over R90 billion) in the South African economy, with 274 Japanese companies sustaining over 250 000 local jobs to the benefit of many South Africans. Japan is the fourth-largest economy in the world and total bilateral trade between the two countries in 2023 was R155,7 billion; with South Africa recording a trade surplus of R55,8 billion.

Some of the key deliverables between the two countries are the benefits from high-quality Japanese training and skills development opportunities such as the African Business Education Initiative at Master's and PhD degree levels (linked to internships at Japanese multinational companies); and a specialised artisans' training programme at two local Technical, Vocational Education and Training institutions (Tshwane-South in Gauteng and North-Link in the Western Cape), focussing on the automotive and energy sectors, respectively.

Furthermore, South Africa also appreciates the opportunity provided to young South Africans to teach English in Japan through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET).

Republic of Korea (ROK)

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Republic of Korea (ROK) continue to grow annually, with a focus on trade and investment. The two countries cooperate within the framework of the Joint Commission of Cooperation (JCC), which is convened at a Ministerial level. The inaugural session of the JCC between the ROK and South Africa was co-chaired by the respective Foreign Ministers in October 2022, which covered a broad spectrum of sectoral cooperation between the two countries.

South Africa is the ROK's largest trading partner in Africa, and the ROK is South Africa's fourth largest trading partner in Asia. Some of the major ROK companies investing in South Africa are Hyundai, Samsung, KIA, Daewoo and LG.

Total trade between the two countries has been growing steadily with the trade balance in South Africa's favour. Total trade amounts to R56 billion in 2023, with exports to ROK totalling R37 billion and imports from ROK totalling R18 billion.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

Due to the imposition of various UNSC sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), bilateral relations

between the two countries have remained limited.

To promote bilateral relations, South Africa and the DPRK signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Diplomatic Consultation in 2022. This structured mechanism will serve as a platform to broaden the scope of sectoral cooperation between the two countries.

South Africa has consistently called for the de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, as it firmly believes that nuclear weapons and the pursuance of such capabilities do not enhance security, but rather constitute a source of regional and international insecurity.

Mongolia

The Mongolian Embassy in Egypt is accredited to South Africa, while South Africa's Embassy in Beijing is accredited to Mongolia. South Africa and Mongolia held their bilateral political consultation in Pretoria in January 2020 to discuss relations, opportunities for expanding economic cooperation in mining, agriculture, education and culture sectors, as well as regional and international issues of common interest.

Mongolia's mining sector and its vast coal reserves potentially offer an opportunity for collaboration with South Africa, especially in terms of clean coal technologies. Mongolia's remoteness from South Africa as a landlocked country surrounded by China and Russia, probably contributed to exports from South Africa to Mongolia in 2020 only amounting to R28,2 million while imports from Mongolia stood at R554 686.

South and Central Asia

Central Asia

The South African Ambassador to Kazakhstan is accredited to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, while the South African Ambassador in Turkey is accredited to Uzbekistan, both on a non-residential basis. Tajikistan's Ambassador to Egypt and Kyrgyzstan's Ambassador in Saudi Arabia are accredited on a non-residential basis to South Africa.

Kazakhstan

Bilateral relations between South African and Kazakhstan are cordial and are conducted under the umbrella of the structured Protocol on Regular Political Consultations, signed in 1997 and co-chaired at the level of Deputy Minister.

The Bilateral Political Consultation serves to explore opportunities to strengthen bilateral relations between South Africa and Kazakhstan, focussing on trade and investment, skills exchange and academic cooperation, and to build on existing cooperation at various levels in the multilateral forums.

The seventh round of Bilateral Political Consultations took place in Astana on 7 June 2023, to review progress made since the previous round. The consultations further explored closer cooperation in the

fields of education and skills exchange, science and technology, mining, agriculture and energy to encourage the expansion of economic cooperation.

South Asia

South Africa's economic strategy in South Asia is strongly focused on deepening trade and investment linkages, particularly with countries that offer potential for future growth, and where synergies and complementarities in products and technologies exist. South Africa enjoys cordial relations with India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan and the Maldives.

India

The strategic partnership between South Africa and India is anchored by a deep and shared history of friendship and solidarity. Bilateral relations with India are structured via a Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) and Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) which are held at a Senior Official level.

The most recent JMC was the 10th JMC, which was co-chaired by the former Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Naledi Pandor, and the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Mr Jaishankar, in New Delhi on 17 January 2020. Key achievements of the 10th Session of the JMC included implementation of the Visa Simplification Agreement as well as the roll-out of the e-visa system for Indian nationals, the announcement of the hard launch of the Gandhi Mandela Artisan Skills Centre, the identification of two agricultural products for Indian market access, as well as positive consideration of customised training courses for South African civil servants.

The most recent FOC meeting was held in New Delhi on 3 August 2022. The meeting served to review the status of pending issues and projects and to commence with preparations for the 11th JMC which will be hosted by South Africa. It was also agreed that the three-year Strategic Programme of Cooperation (SPoC) signed during the 2019 State Visit will be reviewed with the intention of renewing the document during the next JMC.

Many of the common foreign policy objectives that both countries share are pursued multilaterally, especially through South-South initiatives. South Africa and India are both committed to the BRICS, IBSA, IORA, the BASIC group of countries, the G77 plus China, the NAM, the Commonwealth and the G20. Close cooperation with India exists within these groupings.

Pakistan

South Africa's bilateral relations with Pakistan were established in April 1994 and are underscored by strong bonds of solidarity, friendship and cooperation. The relations are managed through a Joint Commission (JC), which meets biennially. The agreement establishing the JC was signed on 25 November 2021. The signing of the Agreement on the

Establishment of a Joint Commission was a great milestone for the two countries and is expected to further reinforce the existing warm relationship. Bilateral trade with Pakistan has expanded rapidly, while the potential to strengthen economic relations between South Africa and Pakistan is enormous, as both countries are considered regional markets with large and diverse resources.

Sri Lanka

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Sri Lanka are cordial and conducted under the umbrella of a structured Partnership Forum. Major exports to Sri Lanka are minerals, primarily coal. Bilateral relations have shown a marked strengthening as a result of growing collaboration over a wide spectrum of activities, most notably tourism, investment, trade and educational exchanges.

Following the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka in 2009 and upon request from Sri Lanka, South Africa has been supporting reconciliation and nation-building initiatives by sharing best practices in reconciliation and nation-building with Sri Lanka.

In March 2023, a Sri Lankan ministerial delegation led by the former Foreign Minister, Mr Ali Sabry and included the Justice Minister, Dr Wijeyadasa Rajapaksha, visited South Africa to study South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. A key outcome of the visit to South Africa, was an agreement to sign an MoU on Technical Cooperation relating to the Establishment of the Proposed Commission for Truth, Unity and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh, Nepal and Maldives

The South African High Commissioner in New Delhi, India, is accredited to Bangladesh on a non-residential basis. Bangladesh holds large potential for the expansion of trade and economic relations. In recent years, bilateral relations between South Africa and Bangladesh have deepened and grown exponentially. Bilateral relations between the two countries are cordial and are conducted under the umbrella of the structured Agreement on the Establishment of Regular Diplomatic Consultations, which is co-chaired at Senior Official level.

Nepal

The South African High Commissioner in New Delhi is accredited non-residentially to Nepal, while Nepal has a resident diplomatic mission in Pretoria. South Africa and Nepal enjoy good bilateral relations, consolidated further through the exchange of high-level bilateral visits. Various visits from Nepal have also focused on learning from the South African model of transitional justice, best practices and good governance.

In an effort to further enhance the strong bilateral relations between the two countries, on 10 March 2023, South Africa and Nepal signed a Declaration of Intent on Cooperation, which provides for a structured bilateral mechanism at Senior Official level, through which bilateral

relations would be advanced.

Maldives

The South African High Commissioner in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is accredited to the Maldives on a non-residential basis. While bilateral relations between South Africa and the Maldives are cordial, there is currently no bilateral mechanism in place to advance relations between the two countries.

South-East Asia

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a primary intergovernmental regional grouping in southeast Asia, established in 1967 to promote economic and security cooperation among its ten members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam (Timor Leste is on track to become the 11th member of the organisation).

South Africa's bilateral relations with the countries in this region have grown steadily and positively over the past 30 years, prompting South Africa to become a high contracting party to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2020.

In July 2023, South Africa was granted the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner to ASEAN by a consensus decision of the 56th Meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, becoming the first African country to be conferred the status. Attaining the partnership was part of a concerted effort by South Africa to deepen its political, economic and social relations, through practical sectoral cooperation with southeast Asia – a dynamic and fast-developing region, estimated to have a population of approximately 680 million and a GDP of 3,2 trillion dollars.

Thailand

Thailand is South Africa's largest trading partner in the ASEAN. The structured Bilateral Mechanism through which the two countries optimise existing cooperation is the South Africa-Thailand Senior Official Meeting (SOM). Massive ongoing infrastructure projects in Thailand provide a base for South African exports of machinery, iron ore and steel as well as mineral products. South Africa is due to host the next Senior Officials Meeting in Pretoria in 2024. Thailand has also emerged in recent years as a growing investor in automotive component manufacturing in South Africa.

Malaysia

South Africa's bilateral relations with Malaysia, marked by traditional friendship and cordiality, have continued to progress, supported by an active commercial relationship that promotes two-way trade between the countries. Structured bilateral relations are conducted under the umbrella of the FOC mechanism.

Singapore

South Africa and Singapore enjoy warm and collaborative relations. Bilateral relations are conducted through FOCs, which were established in April 2005 and make provision for regular consultations on issues of mutual interest between the two countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Singapore is world-renowned as a centre of excellence and it has been particularly supportive in assisting South Africa with skills development under the Singapore Cooperation Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Over 1 500 South African civil servants have participated in training courses in Singapore.

Indonesia

In 2008, South Africa and Indonesia signed the Joint Declaration on a Strategic Partnership for a Peaceful and Prosperous Future, elevating the long-standing relations between the two countries to a strategic level. Bilateral relations between the two countries are managed through a JC and JTC established in 2004 and 2006, respectively.

Vietnam

Ties between South Africa and Vietnam have developed and solidified into a multi-faceted relationship with growing cooperation in numerous fields. Bilateral economic relations between the two countries are coordinated through the Partnership Forum for Economic, Trade, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation, which takes place biennially and is co-chaired at the level of Deputy Ministers.

Philippines

The Philippines is the third-largest economy in the ASEAN after Indonesia and Thailand. As such, South Africa highly values its friendly and robust relations with the Philippines. Bilateral relations between the two countries are coordinated through a Bilateral Consultative Forum, a structured mechanism whereby issues of mutual concern, briefings on domestic and regional developments, as well as exploration of possible fields of cooperation are discussed. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos and Timor-Leste South Africa's relations with Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Laos and Timor-Leste are cordial.

Australasia and the Pacific Islands

Australia

South Africa and Australia enjoy cordial relations and interact biennially through the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM). The next session of the SOM is due to be held in Australia to enhance bilateral relations. South Africa and Australia cooperate across a range of sectors and issues including law enforcement, sport, tourism, education, defence relations and science and technology.

Australia is one of South Africa's largest trading partners. Both countries have large, export-oriented resource sectors and

sophisticated agriculture, mining and service sectors. Major imports by South Africa from Australia are chemicals, mineral products and machinery. On the other hand, South Africa's exports to Australia are in the main dominated by high-quality passenger motor vehicles, aircraft, vessels, machinery, iron and steel products.

New Zealand

Bilateral relations between South Africa and New Zealand are coordinated through a biennial SOM. The next session of the SOM is due to be held in New Zealand to enhance bilateral relations. South Africa and New Zealand enjoy close cooperation in business, tourism, agriculture, disarmament, fisheries, environmental protection, indigenous people and human rights issues.

A significant feature of the South Africa-New Zealand relationship is its sporting ties in rugby, cricket, netball and in recent years, soccer. In recognition of existing people-to-people relations. The two countries work well within the multilateral arena, as evidenced by close cooperation within the UN and the Commonwealth. New Zealand remains a major commercial partner for South Africa in the Oceania region.

Relations with the Middle East

South Africa enjoys strong historical relations and ties of solidarity with countries of the Middle East, anchored by the strategic objective of strengthening South-South relations. South Africa has strengthened the bilateral relationships with countries from the Gulf region from a political as well as economic perspective.

The Gulf region's strategic location and vast energy reserves are also critical for ensuring export hubs as well as global energy security. Within the political realm, South Africa's engagements to promote peace and security have been through diplomatic support for conflict resolution efforts in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen and contributing towards finding a sustainable resolution to the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict.

Palestine

South Africa and Palestine have enjoyed warm relations since the inception of democracy. Official diplomatic relations between a democratic South Africa and Palestine were established in 1995. Over the last two decades, bilateral relations have strengthened with the establishment of a JCC, while a Political Consultations Mechanism has further reinforced relations. The overall objectives of these platforms are to monitor and guide the conduct of bilateral relations.

South Africa remains concerned and condemns the continued illegal settlement expansion by Israel, which constitutes a contravention of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. South Africa believes that the only way to bring about lasting peace

in the Middle East is to have a two-state solution for Palestine and Israel based on the international recognition and independence of the State of Palestine. This would be based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, functioning within recognised and secure borders and living side-by-side in peace with Israel and its other neighbours, as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap, the Madrid Principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant UNSC resolutions.

Syria

Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the two countries have continued to maintain diplomatic relations. South Africa affirmed its support for Syria's territorial integrity and reiterated its support for a political solution to the conflict in Syria. South Africa also declared its condemnation of all violence and human rights violations and remains concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Syria. South Africa has called on all parties involved to work for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the conflict considering the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria, through inclusive national dialogue and a Syrian-led political process.

South Africa remains committed to protecting the fundamental interests of the Syrian people, maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East region and upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN and basic norms governing international relations.

The MoU on Bilateral Consultations between the Republic of South Africa and the Syrian Arab Republic was concluded in 2023 on the margins of the Africa-Saudi Summit. The MoU recognises the importance of a formalised and constructive dialogue concerning bilateral relations between South Africa and Syria, as well as the fact that there are regional and international issues of common interest between the two countries.

Iraq

Bilateral relations are cordial and collaborative. The level of trade between the two countries has fluctuated. There are several bilateral agreements in various fields being negotiated, which will constitute an important framework for advancing bilateral relations.

South Africa supports all international initiatives and the government of Iraq's efforts to restore stability and build inclusive and effective governance. The country reaffirmed its support for the mandate of the UN Mission in Iraq. It also supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq in line with the principles of the UN Charter.

Jordan

Jordan was the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1993. The Embassy of South Africa was established in Amman in December 1993, and the Embassy of Jordan was opened in Pretoria in June 1994. The two countries enjoy a warm and increasingly diverse relationship, underpinned by strengthening political ties. An

MoU on Bilateral Political Consultations was concluded in 2023, which recognises the importance of constructive dialogue as well as engaging on regional and international issues of common interest between the two countries.

The MoU on Bilateral Political Consultation (BCP) provides the two countries with an ideal mechanism for structured cooperation in existing opportunities and untapped potential, these straddle across a wide spectrum of human endeavour, from political cooperation to socio-economic issues.

In addition to leveraging the MoU on BCP for political co-operation, focus will also be on the enhancement of economic ties, as well as in the areas of cultural interaction, tourism, education and people-to-people relations.

Lebanon

South Africa has no residential diplomatic presence in Lebanon, but the South African Embassy in Syria is accredited to Lebanon. South Africa and Lebanon established diplomatic relations on 27 June 1994. To further enhance bilateral ties and to institutionalise regular and structural political engagements between the two countries, an MoU on Bilateral Consultations was signed on 23 August 2022. It is envisaged that the MoU will institutionalise a structured bilateral consultation mechanism between the two countries at Senior Officials' level.

At a political level, bilateral cooperation with Lebanon on regional peace and security challenges is important for South Africa to reach its strategic objectives in this region, pursuing significant trade, investment, tourism and other opportunities.

United Arab Emirates

South Africa has strengthened its diplomatic and economic relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in recent years, reflecting its position as South Africa's largest trading partner in the Middle East. The UAE is also a growing source of investment into the South African economy.

Bilateral relations between the two countries are driven through a Ministerial Joint Commission, which reviews relations in the various fields of cooperation, including trade and investment, energy, agriculture, transport and social development. The 3rd Session of the Joint Commission between the Republic of South Africa and the United Arab Emirates was held in Abu Dhabi on 13 June 2023. The mechanism also allows for the identification of new projects in a broad field of cooperation. The UAE also joined BRICS on 1 January 2024.

Iran

The primary mechanism for engagement with Iran is the JCC, established in 1995, which allows for a high-level review of bilateral relations and considers areas to further strengthen relations. During the

Ministerial segment of the 15th Session of the South Africa-Iran JCC held on 10 August 2023, the respective Foreign Ministers reflected on the level of bilateral relations between the countries and the progress made since the previous session to further strengthen bilateral sectoral cooperation. The commission is supported by an intersessional mechanism, the Deputy Ministerial Working Group, which further monitors the implementation of decisions and undertakings made during the JCC.

South Africa remains committed to diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of conflict, as a matter of principle, and considers the JCPOA an important achievement in this regard. The JCPOA was unanimously endorsed by UNSC Resolution 2231, which provides a binding legal framework to the agreement.

Saudi Arabia

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Saudi Arabia were formalised in May 1994. South Africa imports approximately 47% of its oil from Saudi Arabia. The various positive outcomes of the State Visit by President Ramaphosa from 15 to 16 October 2022, were further pursued. Deputy President Mashatile attended the inaugural Saudi-Africa Summit on 10 November 2023.

On the margins of the summit, a meeting was co-chaired by former Minister Pandor and the Saudi Minister for National Economy, Dr Majed Al Qasabi. It was agreed that South Africa and Saudi Arabia will cooperate in areas such as renewable energy, finance, agriculture and in support of the ACFTA.

To grow trade, investment and economic ties, including business-to-business cooperation between South Africa and Saudi Arabia, several business interactions have been arranged with Saudi Arabia. The country is a large investor in the energy sector in South Africa, with ACWA Power being a major role player in South Africa's energy mix through its solar plants in several parts of the country.

The Kingdom has increased its cooperation with South Africa in the agro-processing sector and that Saudi Arabia is now a vital partner and key market for our exports, including South African red meat in Saudi Arabia. South Africa remains committed to solidifying strong bilateral relations in all fields, in line with the aspirations of the leadership of the two countries. This includes increased interaction on regional and international developments.

Qatar

South Africa's political and economic relations with Qatar have diversified and grown significantly over recent years and have become more diverse. Qatar has traditionally enjoyed a healthy trade surplus owing to the high proportion of oil and petrochemical trade to South Africa. SASOL has invested in and is a 49% shareholder with Qatar Energy (51%) in the USD\$1 billion ORYX GTL joint venture, which is its flagship project abroad. In Qatar, ORYX GTL, the world's first

commercial-scale gas-to-liquids plant, uses SASOL's proprietary GTL technology to convert natural gas into liquid fuel and chemical products. Qatar's significant investments in South Africa focus on the financial and business services and chemicals sectors (sales, marketing and support projects).

At the invitation of the Amir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, President Ramaphosa undertook a State Visit to the State of Qatar in Doha from 14 to 15 November 2023 accompanied by the Ministers of International Relations and Cooperation; Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform; Trade, Industry and Competition; Defence and Military Veterans and Basic Education.

Three bilateral Memoranda of Understanding were signed during the visit, covering areas such as the establishment of a Mechanism for Bilateral Consultations which would upgrade the current Senior Officials' bilateral consultations level to Ministerial level, cooperation on basic education and cooperation on the empowerment of women and persons with disabilities.

Kuwait

Kuwait remains an important partner for South Africa in the Middle East, particularly in terms of economic relations. Kuwait has become an increasingly important market for South African exports of live animals, processed food products, machinery and products of the chemical and allied industries.

Kuwaiti companies have made substantial investments in the construction and development of hotels and real estate in South Africa and has invested on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Kuwait has a diverse investment portfolio in South Africa, which includes, among others, investments in blue-chip companies, real estate and resorts, an airfreight wholesaler, an auto parts import company and companies organising livestock imports from South Africa, such as Al-Mawashi.

Oman

Diplomatic relations were established in 1995 and are managed through the South Africa-Oman Bilateral Partnership Forum. Oman has a resident embassy in Pretoria. Due to austerity measures implemented post-COVID-19, the South African Embassy in Muscat was closed in April 2022, and the South African Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia is now accredited to Oman. Oman is also South Africa's third-largest trading partner in the Middle East, preceded only by the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Oman is also of strategic importance for South Africa's energy security as almost 20% of all diesel imports in 2023 were sourced from Oman. Both countries are keen to attract further investment in diverse areas. Significant potential exists for enhanced cooperation in various fields such as agro-processing, livestock and frozen meat exports, construction, education/ training, defence, energy, science and innovation, etc.

Yemen

Relations between South Africa and Yemen are cordial. Both countries are members of the UN, the IORA and the NAM. The continued civil war in Yemen has hindered the development and strengthening of bilateral relations. South Africa continues to support the ongoing efforts by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr Hans Grundberg, towards a peace process in Yemen.

Bahrain

Relations with Bahrain were formalised in November 1993. Trade relations between South Africa and Bahrain have been steadily expanding, with promising prospects for further growth. To further capitalise on relations, South Africa appointed an Honorary-Consul in Manama to assist the accredited embassy in Riyadh, serving as a contact point for South African business interests, promoting trade, investment and tourism.

North America

Canada

Canada and South Africa share cordial and historic relations based on shared values such as respect for democracy, human rights, multilateralism and diversity. Historic relations are based on Canada's opposition to apartheid in South Africa and contribution to the development of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996. In multilateral forums, Canada and South Africa collaborate on such issues as the promotion of ethical governance, gender empowerment, sustainable development and climate change.

The annual consultations, at Senior Official level, are a structured mechanism that provide a platform for foreign policy discussions and sectoral cooperation on various areas including trade and investment, development cooperation, science and innovation, clean technology, environmental affairs, mining and the cultural industries. About two-thirds of South African exports to Canada relate to minerals and mining equipment, with agricultural and chemical products making up the rest.

Canadian investments in South Africa are also largely concentrated in the mining and minerals sector, with more than 50% of total investment in this sector. The other 50% is fairly diversified across a number of sectors including transportation, food processing, hospitality, ICT and instrumentation sectors. There are ongoing efforts to further diversify trade and investment relations, including through Canadian investments in the energy sector in support of South Africa's green transition.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation in the health, science and innovation sectors has been strengthened through the signing of an MoU on Health, which will allow the two countries to intensify cooperation in specialised fields, taking advantage of their respective strengths and world-class expertise. Canada has officially

joined the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) and Canadian technologies are key components of the MeerKAT telescope. On the environmental front, the Working on Fire (WoF) initiative allows for the deployment of South African firefighters to Canada to combat wildland fires, and has been hugely impactful, with scope for further expansion.

Canada is developing a new Engagement Strategy for Africa, which will open further opportunities for enhanced collaboration in support of the AfCFTA. Canada wants to involve other G7 partners in support of the implementation of the AfCFTA and is capacitating its Secretariat. In addition, Canada is keen to work with South Africa in identifying areas of convergence between the G7 and G20 where the two countries could work together on a common agenda during their respective 2025 presidencies.

United States of America

Bilateral cooperation with the United States of America (USA) is historic, broad and robust, covering a wide spectrum of sectoral cooperation aligned to the NDP and MTSF priorities, as well as the US Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa that was unveiled in August 2022. South Africa and the USA also share strong people-to-people ties through the African diaspora and bonds of solidarity that were fostered between the civil rights and anti-apartheid movements.

Bilateral relations are at the strategic level and the USA remains a key partner for South Africa in pursuing domestic priorities and in supporting the African Agenda (economic integration, peace, security and post-conflict reconstruction). Both countries are committed to building on issues of common interest and to maintaining a constructive dialogue on areas of divergence, with a view to strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership for mutual benefit.

The USA is a leading source of foreign direct investment (FDI) and development assistance. Under the Mega Assistance Agreement (MAA) signed in 2018 between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Treasury, the US Government obligated, over the last three years, an amount of USD\$1,880 billion, covering areas such as education, health, skills development, tourism, investment and finance. The US President's Emergency Programme for AIDS Relief continues to be impactful, both in South Africa and the region.

The USA is an important export market for South Africa, including for agricultural and value-added products, and is also a significant source of tourists. The USA is currently South Africa's third-largest trading partner, absorbing a substantial number of manufactured exports from South Africa. In 2023, South Africa exported R155 billion to the USA and imported R169 billion from the USA. Around 600 US companies are invested in South Africa across a range of sectors and employ 134 600 people in South Africa, and there are approximately 22 South African companies currently investing in the USA in key sectors such as petrochemicals (SASOL).

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) affords duty-free and quota-free access to the US market for value-added products from South Africa and is the cornerstone of the economic relationship. More recently, the two countries committed to resuscitate the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) at a Ministerial level, which will ensure constructive dialogue on trade and investment issues.

South Africa hosted the successful 20th AGOA Forum in November 2023. The forum reaffirmed the strategic and mutually beneficial nature of AGOA and promoted economic links between Africa and the USA. There is a common commitment to renew and strengthen AGOA, which is of mutual benefit to the USA and African economies, and to capitalise on the new opportunities presented by the AfCFTA.

Regional organisations

European Union

South Africa and the European Union (EU) enjoy a longstanding relationship that was elevated to a strategic partnership through the adoption of the Joint Action Plan in 2007. Relations with the EU are structured in accordance with the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement, whereas trade relations are governed by the SADC-EU Economic Partnership Agreement.

Within the framework of the strategic partnership, the parties hold meetings at Presidential/Summit and Ministerial levels, as well as structured mechanisms such as the MPD, JCC at Director-General level and inter-parliamentary meetings to develop and strengthen bilateral cooperation and engage on regional, continental, and global issues of common interest.

Following the successful hosting of the 15th meeting of the JCC in December 2022, former Minister Naledi Pandor and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles, co-chaired the 15th Session of the South Africa-EU MPD on 26 to 27 January 2023 in Pretoria. The MPD was held in an extended format which entailed the participation of various European Commissioners and South African Ministers.

Furthermore, the Director-General of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, Mr Zane Dangor, co-chaired the 11th South Africa-EU Political and Security Dialogue Forum and the 8th South Africa-EU Human Rights Dialogue Forum in Pretoria on 26 and 27 February 2024, respectively.

All of the above structured mechanisms, as well as other high-level visits and engagements, served as preparations for the 8th South Africa-EU Summit to be hosted by South Africa, as reaffirmed by President Cyril Ramaphosa and the President of the European Council, President Charles Michel during a teleconference held on 20 May 2024. The EU as a bloc remains South Africa's biggest trade and investment partner and an important source of tourism. More than 1

000 EU companies operate in South Africa, creating more than 350 000 jobs. Challenges remain in the trade sphere and more specifically on market access issues.

During an official visit to the EU in December 2023, the Minister of Finance, Mr Enoch Godongwana and Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen of International Partnerships, co-signed the new EU-South Africa Financing Agreement: Partnering for Impact for the Second Phase of the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021–2027, enabling an allocation of €15 million for the period 2024 – 2027. The EU also launched a €100 million Regional Teachers' Training Programme during the MPD visit.

The 27th South Africa-EU Inter-Parliamentary Meeting (IPM) between members of the South African Parliament and members of the European Parliament, took place at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 18 to 19 October 2023. The discussions focussed on the strategic partnership as well as on issues of mutual interest such as peace and security, trade relations and supply chains, climate change, education, women empowerment and the upcoming elections in both South Africa and the EU Parliament during 2024.

An EU Electoral Expert Mission was deployed to South Africa to assist the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) during the 2024 National and Provincial Elections on 29 May 2024.

Western Europe

Austria

The South Africa-Austria bilateral relationship is anchored by its large expatriate community and the major investments by Austrian companies. The South Africa-Austria Bilateral Consultations, chaired at the level of Deputy Minister, are the primary formal mechanism for the coordination of relations between the two countries, which is focussed on economic relations, renewable energy, science and innovation, vocational training and culture. South Africa successfully hosted the 3rd Meeting of the Bilateral Consultations on 7 June 2022, and the 4th Bilateral Consultations Meeting is scheduled to be hosted in Vienna during late 2024 or early 2025.

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, Mr Alexander Schallenberg, undertook a working visit to South Africa from 13 to 15 December 2023, where he met with former Minister Naledi Pandor, and was accompanied by a business delegation to a business forum. He officially opened the Austrian Cultural Forum in Pretoria and signed an MoU on Arts and Culture with former Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Zizi Kodwa.

Bilateral trade is gradually recovering to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels. The latest trade figures show that total trade increased marginally from R15, 9 billion to R17 billion since 1 July 2023 to the end of June 2024.

A total of 86 Austrian companies are directly involved in South Africa, of which 24 have direct investments, 50 have distribution

and sales offices and 12 are involved in projects, training and other services. These investments have made an invaluable contribution to job creation and skills and technology transfer in South Africa.

Tourism from Austria is gradually increasing year-on-year. The number of Austrian nationals travelling to South Africa increased from 20 894 to 21 322 between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024.

Belgium

South Africa and Belgium enjoy substantive and diverse relations, which was reinforced by the state visit of King Philip of Belgium in March 2023. High-level structured engagements between South Africa and Belgium take place through a JC at Deputy Ministerial level. Four meetings of the JC have taken place, the last of which was hosted by the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Alvin Botes, in South Africa in November 2022. The 5th JC with Belgium is scheduled to be hosted by Belgium in December 2024.

In addition, South Africa has very strong relations with the Flanders region of Belgium, which has a regional representation in South Africa. South Africa and Flanders also manage their relationship through a JC, but at Deputy Director-General level. The main areas of cooperation with Flanders are arts and culture, human rights, higher education, science and innovation, trade and investment, as well as youth. The next JC meeting with Flanders scheduled for later in 2024, will focus on new areas of potential cooperation, following the end of the Flanders Development Programme.

Belgium is a major economic partner for South Africa, and many of South Africa's exports enter Europe through the Port of Antwerp, which is the second-largest in the EU after the Port of Rotterdam.

South Africa's bilateral trade decreased slightly from R91 billion in June 2023 to R83,79 billion in May 2024. Belgium is also one of the top 10 investors in South Africa, with over 180 Belgian companies in South Africa in areas such as mining, green energy, ports, logistics and agriculture.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on Belgian tourist arrivals in South Africa. In 2019, the last "normal" year for tourism before the pandemic, South Africa received 54 233 Belgian tourists, but this number declined by 83% to only 9 106 in 2021. The number of tourists has since recovered from 34 826 in 2022 to 47 733 at the end of June 2024.

Germany

Germany is one of South Africa's most important strategic partners. It is the second-largest market for South African exports, the third-largest source of overseas tourists, and a major investor with about 600 German companies in South Africa, mainly in the auto-industry and telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, machinery and mining industries. Bilateral relations between the two countries are managed through a Binational Commission (BNC) which is chaired at the level of

Foreign Ministers. The 11th Meeting of the BNC was held in Pretoria on 27 June 2023 and the 12th BNC is scheduled to take place in Berlin in 2025. South Africa and Germany have concluded 72 bilateral agreements, which provide a legal framework for cooperation in several areas.

Germany also has an extensive development programme in South Africa, covering areas such as vaccine production, developing infrastructure for renewable energy, vocational education and training aligned strongly with the needs of the energy transition, upskilling women to make them fit for jobs in digital technologies, and upgrading urban spaces in South African townships particularly affected by violence.

Germany is among the largest contributors to climate resilience programmes in South Africa. It is an original member of the International Partners' Group of the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP). Focus areas for the ongoing German-South African Energy Partnership established in 2013, include just energy transition, energy storage, green hydrogen, digitalisation and energy efficiency.

The latest trade statistics show that total trade has decreased by 4% from R301 billion in 2023 to R289 billion during the 12 months to the end of May 2024. South Africa's major export to Germany in 2023 was minerals, and iron ore in particular. South Africa's major import during this period were automotive components.

The latest tourism figures show that the number of German tourists is gradually recovering towards the pre-COVID-19 pandemic level of 322 720 per year. The number of tourists from South Africa to Germany reached 251 062 between April 2023 and May 2024.

Luxembourg

South Africa and Luxembourg enjoy active economic relations with a number of South Africa's largest companies having subsidiaries or European headquarters registered in Luxembourg. The largest of these is MINORCO (a company owned by Anglo American, De Beers and the Oppenheimer family). Since 1994, South Africa and Luxembourg have signed seven bilateral agreements, ranging from economic to development cooperation in the areas of health and agriculture. Luxembourg's significance for South Africa lies mainly in the country being an important centre of the international financial community.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands is one of South Africa's most important international partners and the two countries maintain a substantial and diverse relationship. In 2023, President Ramaphosa received King Willem Alexander and Queen Máxima for a state visit, and Prime Minister Rutte for a working visit.

Former Foreign Minister Hanke Bruins Slot, also visited South Africa for the 3rd South Africa-Netherlands JCC. The 4th JCC is scheduled to take place in the Hague during 2025.

The Netherlands is South Africa's sixth-largest trading partner, a major investor and development partner and the fourth-largest source of overseas tourists. Much of the focus of the bilateral relationship is on green hydrogen and just energy transition. The Netherlands is now a full member of the International Partner Group of the JETP.

South Africa's trade with the Netherlands for the period 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024 was R106,75 billion. Much of South Africa's exports to Europe, including about one-fifth of all agricultural exports, go through the Port of Rotterdam.

Switzerland

South Africa's bilateral relations with Switzerland remain strong, covering areas such as trade and investment, science and innovation, higher education (in particular vocational training), arts and culture and human rights. In recent years, the political dialogue has expanded as a result of Switzerland's mediation role in Mozambique and elsewhere on the African continent.

Bilateral relations are managed through High-Level Consultations (HLC), chaired by the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the two countries. The 10th Meeting of the HLC was held in South Africa on 9 March 2023, with the 11th HLC scheduled to take place in Bern in October 2024.

Switzerland maintains a development programme in South Africa, which has transitioned from development assistance to economic development. The programme is implemented by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in consultation with National Treasury.

South Africa has long been one of Switzerland's important trade and investment partners on the African continent. Total trade increased from R19,6 billion in 2023 to R21,1 billion in 2023. Switzerland is the seventh-largest foreign investor in South Africa, with approximately 100 companies and subsidiaries or production facilities in the country, sustaining an estimated 50 000 jobs.

Switzerland officially joined the SKAO as a full member on 19 January 2022, which is an addition to the significant science, technology and education programmes between the two countries.

Switzerland is the tenth-largest source of overseas tourism in South Africa. Tourism flows are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and have increased from 11 375 in 2021 to 38 160 in 2023.

Switzerland is also host to multiple international organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has played an important part in South Africa's history. During the time of apartheid, the Red Cross was an important channel of communication between political prisoners on Robben Island and their families.

United Kingdom

Bilateral relations between South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK) cover a wide spectrum and have a far-reaching impact. Cooperation

between the two countries is broad and includes health, education, science and technology, energy, the environment, defence, police, arts and culture, and sport and recreation. Bilateral relations between South Africa and the UK are managed through a Bilateral Forum at Foreign Ministerial level, which meets biennially. South Africa and the UK have a strong historic trading relationship, which is also one of South Africa's most important trading relationships.

There is a healthy flow of investment in both directions. The UK is recognised as the foremost source of FDI into South Africa, while South African companies have equally made large investments in the UK. The two countries have identified key sectors for investment to boost economic growth and development.

These sectors include manufacturing, agro-processing, infrastructure development, mining, energy and tourism. South Africa and the UK also have strong relationships in wide-ranging areas of cooperation, including energy, science and technology, education, health, arts and culture.

Ireland

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Ireland are cordial. The relations are managed through the biennial South Africa-Ireland Partnership Forum at Deputy Minister level. After 1994, Ireland strongly supported the reconstruction and development of South Africa with an extensive development cooperation programme.

Ireland's Africa Strategy document emphasises South Africa's important role in Africa and globally. Ireland continues to be a valued source of FDI in business services, alternative/renewable energy, software and information technology services and plastics. The Irish Government also provides assistance to South African students through the Kader Asmal Fellowship Programme, which started in 2013.

France

France is a significant technological, trade, investment, tourism and development cooperation partner for South Africa. Bilateral technical cooperation between South Africa and France exists in various sectors including energy, agriculture, manufacturing, transport, education and science and technology. About 250 French companies have invested in South Africa and employ around 300 000 people. Following the 8th South Africa-France Forum for Political Dialogue (FPD), the two countries agreed to strengthen bilateral relations. The two countries agreed to elevate the existing Forum for Political Dialogue to a Joint Ministerial Commission, a bilateral relations framework that will be led by the two Foreign Ministers.

In October 2023, Director-General Zane Dangor, hosted his French counterpart in Pretoria to discuss several pertinent bilateral issues in preparation for the upcoming Ministerial FPD Meeting due to take place in Paris at a date to be announced by the French authorities.

During the 2022 period, there were a number of bilateral engagements between the two Foreign Ministers during which they agreed to discuss and collaborate on issues of mutual interest and concern.

Greece

South Africa and Greece enjoy traditional and close ties of friendship and cooperation as well as a convergence of views and cooperation on various regional and international issues in general. South Africa-Greece relations are underpinned by the presence of a substantial and influential Greek professional and business community.

Cyprus

South Africa has excellent and long-standing bilateral relations with Cyprus. It has maintained strong ties with the country, partly because of a substantial and influential Cypriot community in South Africa.

Italy

South Africa and Italy's bilateral relationship has evolved over time, with both countries engaging in diplomatic, economic and cultural cooperation. South Africa is host to more than 30 000 Italian citizens. Both countries have signed several agreements in various areas of cooperation in fields such as science and technology, culture, defence, police and water.

The countries are in the process of exploring further areas of cooperation in sectors such as energy and environment, agriculture, health, education, maritime, transport and manufacturing.

Relations between South Africa and Italy focus on strategic partnerships in regional and global multilateral forums (in the context of AfCFTA, IORA, food security, human rights, climate change and JET). In light of Italy being the Chair of the G7 in 2024 and South Africa chairing the G20 in 2025, the two countries have been engaging on how to align the efforts of these two organisations.

Spain

Spain was South Africa's fifth-largest trade partner in Western Europe in 2023. More than 150 Spanish companies invested in South Africa, creating over 20 000 jobs, largely in sectors such as infrastructure development, renewable energy, financial services, tourism, textiles, IT and software, metals and mining.

Spanish companies contribute significantly to employment creation in South Africa, and they currently employ 12 000 workers on a permanent basis. In the 23 projects of the Renewable Energy IPP Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) for South Africa, there is a Spanish company as a developer or engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractor. There is also a strong flow of FDI between the two countries.

Portugal

South Africa and Portugal maintain friendly political relations and the two countries have strong historical and cultural ties. There are approximately 500 000 South Africans of Portuguese descent and about 200 000 Portuguese nationals who reside in South Africa permanently, serving as an important economic link between South Africa and Portugal.

Investment has been growing, with 26 Portuguese companies having invested in South Africa over 30 years, creating many employment opportunities and providing local supply content as well.

South Africa and Portugal's relations are managed through the South Africa-Portugal Bilateral Consultations which facilitate cooperation on agriculture, defence, education, energy, science and technology, and tourism as well as trade and investment.

Holy See

South Africa's relations with The Holy See were formally established in March 1994 by an agreement signed between former President Nelson Mandela and Pope John Paul II. The Holy See actively participates in events and dialogue that promotes sustainable economic growth, diversification, and creates employment in South Africa

Central, Eastern Europe, Nordic and Baltic countries

Nordic countries

South Africa enjoys good relations with all the Nordic and Baltic countries, flowing from the strong grassroots support of these countries for democratisation in South Africa. Relations have been established in various fields at both public and official levels. The scope of Nordic development cooperation is broad and has benefitted civil society and government.

Although Nordic countries stopped providing development assistance to South Africa in 2009, these countries continue to provide technical support and also partner with South Africa and civil society in addressing development needs in various fields. There is also close cooperation on multilateral issues informed by mutually shared values.

The Nordic countries are strong supporters of the AUDA-NEPAD and are directly involved in conflict resolution and reconstruction projects in Africa. This was reinforced by the signing of the Declaration of Intent on Partnerships in Africa in 2008, which laid a framework for future trilateral cooperation.

Denmark

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Denmark are predicated on the historic Danish support and solidarity with the liberation struggle against apartheid in the early 1960s, leading to the eventual establishment of formal diplomatic relations at the advent of South Africa's democracy. Denmark is also an important partner with regard

to overseas development cooperation. South Africa's relations with Denmark are coordinated through the South Africa-Denmark Senior Officials Consultations and the main areas of cooperation include water resource management, science and technology, maritime and environmental affairs.

South Africa's relations with Denmark are coordinated through a strategic partnership agreement. In signing the strategic partnership agreement, both countries confirm their mutual commitment to a strategic partnership aimed at advancing political cooperation, expanding economic relations and promoting trade and investment, among others.

Estonia

South Africa formally recognised the independence of Estonia and the other Baltic states on 28 August 1991. Bilateral relations between the two countries have been developing gradually since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1991. There is no resident Estonian mission in South Africa, and the South African Embassy in Finland is also accredited to Estonia on a non-residential basis.

Finland

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Finland were re-established in 1994. The bilateral relationship was given more definite structure with the signing of the Declaration of Intent at the Skagen Nordic Summit in 2000. Regular bilateral consultations are coordinated at Senior Official level.

The main areas of cooperation include trade and investment, science and technology, innovation, education (marine studies), ICT and energy. The Blue Economy is central to both countries and is also emphasised as an area with potential for future partnerships. Finland supports Africa's infrastructure development through its funding of the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund.

It also supports the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy by promoting four of the eight thematic partnerships of the joint strategy in Africa, namely peace and security, democratic governance and human rights, climate change, and science, information society and space. Economic relations are good, with bilateral investments having taken place in the mining and paper/wood industries.

Major South African investments have been made by Mondi, Sappi and Anglo American. Finland is also a strong international partner in various areas of global concerns such as strengthening multilateralism, international law, the advancement of gender and human rights, as well as around issues of climate change and has recently launched an Africa Strategy.

Iceland

Diplomatic relations were established in 1995 on a non-residential basis. Iceland is accredited to South Africa from its Ministry of Foreign

Affairs in Reykjavík, and South Africa is accredited to Iceland from its Embassy in Oslo, Norway. Iceland forms part of the Nordic coalition of like-minded states concerning their policies towards South Africa, Africa and international issues, and they play an important role in keeping Africa on the global agenda. Economic relations have not developed significantly and bilateral trade remains below R100 million.

Latvia

South Africa was among the first countries to recognise the independence of Latvia, following the restoration of the independence of the country on 29 August 1991. South Africa established full diplomatic relations with Latvia on 4 November 1991. The two countries have since enjoyed warm and cordial relations, but due to a lack of vigorous economic interaction and a well-defined bilateral cooperation framework, relations between the two countries have failed to reach full potential.

Latvia does not have an embassy in South Africa, but the country has a non-resident ambassador accredited to South Africa stationed in Riga, the capital of Latvia. South Africa has non-resident accreditation through the ambassador in Sweden.

Lithuania

South Africa and Lithuania entered into diplomatic relations in 2008, and the first Lithuanian Ambassador to South Africa was appointed in 2015. The South African Embassy in Sweden is accredited to Lithuania. Relations between South Africa and Lithuania are coordinated at Senior Official level. The main areas of cooperation between the two countries include trade and investment, energy, transport, science and technology, academic and cultural cooperation.

Norway

Full diplomatic relations between South Africa and Norway were established in January 1992. Both countries cooperate and support each other in bilateral and multilateral relations. South Africa's relations with Norway are coordinated through the South Africa-Norway High-Level Consultations, a mechanism within the framework of the 1996 MoU on Bilateral Political Consultations established to deepen relations and expand trade and investment.

Bilateral cooperation has grown to include regional and international issues of mutual interest. South Africa and Norway have worked together on the UNSC in promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, and peace and mediation on the African continent. Norway also supports the NDP priorities through technical cooperation in the areas of oceans management, cooperation in trade and investment, renewable energy, climate change, materials efficiency, waste management and recycling, shipbuilding (boat building), agro-processing and minerals.

Sweden

Relations between Sweden and South Africa date back to the 1930s, when a South African legation was opened in Stockholm. Relations were upgraded to ambassadorial level in 1994. Bilateral relations between South Africa and Sweden were further cemented by the South Africa-Sweden Partnership Year in 1999.

Since then, a number of events have taken place, reinforcing and deepening the already close bilateral relations. In recognition of a strategic partnership that exists between the two countries, the South Africa-Sweden BNC was established in 2000, chaired at the level of Deputy President and Deputy Prime Minister, respectively.

Areas of cooperation include trade and investment, higher education, science and technology, water-resource management, energy, maritime affairs, culture, ICT, environmental affairs and defence. Besides the work of the BNC, South Africa and Sweden established a Defence Committee that convenes independently of the BNC. A Memorandum on Defence Cooperation was concluded in 2000. The Defence Committee discusses and exchanges information within areas of regional security, defence management, bilateral defence agreements, peacekeeping operations, mutual visits, exchange of defence-related information, training and defence-industrial cooperation.

Eastern Europe

The Eastern Europe region is of crucial importance to South Africa's strategic objectives, straddling a wide spectrum of political and economic interests. The region is well endowed with strategic commodities and minerals that are of vital significance to South Africa's economy.

Azerbaijan

South Africa and Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations in 1991. The South African Embassy in Ankara is also accredited to Azerbaijan on a non-residential basis. Structured bilateral relations were established by means of an MoU on Regular Diplomatic Consultations that was concluded in February 2014.

The MoU provides for the strengthening and broadening of the scope of bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, scientific, technological, cultural and humanitarian areas. Other areas of potential interests are energy, defence and air services.

Bilateral relations are coordinated at the level of Senior Officials and areas of cooperation include trade and investment, defence, energy and higher education.

Belarus

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Belarus were established in March 1993. Currently, the South African ambassador to the Russian Federation is the non-residential ambassador to Belarus. Belarus opened its embassy in South Africa in January 2000, and the

first South African ambassador presented credentials in February 2000. The two countries enjoy good bilateral relations that have been strengthened by the exchange of high-level visits for political consultations in the past few years. On the economic front, South Africa and Belarus mainly engage through the Inter-governmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), led by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (**the dtic**).

The committee is co-chaired at the level of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Belarusian side and Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition on the South African side. The primary objective of the cooperation is to strengthen and develop trade and economic cooperation on a long term and stable basis and on the principles of equality and mutual benefit.

Georgia

Full diplomatic relations between South Africa and Georgia were established in 1992. The South African Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine, is non-residentially accredited to Georgia. The Government of Georgia opened an embassy in South Africa in August 2011. Structured bilateral engagements between South Africa and Georgia, at the level of Senior Officials, were established in November 1993 by means of a Protocol on Cooperation between the then Department of Foreign Affairs (now the DIRCO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

Areas of focus include tourism, trade and investment, agriculture, culture and sport. The two countries have established a wine-makers exchange programme, which has seen student and expert exchanges between Telavi State University, a Georgian University and Stellenbosch University's Wine Sciences Department.

Russian Federation

Diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation (RF) and South Africa were established on 28 February 1992. The historical links between the two countries remain strong. The former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was one of the key supporters of the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

South Africa became the first African state to recognise the independence of the RF post the dissolution of the USSR, and regards the RF as an important strategic partner with which close bilateral and multilateral ties exist.

Since the re-establishment of bilateral relations, South Africa's relations with the RF have evolved into a strategic relationship over the past few years through continued high-level political engagements. The Declaration on a Strategic Partnership between South Africa and Russia was signed on the margins of the Fifth BRICS Summit held in Durban in March 2013 by the two countries' Heads of State.

This set principles and a framework for an equitable and mutually beneficial partnership that will support the two countries' national development priorities, the African Agenda and the establishment of

a peaceful, just and democratic global governance system. One of the primary mechanisms for improving the bilateral relationship and advancing government's development objectives is the ITEC, which was established in 1999.

The committee is the most important mechanism underpinning mutually beneficial trade and economic ties between the two countries. It has proven to be an effective instrument for effective engagement on trade and investment issues, as well as critical skills and technology transfers, among others. The ITEC has given practical substance to the political commitment on the part of the two countries to work together, as expressed in the Treaty of Friendship and Partnership signed by both countries.

Sectors covered within the agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy, education, mineral resources, science and technology, transport, water and sanitation, trade and industry. Besides the work of the ITEC, South Africa and the RF established a Defence Committee that convenes independently. There is also growing inter-regional and provincial cooperation that bodes well for strengthened economic cooperation, tourism and people-to-people contact.

Serbia

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Serbia were established in April 2002, when Serbia was still referred to as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Serbia regards South Africa as a strategic partner on the African continent, a regional power and a leading economy that is playing a positive role in promoting peace, security and sustainable development in Africa.

South Africa's contribution to the advancement of multilateralism, the rule of law, human rights and an equitable global governance system is similarly appreciated. Serbia opened its embassy in Pretoria in June 1996. The South African Ambassador in Athens, Greece, is accredited to Serbia on a non-resident basis. Both countries enjoy cordial bilateral relations, which are coordinated at the level of Senior Officials. Areas of cooperation include trade and investment, education and agriculture.

Türkiye

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Türkiye were established in 1995 and have resident embassies in Pretoria and Ankara, respectively. The two countries enjoy good bilateral relations, which have been strengthened by a number of bilateral agreements on different areas of cooperation.

The South Africa-Türkiye Strategic Partnership is informed by the two countries' growing political and economic profile and their geostrategic location in Africa and Euro-Asia; Türkiye's rapidly growing political and economic footprint in Africa, including the Africa-Türkiye Strategic Partnership; the two countries' capacity to project their

foreign policies regionally and globally; and active participation and membership in various organisations such as the G20 and the UN.

On the economic front, relations between South Africa and Türkiye are coordinated through the South Africa-Türkiye JEC, led by the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition on the South African side. The primary objective of the JEC, established in 2005, is to promote and deepen bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries. Priority sectors for the JEC include agriculture and agribusiness; automotives; infrastructure, energy and construction services; minerals resources; textile and clothing; and tourism.

Ukraine

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Ukraine are cordial. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in March 1992 and their embassies were established in Kyiv and Pretoria in 1992 and 1995 respectively. The South African Embassy in Ukraine is accredited on a non-residential basis to Georgia, Moldova and Armenia. The two countries regularly engage through political consultations at Senior Official level.

These political consultations are guided by both the MoU between Ministries of Foreign Affairs of South Africa and Ukraine (1994) and the Joint Declaration on Relations and Cooperation between South Africa and Ukraine (November 1996) that provide for regular bilateral political consultations between the foreign ministries.

The main areas of cooperation between the two countries are science and technology, defence, and cooperation between the South African Council for Geoscience and the Ministry of Environmental and Natural Resources of Ukraine, with more possible areas of cooperation currently being explored. There are growing trade relations between South Africa and Ukraine.

Central Europe

Central Europe has seen substantial improvement in relations with South Africa. A number of bilateral mechanisms with these countries were established at various levels. The areas of cooperation have been considerable in, inter alia, the fields of education, arts and culture, science and technology, agriculture, water affairs, trade and tourism. South Africa works very closely with Central European countries on multilateral forums.

Bulgaria

South Africa and Bulgaria have maintained cordial and warm relations dating back to the liberation struggle, as Bulgaria hosted a number of anti-apartheid activists. Diplomatic relations at the level of Ambassador were established through the exchange of notes in February 1992 and the South African Embassy in Sofia started functioning in 1992, while the Bulgarian Embassy in Pretoria was opened in February 1993.

With the intention of expanding relations, several bilateral agreements have been concluded in the areas of air services, defence, tourism, security, arts and culture, healthcare and medical sciences, and education, while several others are under consideration. Bilateral trade and investments remain at a low level.

Croatia

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Croatia have developed steadily since diplomatic relations were established in 1992. The South African Embassy in Hungary is accredited to Croatia, while Croatia opened its embassy in Pretoria in November 1995. Bilateral relations between the two countries are coordinated at the level of Senior Officials with emphasis in various areas such as marine technology, higher education and training, science and technology and tourism.

Czech Republic

Full diplomatic relations between South Africa and the Czech Republic were established in 1991 and resident embassies in each other's capitals were established soon after. Bilateral relations have evolved to a level of maturity, underpinned by increasing commercial and business-to-business activities, as well as people-to-people exchanges. Political consultations are coordinated at Deputy Ministerial level. Areas of cooperation between the two countries include tourism, defence, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and agro-processing.

Trade and economic relations between South Africa and the Czech Republic are governed by the South Africa-Czech Republic Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation (JCEC), which aims to promote and deepen bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Hungary

Hungary was the first among the Central European countries to establish diplomatic ties with South Africa. Full diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in July 1991. Both countries enjoy cordial bilateral relations. Political consultations are coordinated at Deputy Ministerial level. Areas of cooperation between the two countries include higher education, science and technology, water-resource management, defence and agro-processing. The two countries also established a JCC, which aims to promote and deepen bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Poland

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Poland were concluded in December 1991 and embassies were opened in each capital. Political consultations between the two countries are coordinated at Deputy Ministerial level. Areas of cooperation between Poland and South Africa include aeronautics, automotive, defence and agriculture. Poland, with a population of 38 million people, is the largest single

market among the “new” EU states. South Africa is Poland’s top trade partner in Africa. The two countries have agreed to establish a JEC, which will promote and deepen trade and economic cooperation.

Romania

South Africa and Romania established diplomatic relations in November 1991. The formal mechanism, legalising bilateral political consultations on an institutionalised basis between South Africa and Romania, was signed in September 2016. The protocol is crucial in strengthening bilateral relations as well as providing a political framework for other agreements and commitments. South Africa and Romania signed an agreement in the field of science and technology in September 2004.

The partnership has successfully contributed to scientific advancement in both countries. Other areas of cooperation between South Africa and Romania include energy, mining, agriculture and marine technology.

Slovakia

Full diplomatic relations between the former Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia and South Africa were established in October 1991. The dissolution of the Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia brought about the Slovak Republic as a separate sovereign state in 1993. The bilateral diplomatic relations entered into with the Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia continued uninterrupted with the Slovak Republic. South Africa’s bilateral relations with Slovakia are sound.

Whilst South Africa does not have an embassy in Bratislava, the country’s relations with Slovakia are managed on a non-resident basis by the South African Embassy in Vienna. Areas of cooperation between South Africa and Slovakia are in the fields of automotive (including automotive components), agro-processing, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals. Economic relations between South Africa and Slovakia are governed by a JCEC.

Slovenia

Full diplomatic relations between South Africa and Slovenia were established in 1992. While South Africa does not have an embassy in Slovenia, the country’s relations with Slovenia are managed on a non-resident basis by the South African Embassy in Vienna. The Ambassador of Slovenia to Egypt is accredited on a non-residential basis to South Africa. Both countries enjoy cordial bilateral relations, which exist at the level of Senior Officials, with meetings taking place alternatively every two years.

Latin America and the Caribbean

South Africa continues to build and maintain mutually beneficial political, economic and social relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, and to strengthen cooperation to advance the developmental agenda of the South and global governance reforms

through the UN, NAM, G77 plus China, BRICS, IBSA, G20 and the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM).

At a bilateral level, the scope of cooperation covers, among others, the following areas: agribusiness, aquaculture and fisheries, arts and culture, defence, education and skills development, energy, environment, health, infrastructure development, mining, science and innovation, social development, trade and economic cooperation, tourism and transport.

The region is also an integral part of the AU’s sixth region due to the significant presence of an African diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean. This shared heritage and history provides a strong basis to build enduring relations and cooperation to advance the African Agenda as elaborated in Agenda 2063.

Mexico

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Mexico are sound. South Africa and Mexico’s bilateral relations are conducted through a BNC at Ministerial level. South Africa is Mexico’s biggest trading partner in Africa. The priority areas for bilateral cooperation are agribusiness, arts and culture, automotive industry, education and skills development, mining, science and technology and tourism.

The two countries work closely together in multilateral forums on issues such as South-South cooperation, human rights, gender equality, global governance reforms and nuclear disarmament. Several South African companies such as Old Mutual, Aspen, Blue Label Telecoms, Standard Bank, Naspers, Sappi, Mondi and Dimension Data have operations operating in Mexico.

Guatemala

South Africa and Guatemala enjoy cordial relations. The South African Embassy in Mexico is responsible for South Africa’s relations with Guatemala on a non-residential basis.

Panama

South Africa and Panama enjoy cordial bilateral relations. South Africa has cordial relations with Panama. The diplomatic relations were established on 10 January 1995. The Government of Panama opened an embassy in Pretoria in August 2000.

There are over 3 000 South Africans living and working in Panama, especially in mining, banking and finance and the logistics industry. South Africa’s Ambassador in Mexico City is also accredited as South Africa’s non-residential Ambassador to Panama. Panama’s experience as a regional trade and logistics hub presents opportunities for mutually beneficial technical cooperation with South Africa.

Nicaragua

South Africa enjoys cordial and historical relations with Nicaragua. South Africa and Nicaragua established bilateral relations on 15

September 1994. The South African Ambassador in Mexico City is also accredited to Nicaragua. Nicaragua opened its Embassy in Pretoria in January 2024. Gold has become Nicaragua’s most valuable export and is continuing to make a substantial contribution to the Nicaraguan economy.

Brazil

South Africa continues to enjoy cordial relations with Brazil, premised on the principles of solidarity and development cooperation. The two countries also enjoy strategic partner status and close cooperation in BRICS, IBSA, the UN, and G20. The South Africa-Brazil Joint Commission meets at Ministerial level and is supported by a Senior Officials Meeting comprising ten thematic working groups including mining and energy, environment, health, justice and correctional services, trade and investment, tourism, arts, culture, sport, higher education and cooperation between the diplomatic academies, defence, technical development cooperation and agriculture.

Argentina

Argentina is South Africa’s third-largest trading partner in Latin America and the Caribbean region after Brazil and Mexico. Relations are managed through a BNC at Ministerial level. Recently, the first political consultations at Deputy Ministerial level were held to ensure regular high level bilateral interaction and to deepen bilateral cooperation. Key areas of bilateral cooperation with Argentina include agriculture, energy, mining, ocean and Antarctic cooperation, science and technology including space and sport.

The Caribbean

South Africa enjoys cordial relations with the countries of the Caribbean. Most inhabitants of the Caribbean are of African descent and have strong historical and cultural links to the continent. South Africa’s endeavour, in conjunction with the AU and the Caribbean Community, to strengthen cooperation between Africa and the African Diaspora in the Caribbean, has given added impetus to bilateral and multilateral relations.

South Africa attaches importance to strengthening its relations with the Caribbean and developing common positions on global issues such as access to the markets of the industrial North, reform of international institutions and promoting the development agenda and protection of small island states.

The Caribbean Community

The Caribbean community was established in 1973. The organisation comprises 15 Caribbean nations and dependencies. The community’s main purposes are to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members to ensure that the benefits of integration are equitably shared and to coordinate foreign policy.

South Africa enjoys cordial relations with the countries of the Caribbean Community and recognises that the majority of inhabitants in this region are of African descent with historical and cultural links to the African continent.

In this regard, South Africa is committed to strengthening relations with the African Diaspora in line with a similar commitment by the AU that is guided by Pan-African solidarity and South-South cooperation.

South Africa was granted formal Observer Status to the Caribbean Community in February 2014. South Africa and the Caribbean Community continue to work together in multilateral forums.

Uruguay

South Africa and Uruguay have good bilateral relations conducted through political consultations at Deputy Ministerial level and the priority areas for cooperation are agribusiness, mineral resources and energy (especially renewable energy), education (higher [STEM] and basic), software development, trade and investment and sport.

Chile

South Africa and Chile enjoy sound bilateral relations, which are conducted through a JCM at Deputy Ministerial level. South Africa is Chile's largest trading partner in Africa and is a significant investor in the country's mining sector, with major South African mining houses such as Anglo American and Gold Fields having invested in the Chilean market.

The biggest area of trade between South Africa and Chile is capital goods for mining and mining technology and services. Other important areas of cooperation are agribusiness, fisheries and aquaculture, education, science and innovation, Antarctic cooperation, trade and investment, science and innovation (including astronomy) and sport.

Central America and the Andean region

The Andean Community

The Andean Community comprises Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and they have a Free Trade Agreement with the objective of creating a customs union. Cooperation with Latin America countries is in line with South Africa's foreign policy objective of South-South cooperation to strengthen social and economic relations and technical cooperation to advance mutual development priorities.

Regarding South Africa's industrialisation imperatives, the Latin American region is rich in mineral resources and countries such as Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia have expressed a strong interest in working with South Africa to strengthen trade, investment and technical cooperation in mining.

Ecuador

The bilateral relationship between South Africa and Ecuador remains sound and cordial and is conducted through a PCM. The main areas of

cooperation are defence industry, environment and fisheries, mineral resources and energy, science and innovation, and trade.

Paraguay

South Africa and Paraguay concluded an MoU on political consultations, marking an important step forward in the bilateral relations. The MoU will serve as a framework for the development and consolidation of cooperation at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

Peru

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Peru are anchored through an MoU on the establishment of political consultations. The areas of cooperation include mining, agriculture, defence, aqua-culture and fisheries, science and technology, tourism, and trade and investment.

South Africa is a large investor in Peru. Major South African mining companies in Peru include Goldfields Ltd, Anglo-American South Africa Ltd, and Dust-a-Side Pty (Ltd), among others. South African mining investments in Peru have significantly facilitated market opportunities for capital and mining equipment and mining services in Peru. Agro-processing, aquaculture, arts and culture, trade and investment, and sport are important areas for cooperation.

Venezuela

South Africa-Venezuela relations are underpinned by historic ties of solidarity. South Africa continues to pursue strong relations with Venezuela. Venezuela remains a strategic partner of South Africa in Latin America, especially in the context of South-South cooperation through NAM and G77 plus China and the UN. Priority areas for cooperation are agribusiness, arts and culture, energy (oil and gas), mining and pharmaceuticals.

Colombia

South Africa has cordial and growing bilateral relations with Colombia. There is a steady and significant growth of two-way investments between the two countries, especially in mining and agribusiness. Colombia has the second largest population of Afro-descendants in Latin America, after Brazil. The priority areas for cooperation are agribusiness, arts and culture, defence industry, education, energy, environment, science and technology, trade and investment and sport.

Cuba

Cuba is South Africa's historical and strategic partner in Latin America and the Caribbean. South Africa-Cuba relations are characterised by high-level political engagements, shared values and close bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The year 2024 represents the 30th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with Cuba. Both countries are strong proponents for South-South cooperation and solidarity, progressive internationalism and the establishment of an

equitable global governance system in international forums such as the NAM, G77 and the UN.

Bilateral cooperation with Cuba is operationalised by around 15 active agreements and these agreements are appraised during the annual South Africa-Cuba Joint Consultative Mechanism. Health, basic education, science and technology, water resources and public works are the most active cooperation areas.

The Dominican Republic

South Africa and the Dominican Republic enjoy cordial diplomatic relations established in May 2002. The Dominican Republic has a free-market economy and benefits from strong trade links with the Caribbean region as well as the USA. The main economic drivers are construction, manufacturing and tourism.

The Dominican Republic is an attractive trading partner for South Africa in the Caribbean owing to the country's advanced and open economy. The priority areas for cooperation with the Dominican Republic are arts and culture, mining, energy, tourism and sport.

Guyana

Prior to the dawn of freedom and democracy in 1994, Guyana was one of the strong supporters of South Africa's freedom struggle. South Africa and Guyana enjoy cordial bilateral relations established on 4 November 1994. One of the largest offshore oil discoveries in Guyana recently, presents opportunities for trade, investment and technical cooperation in the Guyanese oil industry and infrastructure development.

Jamaica

South Africa and Jamaica have strong historical and political ties, the latter having played an important role in supporting South Africa in the struggle against apartheid. The flagship bilateral cooperation project between South Africa and Jamaica is the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, signed in 2012.

The agreement is implemented through a Joint Committee on Science and Technology. Cooperation in sport, arts and culture is an important area of mutual interest between the two countries, as well as South-South and multilateral cooperation.

Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago is viewed as an important bilateral partner in the Caribbean region. The large African Diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago forms a strong link with Africa and serves as a further catalyst for ongoing cooperation between the respective regions. Trinidad and Tobago's economy is propelled through a well-developed hydrocarbons sector that presents opportunities for trade, investment and technical cooperation in the oil sector.