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OFFICIAL GUIDE TO SOUTH AFRICA



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the President is ultimately responsible for the foreign policy and international relations of South Africa. It is the President's prerogative to appoint heads of mission, receive foreign heads of mission, conduct state-to-state relations, and negotiate and sign all international agreements. International agreements that are not of a technical, administrative or executive nature bind the country only after being approved by Parliament, which also approves the country's ratification of or accession to multilateral agreements. All international agreements must be tabled in Parliament.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation is entrusted with the formulation, promotion, execution and daily conduct of South Africa's foreign policy. The department is mandated to work for the realisation of South Africa's foreign policy objectives by:

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

Over the medium term, the department aimed to continue focusing on strengthening bilateral relations, advancing the African Agenda and promoting regional development, continuing its active participation in multilateral forums and enhancing the management of its infrastructure portfolio in foreign missions.

Strengthening bilateral relations

Bilateral engagements remain the basis on which national priorities are advanced and effective engagements are maintained in multilateral forums. Accordingly, over the medium term, the department will continue to strengthen its political, economic and social relations through its diplomatic missions. These play a critical role in the pursuit of economic diplomacy involving pledges for foreign direct investment and promoting tourism to South Africa.

As such, the department aims to source opportunities through its missions and hand them over to relevant domestic stakeholders for further processing. This will be pursued over the medium term through structured bilateral mechanisms and high-level visits. The department intends to produce reports on the outcomes of its multilateral and multistate engagements.

Advancing the African Agenda and promoting regional development

Through the department, South Africa will continue to pursue its multilateral interests at the continental level through its membership and participation in the African Union (AU). South Africa's national position is informed by its domestic policy, its constitutional values as well as the African Agenda on peace and security, human rights, and economic and social development.

Accordingly, South Africa will continue to advance the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the AU's Agenda 2063. To support these activities, the department anticipates spending R1.1 billion over the medium term on AU membership fees.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is pivotal in South Africa's pursuit of regional development and integration. As such, the department intends to produce 4 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. About R498.7 million over the medium-term period has been set aside for South Africa's membership contributions to the SADC.

South Africa actively participated and influenced the development of the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) of Agenda 2063, which was 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 the acceleration of the implementation of Agenda 2063 and its flagship programmes.

African Continental Free Trade Area (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 that are already trading under the AfCFTA. South Africa also successfully hosted the AfCFTA Business Forum 17–18 April 2023, which brought together governments, the labour sector and the private sector to explore opportunities and benefits that the AfCFTA offers and to explore ways of collaboration in addressing the challenges that are confronting 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 reappointed 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.

Participating in global forums

South Africa continues to advance its interests at the global level through its membership of and participation in United Nations (UN) programmes and forums such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the G77, the G20, the Commonwealth and partnership arrangements.

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 planned to spend R652.6 million over the next three years on UN membership fees.

Managing infrastructure projects and properties

Over the medium-term period, the department planned to purchase properties for office and residential purposes to reduce rental costs and repurpose underused state-owned properties in its global portfolio. Repurposing involves converting offices or large official residences into staff quarters. Plans are in place over the medium-term period to build on state-owned vacant land in New Delhi, India, and refurbish, renovate and maintain seven properties across the world in accordance with the outcomes of conditional assessments to preserve and prolong the department's property portfolio.

International relations

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

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

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

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

Entity:

African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF)

The ARF was established in terms of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund Act of 2000 to enhance cooperation between South Africa and other countries, particularly African ones; promote democracy and good governance; prevent and resolve conflict; encourage socio-economic development and integration; provide humanitarian assistance, and develop human resources. Over the medium-term period, the entity planned to continue focusing on supporting projects that will enhance African trade, goods exchange, economic development and integration.

Regional body:

African Union

The AU is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in Durban in July 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), 1963-1999). In May 1963, 32 Heads of independent African States met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to sign the charter creating Africa's first post-independence continental institution, the OAU.

The OAU was the manifestation of the pan-African vision for an Africa that was united, free and in control of its own destiny and this was solemnised in the OAU Charter in which the founding fathers recognised that freedom, equality, justice and dignity were essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples. The AU is guided by its vision of "An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena."

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

International bodies:

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS)

The BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) group was renamed as BRICS after South Africa was accepted as a full member at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York in September 2010.

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

The DIRCO hosted the Sixth BRICS Sherpas Meeting from 30 November to 3 December 2023 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of the meeting is to reflect on South Africa's tenure as Chair of BRICS for the year 2023 and to prepare for a handover to the next Chair, the Russian Federation. South Africa's term as BRICS Chair ended on 31 December 2023. The Russian Federation took over 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.

India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA)

IBSA is a unique forum which brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents, facing similar challenges. All three countries are developing, pluralistic, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious nations. The grouping was formalised and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia on 6 June 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration.

UN General Assembly (UNGA)

Established in 1945 under the Charter of the UN, the UNGA occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. Comprised of all 193 members of the UN, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. The UNGA meets from September to December each year.

UN Security Council (UNSC)

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

the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the UNSC can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorise the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent member countries. Membership is diverse and includes both developed and developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the South Pacific. Since rejoining the Commonwealth in 1994, South Africa has interacted closely with the work of the Commonwealth contributing politically, financially and in terms of capacity and expertise to the work of the organisation.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

The NAM, consisting of 120 members, is the largest political grouping of countries outside the UN, making it an important lobby group of developing countries in global affairs. South Africa formally joined the movement in 1994 and has played a leading role in NAM deliberations and meetings ever since.

Group of Twenty (G20)

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

South Africa is holding the G20 Presidency from 1 December 2024 to 30 November 2025, only five years before the deadline of the UN 2030 Agenda. The theme for South Africa's G20 Presidency is Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

South Africa is one of the 194-member states that constitute the WHO. The country takes part in the annual World Health Assembly (WHA), which is the WHO's supreme decision-making body. South Africa also participates in the WHO's annual Regional Committee for Africa, which reflects on the decisions taken at the WHA, particularly those relevant to the continent. WHO works with all Member States to support them to achieve the highest standard of health for all people.

New Development Bank (NDB)

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

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