



OFFICIAL GUIDE TO  
South Africa  
2018/19  
**International  
Relations**

In terms of 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.

As such, 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 will only bind the country 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 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's overall mandate is to work for the realisation of South Africa's foreign policy objectives by:

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

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation's (DIRCO) 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.

Chapter 7 of the National Development Plan (NDP) details a vision for positioning South Africa to facilitate broad-based socioeconomic development and foster strong international ties.

Outcome 11 (create a better South Africa, a better Africa and a better world) of government's 2014-2019 Medium Term Strategic Framework gives expression to this, and is directly aligned with the work of the DIRCO.

The department pursues regional political and economic integration, promotes Africa's development through sustained South-South solidarity and mutually beneficial relations with the North, and engages in multilateral systems and processes of global governance in advancing South Africa's foreign policy priorities.

Over the medium term, the department will focus on: recalibrating South Africa's foreign policy and services; strengthening African cooperation and regional integration; consolidating global economic, political and social relations; and developing and managing infrastructure projects and properties.

The department realises its mandate mainly through the 125 diplomatic missions in 108 countries in which South Africa has representation.

## **Recalibrating South Africa's foreign policy and services**

South Africa's foreign policy is formulated and executed in a global environment that is constantly evolving. It therefore 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.

To this end, in 2018/19, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation established the Foreign Policy Review Panel and convened the inaugural Foreign Policy Review Workshop to begin the process of reassessing South Africa's foreign policy.

The panel's work over the MTEF period was expected to provide strategic guidance and recommendations on rationalising foreign missions.

## **Strengthening African cooperation and regional integration**

The integration of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) remains critical for the region's economic development and for South Africa's global competitiveness.

The revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2015-2020 and the Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063 are the key blueprints in place for this.

A renewed focus on industrialisation emerged from the 38th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government, held in 2018, and will guide the department's priorities in leading the implementation and domestication of the region's blueprints over the medium term.

South Africa will continue to participate in the SADC double troika leadership oversight structure, and monitor the implementation of SADC summit decisions and resolutions in advancing political and economic integration.

The department continues to play an active role in African Union (AU) structures and processes for the advancement of peace and security; and conflict prevention, resolution and management on the continent.

This includes the strengthening of mechanisms to consolidate peace and prevent post-conflict countries, such as Libya and South Sudan, from backsliding into civil unrest.

## **Consolidating global economic, political and social relations**

The DIRCO continues to focus on consolidating economic, political and social relations through structured bilateral mechanisms and high-level engagements to promote national priorities.

As the current chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, South Africa will advocate for the restructuring of the global political, economic and financial architecture to be more balanced, representative, inclusive and equitable; and ensure that the international system rests on the important pillars of multilateralism and international law.

In 2019, South Africa assumed tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, and was expected to use this membership to promote international peace and security through advocating for peaceful dispute resolution and inclusive dialogue; and enhance cooperation

and improve efficiency between the UN, the AU and other regional and subregional organisations.

In support of South Africa's economic growth, in 2019/20, the department was expected to undertake 112 economic diplomacy initiatives on trade and investment, and 126 engagements with chambers of commerce.

It also planned to continue strengthening South Africa's bilateral relations, with a stronger emphasis on economic partnerships in line with economic growth imperatives.

## Developing and managing infrastructure projects and properties

The department has a property portfolio consisting of 163 state-owned properties and about 1 000 rented properties.

Over the medium term, the department planned to focus on increasing maintenance of its current ageing state-owned properties as well as renovations in Namibia, Eswatini, Brasilia and the Hague. In addition, feasibility studies would be undertaken to prioritise new developments in areas where land is owned such as in India, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and South Sudan.

## Foreign policy

South Africa's foreign policy outlook is based on its commitment to the values and ideals of Pan-Africanism, solidarity with people of the South and the need to cooperate with all peace-loving people across the globe in pursuit of shared prosperity and a just, equitable and rules-based international order.

The country's diplomacy of Ubuntu continues to place cooperation with partners as the thrust of its foreign policy endeavours above all forms of competition.

South Africa strives to address its domestic imperatives as enunciated in the NDP and national interest while taking into cognisance the needs and aspirations of others.

The country's diplomatic efforts over the past two decades include conflict resolution, prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

- **Africa** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in Africa, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value adding industries and mineral beneficiation,

and inbound tourism and the skills base. South Africa has foreign representation in 47 diplomatic missions in Africa.

- **Asia and Middle East** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in Asia and the Middle East, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value adding industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and the skills base. South Africa has foreign representation in 32 diplomatic missions in Asia and the Middle East.
- **Americas and Caribbean** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in the Americas and Caribbean, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value adding industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and the skills base. South Africa foreign representation in 16 diplomatic missions in the Americas and Caribbean.
- **Europe** embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in Europe, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value adding industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and the skills base. South Africa has foreign representation in 28 diplomatic missions in Europe.

## Strengthening regional integration and the African Agenda

The DIRCO uses the NDP as an overarching vision for guiding South Africa's foreign policy and international relations programme.

Chapter 7 of the NDP emphasises the importance of regional integration, specifically in the SADC, which is South Africa's largest trade partner in Africa.

The country has also been unrelenting in relation to fostering peace as well as postconflict reconstruction and development in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and South Sudan. In essence, whether involved within the UN and/or its specialised agencies or, in bodies like the G20, G77, IBSA or BRICS, South Africa steadfastly advances the African Agenda.

The country wholly identifies with the aspirations of Agenda 2063 of the AU and its vision of 'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena'. South Africa and its fortunes are inextricably linked to those of the continent. Accordingly, South Africa is fully behind the African Agenda 2063 and its Action Plan.

## **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 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the importance of non-proliferation is promoted, taking into account that export controls should not become the means whereby developing countries are denied access to advanced technologies required for their development.

On 25 February 2019, South Africa joined a growing number of states in submitting its Instrument of Ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to the UN in New York.

The TPNW seeks to establish an international norm, delegitimising and stigmatising the possession of nuclear weapons. It aims to contribute towards achieving the objective set out in the very first resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1946 to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction.

It 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.

## **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 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). At the 2019 AU Summit, South Africa was elected to chair the AU in 2020.

## **Africa Day**

Africa Day is celebrated annually on 25 May within the African continent to mark the formation of the OAU on 25 May 1963 and the AU in 2002, as well as chart the progress made by the continent since then to advance democracy, peace, stability and socio-economic development.

South Africa marked Africa Month 2019 under the theme “Celebrating 25 Years of Democracy: Building a Better Africa and a Better World”. The month was an opportunity to promote African unity, deeper regional integration and recommit Africa to a common destiny.

South Africa plays an active role as an integral part of the African continent. The country’s national interest is intrinsically linked to continental stability, unity and prosperity of Africa.

## **New Partnership for Africa’s Development**

NEPAD is a socio-economic flagship programme of the AU. NEPAD’s four primary objectives are to eradicate poverty, promote sustainable growth and development, integrate Africa in the world economy and accelerate the empowerment of women.

NEPAD facilitates and coordinates the development of continent-wide programmes and projects, mobilises resources and engages the global community, Regional Economic Communities and member states in the implementation of these programmes and projects.

## **International bodies**

### **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**

South Africa assumed the rotational Chairship of BRICS on 1 January 2018 and successfully hosted the 10th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg from 25 to 27 July 2018, under the theme: “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution.”



## **India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA)**

The IBSA Dialogue Forum brings together three large pluralistic, multicultural and multiracial 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 peoples 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.

## **UNGA and UNSC**

In September 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa participated for the first time in the General Debate of the 73rd Session of the UNGA7, under the theme: “Making the UN Relevant to All People: Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Peaceful, Equitable and Sustainable Societies”.

The President’s programme commenced with the unveiling of a life-size statue of former President Nelson Mandela at the UN Headquarters. Also convened in honour of the centenary of the birth of President Mandela was the UN Nelson Mandela Peace Summit.

South Africa has been elected to serve on the UNSC from January 2019 to December 2020. This is South Africa’s third term on the UNSC, having previously served in 2007 to 2008 and 2011 to 2012. South Africa’s tenure on the Security Council will be dedicated to the legacy of former President Nelson Mandela and his commitment to peace.

South Africa will also use its experience in the prioritisation of diplomacy, mediation, the pacific settlement of disputes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding through inclusive dialogue and negotiations with the ultimate aim of supporting parties to achieve sustainable peace, national unity and reconciliation.

It will also actively contribute to achieving a Africa at peace by 2063 by pursuing and promoting Africa’s goal of “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020”, but also to promote and achieve peace in all the regions of the world.

In continuing its legacy from the two previous terms on the UNSC, South Africa will advocate for closer cooperation between the UNSC and the AU Peace and Security Council.

## Commonwealth

The modern 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

The NAM, consisting of 120 members, was chaired by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela until 2019. It 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.

The G20 economies account for 85% of the global Gross Domestic Product, 80% of world trade and two-thirds of the world's population.

South Africa also works together closely with the following international bodies and organisations to ensure that it benefits from trade, investment, industrialisation and innovation to address the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment, as espoused in the NDP:

- World Trade Organisation.
- World Economic Forum.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- International Labour Organisation.
- World Intellectual Property Organisation.

## 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.

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 the 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)
- contributing to economic growth through health employment.

## New Development Bank (NDB)

The purpose of the NDB is to mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging market economies, and developing countries, to complement the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development.

In April 2019, the NDB approved loans for three projects in South Africa, including funding Eskom to stabilise the national electricity grid.

The NDB was also expected to provide infrastructure and sustainable development project funding to countries that are not members of the BRICS.



