

Pocket Guide to South Africa 2016/17  
International Relations



South Africa's foreign policy is guided by government's apex strategy, the National Development Plan (NDP), which sets out a long-term vision that seeks to address the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality, and put South Africa on a path towards long-term development and prosperity.

In this regard, Chapter 7 of the NDP envisions an active role for South Africa in the region, the continent and the world. The country seeks to build strategic partnerships for development to advance its national interests and promote the enduring values that define the nation, namely democracy, human rights and good governance.

The country continues to pursue regional political and economic integration, and promote Africa's development through sustained South-South solidarity and mutually beneficial relations with the North.

South Africa has managed to increase the volume of out-bound trade and inward investment, tourism, skills and technology transfers. As of December 2016, South Africa's total trade with Africa stood at R436 billion. In 2016, the country grew its exports to Africa by 4,67%, while total bilateral trade grew by 3,84%.

The President of the Republic of South Africa is responsible for the foreign policy and international relations of the country, according to the Constitution. 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 Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) focuses, among other things, on consolidating South Africa's global economic, political and social relations, strengthening the African Agenda and regional integration.

South Africa continues to engage with strategic formations of the North, while advancing mutually beneficial South-South cooperation through structured bilateral mechanisms and multilateral agreements. The country'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 DIRCO also planned to use the United States' African Growth and Opportunity Act as a platform for industrialisation and regional integration, and relations with the European Union (EU) on the establishment of joint infrastructure projects were at the advanced stages by mid-2016.

These engagements are complementary with ongoing participation in United Nations (UN) structures and multilateral organisations and forums. The department will strengthen and consolidate South-South relations, reflecting the shift in the balance of the global distribution of power and the increasing influence of emerging economies in the multilateral trading system.

The department continues to use its membership and engagements with groupings of the South, such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Group of 77, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS), to advance South Africa's foreign policy objectives.

The adoption of the strategy for the BRICS economic partnership was expected to facilitate trade and investment, enhance market access opportunities and facilitate market interlinkages between the countries. The BRICS' New Development Bank is expected to serve as an instrument for financing infrastructure investment and sustainable development projects in the BRICS and other developing countries and emerging market economies.

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 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 provide a world-class and uniquely South African state protocol service.

## African Union (AU)

South Africa's future is inherently linked to that of the rest of the African continent. The DIRCO continues to support regional and continental processes, responding to and resolving crises, strengthening regional integration, contributing to an enabling trade environment, increasing intra-Africa trade, and championing sustainable development and opportunities. Strengthening the AU and its structures is a key priority for deepening continental integration.

The department continues to make contributions to: operationalising the tripartite agreement between South Africa, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in support of the peace and security framework agreement for the Great Lakes region; deploying the Southern African Development Community (SADC) intervention brigade; and, working with the Department of Defence, operationalising the AU Peace and Security Architecture and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises, which is the multinational African interventionist standby force set up in November 2013.

The AU's Agenda 2063, under the theme "The Africa We Want", seeks to chart a new development trajectory for Africa towards self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity. The first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 identifies the key outcomes by 2023. The DIRCO will be involved in rationalising regional economic communities towards a Continental Free Trade Area, revitalising the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) on infrastructure development, and promoting good governance systems through the African Peer Review Mechanism.

Among others, Agenda 2063 aspires to a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. It also seeks an integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.

The AU Agenda includes the commitments to support railway and road infrastructure, power generation and distribution networks, industrial and technology parks and human resources development. Agenda 2063 sets out a roadmap towards an Africa where women are empowered to play their rightful role in all spheres of life, and with full equality. This is in line with the AU heads of state decision to establish the Pan African Women's Organisation as a legal entity and a specialised agency of the AU.

The AU Heads of State and Assembly declared 2017 as the year of “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in the Youth”. This provides an opportunity for the continent to leverage the youth bulge to propel its socio-economic development.

## **Africa Day**

On 25 May 2017, President Jacob Zuma hosted the national 2017 Africa Day celebration at the Sefako Makgatho Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria.

Africa Day is celebrated annually on 25 May within the African continent to mark the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (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.

The theme for Africa Month 2017 was “The Year of OR Tambo: Building a Better Africa and a Better World”. South Africa used the day to reaffirm support for the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and committed the country to playing its role within the AU to ensure the successful implementation of the vision and plan to build a better Africa.

The 2017 Africa Day also mark the celebration of 23 years since the country’s reintegration into the OAU/AU and the international community, following the dawn of freedom and democracy in 1994.

## **New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)**

NEPAD, an AU strategic framework for pan-African socio-economic development, is both a vision and a policy framework for Africa in the 21st century. NEPAD provides unique opportunities for African countries to take full control of their development agenda, to work more closely together, and to cooperate more effectively with international partners.

NEPAD manages a number of programmes and projects in six theme areas namely:

- agriculture and food security
- climate change and national resource management
- regional integration and infrastructure
- human development
- economic and corporate governance
- cross-cutting issues, including gender, capacity development and information and communication technology (ICT).

Through NEPAD, Africa has expanded its development priorities. Development and funding in agriculture, information and communications technology, science and technology, infrastructure and education has improved the quality of life for millions of Africans.

## **South Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

The SADC developed from the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, which was established in 1980. It adopted its current name during a summit meeting in Windhoek, Namibia in August 1992. The initial member states are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. South Africa became a member after 1994.

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

As SADC Chair of Summit for the 2017-2018 period under the theme: “Partnering with the private sector in developing industry and regional value-chains”, South Africa aimed to focus on harnessing the participation and involvement of the regional private sector in the implementation of the SADC Regional Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap.

Efforts were also underway to accelerate the implementation of the SADC-Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa-East African Community Free Trade Area, which would enhance intra-Africa trade and build towards the achievement of the Continental Free Trade Agreement.

## **South Africa and Africa**

Peace and stability on the continent is a prerequisite for development and prosperity. Notwithstanding the political stability experienced in the greater part of the continent, pockets of instability and insecurity remained a challenge in the following countries: South Sudan, Burundi, the DRC, Mali, Libya, Somalia, the CAR, Lesotho, the Great Lakes, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

The continent has committed to Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020, in alignment with commitments to Agenda 2063.

The African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capability was expected to respond quickly in conflict situations to save lives and bring stability.

In 2016, various post-conflict reconstruction and development initiatives were undertaken and humanitarian aid delivered to various countries – Namibia, Malawi, Swaziland, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Burundi – in support of the consolidation of peace, political stability and constitutionally based institutions, as well as building human capacities within partner governments and parliaments

Africa is the second fastest growing region in the world after Asia, growing steadily at a rate of 5% per year over most of the last decade.

This growth has been attributed to the increasingly sound macro-economic environment with low government debt, rising domestic resource mobilisation and reduced inflation rates.

## **North Africa and The Horn**

This region comprises 14 countries, of which nine are defined as North Africa and five as Horn of Africa. These countries stretch from Mauritania in the West through to Somalia in the East.

South Africa enjoys a special relationship with the countries of the region. This is epitomised by joint commissions held annually with three countries at Ministerial level (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia), and an annual Binational Commission at Presidential level with Algeria. North African countries represent the largest economies in Africa apart from South Africa and Nigeria.

## **Asia and Australasia**

The PRC has become Africa's largest trade partner, and Africa is now one of the PRC's major import sources and fourth largest investment destination.

The 7th Ministerial Conference of FOCAC will be held in the PRC in 2018.

By mid-2017, some 80 South African students – under the aegis of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Africa Business Education initiative – were studying for Master's degrees in highly technical fields in Japan, which would be followed by internships at Japanese companies.

South Africa and Australia have a history of productive cooperation across a range of sectors and issues, including fisheries protection, mining, law enforcement, sport, tourism, education and training [in fields such as information and communications technology, public administration, mining

and resources management], defence relations and customs cooperation.

At bilateral level, South Africa and New Zealand enjoy close cooperation in business, tourism, agriculture, disarmament, fisheries, environmental protection, indigenous people and human rights issues.

## The Middle East

South Africa's relationship with the Arab States remains cordial, with ongoing engagements at various political and economic levels that are anchored by the strategic objective of strengthening South-South relations.

South Africa supports peace between Israel and the Arab world, which must involve an end to the illegal occupation by Israel of Arab land, in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, which has led to conflict and violence between the people of the region over the last six decades.

## The Americas

The USA is a major economic partner for South Africa and continues to feature high on the list of trade and investment partners. There are about 600 companies from the USA trading in South Africa, which provide over 120 000 local jobs.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was re-authorised in June 2015 for 10 years until 2025, with South Africa's inclusion. This will secure continued market access for South African products, including in value-added generating sectors such as agriculture and automobiles.

This agreement provides South Africa with preferable market access for certain exports to the USA. The expansion of business and technological networks continue to mutually benefit the two countries.

While the USA is a significant market for South Africa, South Africa is the USA's biggest market in Africa.

Bilateral trade between South Africa and the USA grew from R15,9 billion in 1994 to more than R73 billion in 2016. The USA remains the largest single source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in South Africa with over US\$50 billion. Development Assistance from the USA amounts to approximately US\$450 million, the bulk of which is directed at health cooperation.

## The Caribbean

South Africa enjoys cordial relations with the countries of the Caribbean. The majority of 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 Caricom 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.

## Europe

Since 1994, building on shared values and mutual interests, South Africa and the EU have developed a comprehensive partnership based on the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement.

The SA-EU relationship is guided by the principle that the EU should support South Africa's national, regional and African priorities and programmes to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment.

The EU is South Africa's main development assistance partner. The South Africa-EU Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for South Africa is R4,3 billion for the cycle 2014-2020. The EU also contributes R1,8 billion to infrastructure development for domestic and regional programmes. Bilateral trade between South Africa and Europe amounted to about R860 billion in 2016.

## Benelux countries

The Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) remain important trade and investment partners of South Africa, and major providers of tourism. The Netherlands is the second-most important source of FDI into South Africa.

There has been important trilateral cooperation with the Netherlands and Belgium in the past in support of peace and security in Africa, inter alia on capacity building in the Great Lakes Region. Such trilateral cooperation can be further expanded in the future.

There is a regular exchange of views between South Africa and Belgium, as well as with the Netherlands, on the issues and complicated processes necessary to find durable solutions to the conflicts in the region.

## German-speaking countries

Bilateral relations between South Africa and the German-speaking countries cover various issues, including investment and trade, science and technology, defence, culture, the environment, tourism, sport, development cooperation and energy, but also entail multilateral and trilateral engagements.

## Nordic countries

South Africa enjoys good relations with all the Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Flowing from the strong grassroots support in these countries for democratisation in South Africa, relations have been established in virtually every field at both public and official levels. The scope of Nordic development cooperation is broad and has benefited civil society and government.

Relations in the international arena have seen close cooperation on multilateral issues. The Nordic countries are strong supporters of NEPAD and are directly involved in conflict resolution and reconstruction projects in Africa.

## International bodies

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

BRICS is the acronym for a grouping of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. South Africa was expected to take over the Chairship of the BRICS as from 1 January to 31 December 2018, and the country will host the 10th BRICS Summit.

The country planned to focus on deepening BRICS's cooperation for common development, enhancement of global governance to jointly meet shared challenges, carrying out people-to-people exchanges to support BRICS cooperation, and institutional improvements, among others.

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

IBSA is a coalition of the south that has facilitated dialogue at a level previously unimaginable. Development cooperation, along with the views on tackling socio-economic distress and trading among the three nations distinguishes IBSA from BRICS. All the IBSA members are democracies and can discuss issues which cannot be discussed in BRICS summits.

The forum provides the three countries with a platform to engage in discussions for cooperation in fields such as agriculture, trade, culture and defence. South Africa was

expected to assume the Indian Ocean Rim (IORA) chairship in August 2017. IORA is a strategic formations that create a platform for countries in the Indian Ocean Rim to deepen cooperation in areas such as oceans economy for shared prosperity.

## **United Nations**

The year 2015 marked the 70th Anniversary of the formation of the UN and the deadline for the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The UN occupies the central and indispensable role within the global system of governance. South Africa looks to the UN to advance the global development agenda and address under-development, social integration, full employment and decent work for all and the eradication of poverty globally.

Through participation in multilateral forums, South Africa also upholds the belief that the resolution of international conflicts should be peaceful and in accordance with the centrality of the UN Charter and the principles of international law. South Africa was one of the 51 founding member 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 readmitted to the UN in 1994 following its transition to democracy. South Africa participated in the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 11th Session of the Conference of Parties serving as the Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol held from 30 November to 11 December 2015 in Paris, France.

In line with South Africa's national interest as an African and developing country that will require post-2020 support, South Africa continues to defend the UNFCCC's core principles of equity and differentiation.

## **UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Security Council (UNSC)**

President Zuma led the South African delegation to the 71st Session of the UNGA 71, which took place in New York in the USA from 19 to 25 September 2016 under the theme: "The Sustainable Development Goals: A Universal Push to Transform Our World".

The General Debate presented an opportunity for member states to take stock of the effectiveness of the UN

and deliberations focused on UN reform, including on the revitalisation of the UNGA; improvement of the work of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); and most importantly, the substantive reform of the UNSC to expand its membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

This was also the final General Debate of the former Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, whose term ended on 31 December 2016.

### **Commonwealth**

The modern Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 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, with its 120 member states, is the largest political grouping of countries outside the UN, making it an important lobby group of developing countries in global affairs.

The NAM consists of 120 member states. 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 is a member of the G20, which consists of 19 countries, including the EU. G20 members have been meeting regularly since 1999 to discuss global economic policy coordination.

The G20 was conceptualised to stabilise and strengthen the global economy, by bringing together the major advanced and emerging market economies. These economies together represent around 85% of global GDP, 80% of global trade and two-thirds of the world's population.

South Africa's participation in the G20 is aimed at advancing the national agenda to create a better South Africa and contribute to a better and safer Africa and a better world.

The country's participation in the G20 is to provide strategic foresight in establishing an economic and international policy platform that will drive and negotiate the best possible outcomes for South Africa, Africa and the developing world.

### **World Health Organisation (WHO)**

South Africa is a member of the WHO, whose goal is to build a better, healthier future for people all over the world.

### **New Development Bank (NDB)**

The BRICS NDB opened its headquarters in Shanghai, China, on 21 July 2015. Together with its regional office in South Africa, the African Regional Centre, and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, the NDB constitutes the first formal BRICS financial institutions.

The purpose of the NDB is to mobilize 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.

