

2019/20 SOUTH AFRICA YEARBOOK

International Relations



International Relations

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 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 only bind the country after being approved by Parliament. Parliament 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 is to work for the realisation of South Africa's foreign policy objectives. This is done 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, 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 business;
- 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 the 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 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 maintains diplomatic relations with countries and international organisations through 125 diplomatic missions in 108 countries in which the country has representation, and through the accreditation of more than 160 countries and international organisations resident in South Africa.

South Africa's diplomatic and consular missions implement the country's 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. The work of the department is primarily realised through the diplomatic missions in countries in which South Africa has representation.

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.

Over the medium term, the DIRCO plans to give effect to these guiding policies by focusing on strengthening the African Agenda and regional integration; consolidating global economic, political and social relations; and developing and managing state-owned properties in foreign missions.

Strengthening the African Agenda and regional integration

The DIRCO will continue to play an active role in the African Union's (AU) structures and processes for the advancement of peace, security and conflict prevention in Africa. South Africa has been nominated to chair the AU in 2020, with a mandate to ensure that there are linkages between development, good governance, peace and stability. As Chair, the country will focus on promoting economic development, trade and investment by seeking ways to foster inclusive growth and sustainable development; enhancing peace and security efforts in Africa; and supporting good governance through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the AU structure responsible for driving the union's agenda of good governance. These activities will be carried out in the International Transfers programme, which has a total budget of R2.4 billion over the Medium Term Expenditure Framework period. South Africa's membership contribution to the AU is expected to decrease from R437.9 million in 2019/20 to R275.4 million in 2022/23. This is due to the country having contributed an additional amount of R413.3 million in 2019/20 and 2020/21, due to funding shortfalls. The decrease in contributions in 2021/22 and 2022/23 is expected to lead to a decrease in spending in the International Transfers programme, from R855.6 million in 2019/20 to R756.6 million in 2022/23.

Consolidating global economic, political and social relations

The DIRCO will continue to focus on consolidating economic, political and social relations through structured bilateral mechanisms, high-level engagements and the creation of country-specific strategies to promote national priorities.

South Africa will continue to accelerate its economic diplomacy and grow its regional, continental and global trade and investment partnerships through engagements and activities undertaken by South African missions abroad to promote the country's economic interests, investment opportunities, tourism, skills development and cultural exchange. Examples of this include foreign missions holding tourism promotional events and meetings to boost South African tourism and promote the country as a destination of choice for business and leisure.

Accordingly, in each year over the medium term, the department will seek to inform and promote South Africa's foreign policy to domestic and international audiences by producing a targeted 12 public participation programmes and publishing 90 media statements and nine opinion pieces. As a result of these activities, spending in the Public Diplomacy and Protocol Services programme is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 7.3%, from R318.9 million in 2019/20 to R393.7 million in 2022/23. This expenditure includes compensation of employees, property payments, operating leases, and travel and subsistence.

Developing and managing state-owned properties in foreign missions

Over the medium term, the DIRCO will seek to reduce its rental portfolio and operational costs associated with the rental of more than 1 000 properties abroad; and ensure the longevity of its 127 state-owned properties by conducting essential maintenance, repairs and renovations. As such, the department will focus on developing vacant state-owned land in Luanda (Angola), New Delhi (India) and Gaborone (Botswana); and renovating state-owned properties in Mbabane (Eswatini), the Hague (Netherlands), Windhoek and Walvis Bay (Namibia), and Brasilia (Brazil).

This is expected to lead to a decrease in expenditure on leases. The department also plans to assess the conditions of its properties in Europe that are more than 50-years old, particularly in London (England), Paris (France), Vienna (Austria), Rome (Italy), Brussels (Belgium), Madrid (Spain) and Copenhagen (Denmark) to inform decisions on their future holding and use.

For these capital investment objectives, R1.2 billion over the medium term has been set aside in the Office Accommodation subprogramme in the Administration programme.

Legislation

The DIRCO derives its mandate from the following legislation:

- the 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;
- the 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 United Nations (UN) and its specialised agencies, and other international organisations and certain people;
- the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF) Act, 2001 (Act 51 of 2001), which establishes an ARF to enhance 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
- the International agreements (multilateral and bilateral): International agreements concluded by South Africa in terms of sections 231(2) and 231(3) of the Constitution.

Budget

For the 2019/20 financial year, the DIRCO was allocated R6.5 billion. As the department largely relies on its personnel to perform its functions, an estimated 45.6% (R9.8 billion) of its total expenditure over the medium term is earmarked for the compensation of employees. This includes the Foreign Service wage bill, allowances payable to transferred staff in terms of the Foreign Service Dispensation Policy, membership fees payable to international organisations, and the development and maintenance of infrastructure in foreign missions. Spending on the compensation of employees is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 5.9%, from R2.9 billion in 2019/20

to R3.4 billion in 2022/23. Total expenditure is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 4%, from R6.5 billion in 2019/20 to R7.3 billion in 2022/23.

Entity

African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund

The ARF provides cooperation funding for initiatives between South Africa and other countries that relate to the promotion of democracy and good governance, the prevention and resolution of conflicts, socio-economic development and integration, humanitarian assistance and relief, and the development of human resources. The fund's total expenditure for 2020/21 is expected to be R50.8 million.

The ARF is a public entity that falls within the purview of the DIRCO's day-to-day responsibilities. It was established through the ARF Act of 2000. It strives to ensure that it complies with the laws and regulatory prescriptions which govern the management of public funds in South Africa. South Africa will continue to play an active role in supporting initiatives aimed at enhancing the African Agenda through the ARF.

The objectives of the ARF and South Africa's foreign policy and principles are aligned with the country's NDP, which is linked to the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The purpose is to enhance 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.

Outputs are the disbursement of development aid to enhance cooperation between South Africa and other countries, to promote democracy and good governance, contribute to prevention and resolution of conflict, support socio-economic development and integration and provide humanitarian assistance.

Performance environment

South Africa's foreign policy is implemented within a highly dynamic and often unpredictable and complex international geopolitical environment. Africa remains central to South Africa's foreign policy imperatives. South Africa's engagements and priorities with respect to other countries on the African continent remain focussed and poised on the strengthening of bilateral relations, the promotion of peace, security and stability, economic cooperation and integration, and the overall enhancement of the African Agenda.

The Asia and Middle East regions are an integral component of South Africa's global trade and makes a significant contribution to efforts to address the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Scope exists for further growth and the challenge of reducing South Africa's trade deficits with the regions.

The DIRCO plans to increase high-level visits to the regions, in particular to countries with which South Africa wishes to establish closer diplomatic ties. The regions have also proven to be a significant contributor to reaching the country's investment targets. The strong focus on investment was expected to be continued in the objectives set for 2019 and 2020. The Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) forum is a grouping based on the shared values of the need to restructure the global political, economic and financial architecture to make it more balanced, representative, inclusive and equitable, as well as to ensure that the international system rests on the important pillars of multilateralism and international law.

The five BRICS countries represent over 3.6 billion people, or about 41% of the world population. All five members are in the top 25 of the world's population, and four are in the top 10. The five nations have a combined nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$16.6 trillion, equivalent to approximately 22% of the gross world product, combined GDP (purchasing power parity) of around US\$37 trillion, and an estimated US\$4 trillion in combined foreign reserves. Both South African exports to, and imports from other BRICS countries have grown at a rate faster than South Africa's global trade, thus increasing the importance of other BRICS countries in South Africa's trade basket. Combined, the BRICS countries account for 15.4%

of South Africa's global exports, and 25.4% of the country's imports.

Multilateralism remains a focal point of South Africa's foreign policy. The strategic plan of the DIRCO (2015 – 2020) directs that South Africa's multilateral engagements are premised on the need to advance the priorities reflected in the NDP, as well as the development priorities of developing countries. In order to influence multilateral processes to reflect and advance these priorities, South Africa must be represented in multilateral fora to engage, influence, negotiate and articulate its positions with the aim of having these positions reflected in the outcomes of multilateral meetings and processes.

The underlying principles, which continue to serve as guidelines in the conduct of South Africa's foreign relations are based on commitments to:

- the promotion of human rights;
- the promotion of democracy;
- justice and international law in the conduct of relations between nations;
- international peace and internationally agreed-upon mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts;
- the interests of Africa in world affairs; and
- economic development through regional and international cooperation in an interdependent world.

Amid uncertainties, Africa is also experiencing positive trends such as optimistic economic growth, the increase in democratic changes in governments and general acceptance of Pan-African programmes such as Agenda 2063, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), the APRM and African initiatives towards socio-economic development. At the same time, the AU Commission is under new leadership.

The report on the Proposed Recommendations for the Institutional Reform of the AU (Kagame Report) has made important, far-reaching recommendations that will improve and streamline the organisation's performance and ensure financial independence, thus reducing its reliance on external partners. The Kagame Report calls for the strengthening of the APRM to track implementation and oversee monitoring and evaluation in key governance areas on the continent. This is to be welcomed,

particularly the repositioning of the APRM to play a monitoring and evaluation role for the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN's 2030 Agenda for SDGs.

Programmes

International Relations

The programme promotes relations with foreign countries. Its objective is 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. Its subprogramme include:

- Africa, which embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in Africa, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, foreign direct investment (FDI) with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 47 diplomatic missions in Africa.
- Asia and the Middle East, which embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with individual 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-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 32 diplomatic missions in Asia and the Middle East.
- Americas and the Caribbean, which embraces relevant national priorities by strengthening bilateral cooperation with countries in the Americas and the Caribbean, particularly through focusing on increasing exports of South African goods and services, FDI with technology transfers into value-added industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 16 diplomatic missions in the Americas and the 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-added

industries and mineral beneficiation, and inbound tourism and skills enhancement. South Africa has foreign representation in 28 diplomatic missions in Europe.

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. The programme's objective over the medium term include:

- Contributing to a reformed and strengthened multilateral system based on equal rules that will be responsive to the needs of developing countries and Africa, in particular, by participating in the global system of governance.
- Strengthening the AU and its structures by providing ongoing financial support for the operations of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in terms of the country's host agreement.
- Improving governance and capacity in the SADC secretariat by implementing the secretariat's job evaluation plan and assisting with the recruitment process.
- Contributing towards processes of the AUDA-NEPAD for socio-economic development in Africa by participating in the APRM and submitting APRM country reports when required.
- Strengthening bilateral, trilateral and multilateral interests and relations within the dialogue forum of the BRICS group of countries through active participation in forum structures.
- Strengthening political solidarity, economic cooperation and socio-cultural relations with Asian countries by participating in structures of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership.
- Strengthening North-South economic and political relations and cooperation to advance the African Agenda through financing development initiatives and providing support for institutional and governance reforms.
The subprogrammes include:
 - The Global System of Governance, which 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.
 - The Continental Cooperation, which provides for the

enhancement of the African Agenda and sustainable development.

- The South-South Cooperation, which 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.
- The 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 in 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, which 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.
- Protocol Services, which 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 programme funds membership fees and transfers to international organisations. It promotes multilateral activities that enhance South Africa's economic and diplomatic relations within 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 the SADC; and
- 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 R116 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 and in 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 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.

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.

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

In 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 to the UN in New York.

The historic treaty was adopted by a vote of 122 states in favour at the UN in 2017 and was opened for signatures the same year. South Africa signed the treaty at a ceremony held on the margins of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly.

The treaty seeks to establish an international norm, de-legitimising 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 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.

The year 2020 marks a number of milestones, including the 75th anniversary of the UN, the 50th anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the 25th anniversary of its indefinite extension. It also marks 75 years since the first use of nuclear weapons. South Africa views the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. The Treaty represents a historical bargain between the Nuclear-Weapon States and the Non-Nuclear-Weapon States, in terms of which the former has undertaken to eliminate their nuclear weapons based on the reciprocal undertaking by the latter not to pursue the nuclear weapons option. While non-proliferation measures have been strengthened, similar concrete progress has not yet been realised in the area of nuclear disarmament. 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 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) complements other international instruments by contributing towards fulfilling the nuclear disarmament obligations under the NPT, the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the various nuclear weapon free zone treaties, such as the Pelindaba Treaty. The TPNW includes different pathways for states possessing or hosting nuclear weapons to join when they are ready through a time bound, verifiable and irreversible process of nuclear disarmament. 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

Ubuntu brand

Ubuntu magazine

The DIRCO's quarterly magazine, *Ubuntu – South Africa's Public Diplomacy in Action*, is aimed at:

- communicating with and educating stakeholders on South Africa's foreign policy positions, achievements, objectives and goal; and
- giving in-depth analysis and information on key departmental issues ranging from current affairs, bilateral and multilateral milestones, upcoming key events, as well as international work done by other government departments, business and parastatals.

The high-quality glossy magazine spreads South Africa's foreign policy message quarterly around the world. Its footprint extends across the globe. The magazine is also available online on www.dirco.gov.za.

Ubuntu Radio

Ubuntu Radio is an online, 24-hour radio station aimed at enhancing communication on South Africa's foreign policy.

The first of its kind on the African continent, it is accessible on www.ubunturadio.com and on the DStv Audio Bouquet Channel 888. The objective of Ubuntu Radio is to create a platform to exchange views and opinions by various stakeholders.

Ubuntu Awards

The 2020 edition of the annual Ubuntu Awards were held in Cape Town on 15 February 2020 under the theme, "Celebrating Excellence in Diplomacy – Working Together to Build a Better Africa and a Better World".

The purpose of the awards is to recognise South African citizens for their distinguished service and contribution to promoting South Africa's national interests and values across the world.

The event takes place traditionally after the opening of Parliament and brings together captains of industry, civil-society leaders, members of Cabinet and other eminent persons in addition to ambassadors and high commissioners accredited to South Africa.

Among the 2020 winners was *The Daily Show* host and Grammy Award nominee, Trevor Noah, who was awarded the Ubuntu Arts and Cultural Diplomacy Award in the youth category for flying the South African flag high in his field of work.

World-celebrated musician, Vusi Mahlasela, who is a South African Music Awards Lifetime Achievement recipient, received the Arts and Cultural Diplomacy Award in the veterans' category.

Springboks Assistant Coach Mzwandile Stick received the Sports Diplomacy Award on behalf of the team, following their Rugby World Cup triumph in Japan in 2019 and for uniting the country behind the slogan "Stronger Together".

The Ubuntu Lifetime Achievement Award went to Dr Brigalia Bam, a prominent gender activist. Bam is the Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University, a former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission and former General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. She was recently awarded the prestigious Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Peace and Reconciliation.

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 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.

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 a rules-based, just, and equitable international order, remains a focal point of South Africa's foreign policy. Consequently, South Africa will continue to engage the multilateral system, particularly the UN, through its agencies, funds, programmes and processes, to advance South Africa's foreign policy priorities.

These engagements take into account that the multilateral system still does not fully reflect global political and economic realities, and is in need of reform. A key priority for South Africa is to regain lost momentum that would accelerate the reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC), as well as to advance the reform of the broader global governance architecture with a view to improving 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 into a common cause to undertake 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, on 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.

Furthermore, in the wake of numerous terror attacks across the world, countering international terrorism remains a priority on the agenda of the UN, particularly with regard to the abuse of cyber platforms for propaganda, recruitment and planning of attacks, radicalising of 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 looks to the UN to advance the global peace and security and development agenda, and address underdevelopment, social integration, full employment and decent work for all and the eradication of poverty globally.

Through its 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 members of the UN in 1945. Since then, the 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.

United Nations Security Council

South Africa was elected to serve on the UNSC for the term 2019 – 2020.

This is South Africa's third term on the UNSC, having previously served in 2007 – 2008 and 2011 – 2012. South Africa's tenure on

the council will be dedicated to the legacy of former President Nelson Mandela and his commitment to peace.

South Africa will 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;. The country will also actively contribute to achieving a Africa at peace by 2063 by pursuing and promoting Africa's goal of "Silencing the Guns by the Year 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 African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC).

UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The council is a premier organ of the UN responsible for the 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.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

South Africa is an active participant in key UNESCO governance structures such as the General Conference and the World Heritage Committee and served on the organisation's Executive Board (for the term 2015 – 2019).

South Africa also 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 in 1997, it has inscribed 10 world heritage sites under the convention, 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); and
- Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains (2018).

National interaction with the UNESCO's various areas of work is coordinated through the South African National Commission for the UNESCO, whose secretariat is hosted by the Department of Basic Education.

Human rights and humanitarian affairs

South Africa played a leadership role in several intergovernmental processes at the UN pertaining to norms and standard setting in international human rights and humanitarian law, law of international protection for asylum seekers, refugees, including migrants, the empowerment of women and gender equality, the protection of the rights of the child and persons with disabilities, as well as food security and nutrition.

To this end, the South African delegation to this system took leadership roles such as chairing relevant intergovernmental working groups, initiating and negotiating flagship resolutions, influencing as well as impacting the agenda setting in these areas.

In the above context, the most important initiative entails the leadership role in the work of the ad-hoc committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards to the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, aimed at combating contemporary forms of racism.

The year 2019 marked the last year of South Africa's back-to-back membership on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The country is committed toward

the strengthening and deepening of the multilateral system of global governance and the rule of law, despite increasing unilateralism and the growth of populist and ultra-nationalist forces in the world.

In 2019, South Africa joined other member states in various commemorative events in New York and Geneva celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC was the first international human rights treaty to be signed and ratified by a democratic South Africa in 1995. Given South Africa's history, children still face numerous challenges, including poverty, poor education and limited access to the provision of quality services. Since ratifying the CRC, and guided by commitments to child rights, South Africa has focused on addressing these historical fault lines. Section 28 of South Africa's Bill of Rights includes obligations on children's rights. Laws and policies aimed at realising child rights have been explicated to meet the country's commitments arising out of the CRC and the Constitution.

Based on regular reviews of the implementation of laws and policies, the South African government attempts to address the gaps that still exist in the promotion, protection and fulfilment of child rights. Tangible results include reforms with regards to juvenile justice. South Africa participated in the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty. In December 2019, government and the mandate holder, Independent Expert Professor Manfred Nowak, co-hosted the southern African regional launch of the UN Global Study. This launch brought together officials from 15 SADC member states, human rights institutions, civil society organisations and academia to discuss how the outcomes and recommendations of the UN Global Study could be implemented in the region. For children, deprivation of liberty means deprivation of childhood, and is a form of structural violence, which states committed themselves to eliminate. Similar to the support provided to the previous two UN global studies on children, South Africa strongly urges the UN to continue to support the independent expert leading this important mandate to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty.

In 2019, South Africa was proudly one of the member

states that abolished corporal punishment in all settings when the country's apex court, the Constitutional Court, ruled in favour of government policy that prohibited corporal punishment, including in the home. This ruling confirmed that government laws and policies in these areas are in line with our international obligations on protecting children under Article 19 of the CRC.

Despite gains made over the last 25 years, there are still critical challenges that threaten the plight of children. Key priorities that remain for South Africa include early childhood development and care; violence against children; health and nutrition; and quality education and life skills programmes. South Africa, therefore, encourages states addressing the rights of the child within multilateral fora, to remain steadfast in strengthening and enhancing the important gains that have been made for children from developing countries. This will ensure that children experience the care and protection they deserve and have a voice in the decisions that are made pertaining to them.

The 43rd Session of the UNHRC was held from 24 to 26 February 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland. South Africa's participation at the high-level segment focused on the following issues: outlining the country's human rights priorities for 2020; giving an update on the government's recent efforts in ensuring the promotion, protection, fulfilment, enjoyment and practical realisation of human rights; initiating the process of lobbying support for the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), in particular the convening of a one-day high-level plenary event to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the DDPA on the margins of the high-level segment of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2021; and delivering messages on advancing gender equality, empowerment of women, and combating violence against women and girls.

South Africa participated in two high-level panel discussions on human rights mainstreaming, whose theme focused on "Thirty years of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Challenges and Opportunities"; and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women.

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, 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 the decisions taken at the WHA (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 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); and
- contributing to economic growth through health employment.

In April 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa participated in the WHO virtual launch of a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable global access to new COVID-19 essential health technologies. The launch was co-hosted by WHO Director-General (DG), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus; France President Emmanuel Macron; European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen; and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. President Ramaphosa participated in his capacity as President of South Africa and Chair of the AU.

Global health actors, private sector partners and other stakeholders came together to create a global platform for action which aimed to enhance connections and leverage interdependencies for collective thought-partnership, problem-solving, mobilising and guiding investments. This platform secured equitable access for new COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. It enabled partners to avoid duplication and overlap, and identify gaps and close them before they emerge. It also connected upstream and downstream activities with countries and communities. Its mission was not

only accelerated development and production of new COVID-19 tools – it was to accelerate equitable global access to safe, quality, effective, and affordable COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, and thus to ensure that in the fight against COVID-19, no one is left behind.

In May 2020, President Ramaphosa attended the 73rd WHA where he affirmed South Africa's support for the WHO, which has been key in guiding the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The WHO has been instrumental in providing guidance and support to African governments with early detection of the pandemic, training health workers and strengthening surveillance in communities.

Group of Twenty

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 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 focusing 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 also works closely with the following international bodies and organisations:

- World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- World Economic Forum (WEF)
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

The country continues to engage with key global economic institutions such as the WTO, the OECD, the ILO and WIPO to ensure that South Africa benefits from trade, investment, industrialisation and innovation to address the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment as espoused in the NDP.

South Africa pursues a system that is sensitive to the needs of the poorest, while leaving policy space at national level to address the development challenges of the South and Africa.

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 to 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 towards the right direction in its mission to address the long-standing 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 its

first ten-year implementation plan.

Thus far, there's has been progress made in this regard, as evidenced by:

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

These flagship programmes of Agenda 2063 are the catalysts which will ensure the acceleration of integration within the continent and will further enable the African countries to maximise the 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 US\$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, amongst others. Additionally, the country continues to play a steering role in matters related to peace and security on the continent.

AU Summit

The AU 33rd Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government Summit was held in Ethiopia from 9 to 10 February 2020 under the theme; "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development". President Ramaphosa

led a South African delegation to the summit where the country assumed the Chairship of the AU for the second time, taking over from Egypt.

While in Ethiopia, President Ramaphosa participated in a number of meetings, including a meeting of the committee of Heads of States and Government on climate change; the 29th Summit of the APRM Forum of Heads of State and Government; and the 37th Session of the AUDA-NEPAD Heads of State and Government orientation committee. He also engaged in a number of bilateral meetings with other Heads of State and Government on the side-lines of the summit and participated in the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative event.

Amongst many issues on the agenda, the 2020 assembly considered the report of the 35th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, the peace and security situation on the continent, and draft legal instruments of the AU.

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

The relationship between the AU and the regional economic communities (RECs)/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 Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Madagascar, Burundi, South Sudan, Somalia, 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 negatively 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.

RECs are recognised as the building blocks of the AU, necessitating the need for 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 RECs, 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/post-colonial pattern where Africa was a supplier of raw materials. 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.

African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development

The AUDA-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. The AUDA-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.

The AUDA-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; and
- cross-cutting issues, including gender, capacity development and information and communications technology (ICT).

South Africa, as one of the initiating countries, played a key role in the establishment of the AUDA-NEPAD and the African APRM, and hosts the AUDA-NEPAD Agency and APRM Secretariat in Midrand, Gauteng.

The APRM process is aimed at addressing corruption, poor governance and inefficient delivery of public goods and services to the citizens of African countries. It encourages the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental economic integration through the sharing of experiences and best practices, and is important to the sustainability of the AUDA-NEPAD.

The AUDA-NEPAD remains the main programme of reference for intra-African socio-economic and developmental relations

and Africa's partnerships with international partners such as the:

- European Union (EU)-AU Strategic Partnership;
- Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC);
- Group of Seven Most Industrialised Nations plus Russia;
- Tokyo International Conference on African Development;
- New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP); and
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

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

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 (TFTA) between the SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) 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. South Africa contributed to the development of the SACU’s five-point plan, which aims to transform the customs union from a tariff and a revenue-sharing agreement to an integrated institution capable of promoting true regional economic development.

South Africa and Namibia co-hosted the SADC Solidarity Conference with Western Sahara from 25 to 26 March 2019 in Pretoria. This came after the 37th Summit of the SADC Heads of State and Government resolved to convene the Solidarity Conference with Western Sahara.

During the conference, the SADC Heads of State and Government expressed the region’s support towards decolonisation and right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Work in the SADC continues to focus on consolidating the SADC Free Trade Agreement (FTA), launched in 2008, before considering deeper forms of integration in the region. The ongoing negotiations to establish the TFTA will combine the three major RECs of 600 million people and a combined GDP of USD\$1 trillion, as building blocks towards continental integration.

In May 2018, Cabinet approved the agreement establishing the TFTA between the COMESA, EAC and SADC be tabled in Parliament for ratification.

The establishment of the TFTA has been heralded as one of the most important developments in Africa. It responds to the need for Africa to overcome small fragmented markets and increases prospects of stimulating industrialisation, employment, income generation and poverty reduction. It further addresses the negative impact on industrialisation, economies of scale and competitiveness.

The TFTA is a key Africa-led project that is being done through the promotion of intra-African investments and attraction of more foreign investment into the FTA. It is an important initiative

in accelerating regional integration efforts aimed at improved intra-African trade,

The TFTA is anchored on the development integration approach that is based on three pillars: market integration, infrastructure development and industrial development. It also forms the basis for the ongoing African continental FTA negotiations which will unlock trade and investment opportunities in the entire continent.

This is also aligned to South Africa’s NDP objective of an integrated Southern African region with beneficial relations with the rest of the world.

One of the key areas to stimulate regional economic development has been the finalisation of the SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan, which focuses on the following six priority sectors: energy, transport, ICT/communications, water, tourism and meteorology.

South Africa has played a critical role in promoting peace, security and political stability in the SADC region, including participation in peace missions. This includes creating an environment conducive to regional political integration, facilitation, and the promotion of democracy and good governance.

Strengthening African cooperation and regional integration

The 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, and that guides government’s priorities in leading the implementation and domestication of the region’s blueprints over the medium term. South Africa continues 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 DIRCO continues to play an active role in the 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 in countries such as Libya and South Sudan, from backsliding into civil unrest. As one of the largest contributors to the AU budget, South Africa’s membership contribution was expected to increase by R200 million in 2019/20 (from R237.9 million to R437.9 million) and by R213.3 million in 2020/21 (from R251 million to R464.3 million) to address a shortfall as a result of the current scale of assessment to determine countries’ membership fees to the AU. This contribution is expected to decrease to R265.1 million in 2021/22, when the current three-year cycle of the scale of assessment lapses.

Development partners

South Africa has key partnerships such as the FOCAC, Africa’s comprehensive partnership with India, and the Korea-Africa Forum. The South African government spares no effort in strengthening the progressive forums of the South such as the NAM, Group of 77 (G77)+China, Africa-South America Summit and the NAASP. These forums have demonstrated that they are trusted allies and partners in South Africa’s aim for a better Africa in a better world

Relations with countries of the South remain strong and 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 IBSA serves as an intimate platform from which to coordinate matters of common interest and concern, and to promote 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 pre-eminent regional organisation linking Africa, the Middle East and Asia via the Indian Ocean. The association is growing in

stature and prominence, and South Africa chaired the IORA from October 2017 to 2019.

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 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 challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality through increased trade, investment, tourism, capacity building, skills and technology transfers.

These objectives are further realised through BRICS' financial institutions like the New Development Bank (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 the 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.

South Africa has made concerted efforts to place the African Continent and the Global South on the agenda of BRICS and to harmonise policies adopted in regional and international fora 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, and its Africa 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.

The 11th BRICS Summit was held in Brazil from 13 to 14 November 2019 under the theme, "BRICS: Economic Growth for an Innovative Future."

Brazil's priorities for its 2019 BRICS Chairship were innovation, fighting transnational crime, health and promoting trade and investment with a focus on infrastructure development and possible public-private partnerships.

IBSA Dialogue Forum

The IBSA Dialogue Forum brings together three large pluralistic, multi-cultural 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 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.

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 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.

The engagement process of the IBSA countries takes place on a number of levels, namely: Summit (Heads of State and Government), the IBSA Trilateral Ministerial Commission meeting (Ministers), and Senior Officials and Technical (through various working groups).

As part of the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the IBSA Dialogue Forum, President Ramaphosa spoke at the inaugural Gandhi-Mandela Freedom Lecture series in New Delhi during a state visit to India.

Indian Ocean Rim Association

The IORA is a charter-based regional multilateral organisation of 22 littoral and island states around the Indian Ocean and 10 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 concluded its two-year Chairship of the IORA in November 2019 when it handed over the Chairship to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the 19th IORA Council of Ministers held in Abu Dhabi.

South Africa's Chairship of the IORA provided an important platform to pursue the country's domestic imperatives such as the NDP as well as other regional and global programmes, such as the AU's Agenda 2063; the 2050 African Integrated Maritime Strategy; the AUDA-NEPAD, and Agenda 2030. During the South African Chairship, the IORA also adopted a special declaration to commemorate the centenary of former President Mandela and communicated the IORA Nelson Mandela "Be the Legacy" internship programme, envisioned to be launched in July 2020, as a contribution to empowering and capacitating the youth of the Indian Ocean Region. South Africa remains part of the IORA Troika for the next two years, which is constituted as follows: UAE (Chair), Bangladesh (Vice Chair) and South Africa (Past Chair). South Africa also remains either in the leading or core cluster country role of various IORA working groups established to implement key regional-wide programmes that emanate from the six IORA priority areas and two cross-cutting thematic areas.

Commonwealth

The modern Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 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.

In March 2020, South Africa joined other member states in celebrating the Commonwealth Day. It was held under the theme, “Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.”

As a member of the Commonwealth, South Africa cooperates with the organisation’s family of nations to create better life for its citizens through economic transformation and collaboration in the fields of education and skills development, women and youth empowerment, technology and innovation, the blue economy, as well as trade and investment. Therefore, the 2020 theme spoke directly to South Africa’s NDP, the AU’s Agenda 2063 and the UN’s Agenda 2063, which aim to create a prosperous world, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Since rejoining the Commonwealth in 1994, South Africa has worked closely with the group, contributing financially, and in terms of capacity and expertise to the work of the organisation. Recently, South Africa in partnership with the British Council, the United Kingdom’s (UK) International Organisation for Cultural Relations and Educational Opportunities, implemented the Improving Work Opportunities project for young people in the Commonwealth to address the high rate of youth unemployment. Six South African Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges will partner with their counterparts in Ghana, India, Malaysia and the UK to learn and share best practices on work readiness programmes.

Since the establishment of the Commonwealth on 26 April 1949, the relevance and value of this organisation has increased as the number of members have grown from eight countries in 1949 to 54 in 2020 and with a membership of around 2.4 billion people from developed and developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the South Pacific. Members work together to pursue common goals to promote a fairer, prosperous, sustainable and secure future.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting which was scheduled to take place in Kigali, Rwanda from 22 to 27 June 2020 was postponed. The event will be held in Kigali at a time to be announced.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

With its 120 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. 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, amongst others.

The 18th Summit of the NAM was held from 25 to 26 October 2019 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The summit was attended by delegates from more than 120 countries. A delegation from South Africa also attended the summit which was held under the theme, “NAM Baku Summit – Upholding the Bandung Principles to ensure concerted and adequate response to the challenges of the contemporary world.”

G77 and China

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, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Although the members of the G77 have increased to 134 countries, including China as the associate member, the original name was retained due to its historic significance.

The G77 and China is the largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries in the UN system. It provides the means for countries of the South to promote their collective economic interests, enhances its joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the UN system and promotes South-South cooperation.

South Africa chaired the G77 and China in 2006 and 2015. Significant during South Africa’s chairing of the G77 was the adoption of the landmark 2030 Agenda for SDGs, which builds

on the Millennium Development Goals and sets the global development trajectory until 2030.

As Chair of the G77, South Africa was also at the forefront of the negotiations and successfully carried out its mandate to ensure that the positions of developing countries were advanced.

Additionally, during South Africa’s chairing of the group, developing countries were able to influence the outcomes of the Paris Climate Change negotiations, and international outcomes on development financing.

West Africa Senegal

Senegal and South Africa are bound by their historic ties of friendship that were 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 (JC) for Bilateral Cooperation.

Mali

South Africa and Mali established bilateral relations in May 1994. The bilateral relations between the two countries are conducted through the JC for Cooperation 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 an African Renaissance Fund contribution.

Peace, security and stability remain a challenge in Northern and Central Mali. South Africa supports the current peace

process in Mali and encourages all the parties involved to remain committed to the implementation of the Peace Agreement in an effort to ensuring 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 the relations between the two countries date back to the common struggle against apartheid and colonialism.

Cabo Verde

South Africa and Cabo Verde exchanged diplomatic 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

The 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 maintain 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, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Economic and Technical Cooperation.

These agreements allow the two countries to engage on a number of areas of possible cooperation, including agriculture,

energy, infrastructure development, capacity and institutional building and trade as well as in 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 which is 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 Joint Commission for Cooperation (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 following the disputed Presidential Elections in Côte d'Ivoire.

Bilateral trade between South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire has experienced an upward trend. 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 amongst others.

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.

In February 2019, President Ramaphosa congratulated his Nigerian counterpart, President Muhammadu Buhari following his successful re-election.

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 the 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.

South Africa exported R4.4 billion worth of goods to Ghana in 2018 while imports were valued at R8.7 billion, thus registering a trade deficit of R4.3 billion with Ghana in 2019.

The majority of the South African investment projects are in the services sector with a total of over 100 projects valued at over US\$780m. 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 JC on Cooperation was concluded on 14 June 2015.

Burkina Faso

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Burkina Faso were established in May 1995. South Africa has an embassy in Ouagadougou since February 2007, and Burkina 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 the 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 Nelson Mandela, followed by former President Thabo Mbeki and by 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. It 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 the 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 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, among others, marine manufacturing and transport; aquaculture; offshore oil and gas exploration; and marine protection and governance.

South Africa and 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.

In January 2019, the South African government sent a representative to attend the inauguration of President-elect Andry Rajoelina in Antananarivo. The visit was also used to strengthen bilateral and socio-economic relations between the two countries.

Madagascar and South Africa have strong bilateral relations and currently have a MoU on Regular Diplomatic Consultations which covers 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 by 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

The 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

In 2019, a South African delegation visited Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to continue consultations with the leadership of member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as part of facilitating efforts towards sustainable peace and stability in South Sudan.

The delegation met with the Chairperson of the IGAD and Prime Minister of Ethiopia. They discussed the implementation of the Revitalised Peace Agreement on South Sudan and preparations for the transitional period. In January 2020, South Sudanese President Gen Salva Kiir Mayardit visited South Africa.

The working visit afforded the countries an opportunity to discuss the progress made thus far, in relation to the implementation of the Revitalised-Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). In this context, Deputy President David Mabuza, in his capacity as the Special Envoy of President Ramaphosa to the South Sudan,

has been co-facilitating a series of meetings of the parties to the R-ARCSS in conjunction with the IGAD.

The focus of these consultative meetings has largely been on the resolution of the number of states and their boundaries, as one of sticking points towards the formation of the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU).

South Africa will continue to support and remains committed to the South Sudanese Peace Process in its entirety, and stands in solidarity with the people of South Sudan in their quest to ultimately find lasting peace. South Africa will continue to encourage all relevant stakeholders to adhere to all the pre-transitional requirements and fully implement the R-ARCSS. South Africa remains confident that the parties will find common ground to form the RTGoNU.

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/agri-business; 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 during 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.

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, focusing 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 urges the Libyan people and its leaders to set aside their differences and unite in the interest of peace, stability and prosperity in Libya. Further, South Africa is ready to assist the Libyan people by sharing her 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 serves 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 at the SADR's inclusion. Morocco was re-admitted as a member of the AU in 2017. Throughout the years, Pretoria 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, which 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.

South Africa calls on the parties to return to a discussion table and have constructive direct dialogue.

In March 2019, South Africa hosted a Solidarity Conference with the SADR, following a resolution by SADC during its 38th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government to convene the conference. During the solidarity conference, the SADC Heads of State and Government expressed the region's support for decolonisation and self-determination for Western Sahara on the basis of the values and principles that have guided the quest for independence throughout Africa.

SADC's collaboration on and with Western Sahara has been informed by the region's own decolonisation experiences and the quest for liberation and self-determination.

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 (CEMAC), the community of Sahel-Saharan States, 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 CEMAC. 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 have seen the signing of a number of agreements.

The Joint Trade Committee is playing an important role in facilitating the trade and investment relationship.

Equatorial Guinea

In April 2019, President Ramaphosa concluded a working visit to Equatorial Guinea where he held talks with his counterpart, President Obiang Nguema Mbasongo.

The visit provided an opportunity for President Ramaphosa and President Mbasongo to strengthen political, diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries, in pursuance of the objective to promote peace, security and sustainable development in Africa and the world.

They further agreed on the need to strengthen South-South cooperation and inter-African cooperation in particular.

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.

During the visit, the Heads of State participated in a bilateral meeting and witnessed the signing of the Rules of Procedure for a Joint Permanent Commission.

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 Doualla in Cameroon is used to import goods to landlocked countries in the region such as 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 that are 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.

In January 2019, South Africa signed a MoU with Namibian for the neighbouring countries 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 Ecosystem (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 Benguela Current Commission and now ratified into a convention.

Lesotho

South Africa's bilateral relations with the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho remain strong and are based on a 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 it is critical to the economic success of the kingdom.

The strong cooperation that exists between the two countries cover 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 the Kingdom of Eswatini, reflected in the JBC for Cooperation Agreement, are amiable and informed essentially by historical and cultural affinities, including the geographical proximity between the peoples of the two countries.

In March 2019, President Ramaphosa concluded a working visit to the Kingdom of Eswatini where he held talks with King Mswati III on a range of bilateral issues.

President Ramaphosa and King Mswati reviewed bilateral cooperation between the two countries

The two leaders directed the Ministers of International Relations and Cooperation in the two countries to convene a JBC for Cooperation that oversees the implementation of signed agreements between South Africa and Eswatini.

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 the JCC which was signed in October 2005.

Democratic Republic of 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 on 14 January 2004, is the principal agreement establishing bilateral cooperation between the two states in the form of the BNC, which provides the basis for political, economic and technical cooperation.

Zimbabwe

South Africa and Zimbabwe enjoy historic political and fraternal relations which also incorporate regional affiliation 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.

In March 2019, President Ramaphosa and President Emmerson Mnangagwa co-chaired the third session of the South Africa-Zimbabwe BNC.

Relations between South Africa and Zimbabwe are conducted through the BNC which was established in 2015.

During the BNC, the two Heads of State reviewed bilateral cooperation and progress made with the implementation of bilateral agreements.

South Africa and Zimbabwe 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 the JCC.

Since its inception in May 2007, four sessions of the JCC were held in June 2008, September 2012, April 2016 and 2018 respectively.

Mozambique

In January 2019, President Ramaphosa undertook a working visit to Mozambique, where he held bilateral talks with his counterpart President Filipe Nyusi, to discuss bilateral, regional and global issues of common interest.

South Africa and Mozambique enjoy very good economic, political and cultural relations dating back to the days of the struggle against apartheid.

In March 2019, a delegation from South Africa visited Mozambique and Zimbabwe to hand over donations aimed at assisting victims of Cyclone Idai. The donations included financial aid, clothes, water purifiers, non-perishable food items and blankets.

Tanzania

The 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 between the two countries.

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 China 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, economic and people-to-people relations. South Africa and China share a common developmental agenda based on the principle of internationalism and enjoy strong diplomatic and trade relations. China is South Africa's biggest trading partner and also 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+ China, G20 and are co-chairs of the FOCAC. South Africa's bilateral relations with China are guided broadly through mechanisms such as the Beijing Declaration establishing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the BNC, the Joint Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Cooperation, the Strategic Dialogue Mechanism and the 5 to 10-Year Strategic Framework on Cooperation signed in 2014. South Africa-China bilateral relations have grown from a partnership to a strategic partnership, and subsequently to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

South Africa and China 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. South Africa and China's bilateral relations are managed through structured mechanisms, including the BNC, the Joint Working Group and the Strategic Dialogue. These mechanisms are chaired at the Deputy President, Ministerial and Deputy Ministerial level respectively. South Africa is China's largest trading partner in Africa, and China is also South Africa's largest trading partner as reflected in the total trade volume of R343 billion.

South Africa and China work together to improve the structure of bilateral trade by encouraging the trade of high value-added manufactured goods and increasing China's investment in South Africa. The two sides continue to deepen their cooperation in infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, railways, ports, power plants, airports and housing. It should be

noted that the current bilateral trade volume is skewed in favour of China and through the numerous high-level engagements the leaders have sought to redress the trade deficit through signing of agreements and MoUs among others which provide further opportunities for increased exports to China.

In 2019 several high-level visits and meetings took place between the two countries. The 10th Africa-China Strategic Dialogue was held on 30 October 2019, between South Africa and China. The dialogue provided a platform for the review of bilateral political and economic relations between the two countries.

On 31 November 2019, South Africa and China co-chaired the 7th South Africa-China BNC. The objective was to exchange views and assess the state of bilateral relations within the framework of the BNC.

On the economic front, South Africa and China also enjoy strong relations. South Africa remains China's number one trading partner in Africa. Bilateral trade between South Africa and China, for 2019 amounted to R374 billion, with a trade deficit of R96 billion in China's favour. While there is a trade imbalance between South Africa and China, both countries have implemented various mechanisms aimed at addressing this imbalance. Following the successful opening of the Chinese market for exports of South African wine and beef, the market access for various fruit and dairy products are now being negotiated.

As a sign of the strong relations between the two countries, South Africa donated medical supplies to China 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. China has also donated medical supplies and pledged financial assistance to South Africa in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Japan

South Africa and Japan enjoy excellent diplomatic relations in the fields of trade and investment; science and technology cooperation; and skills development support.

Since 2010, the relations have been upgraded to a Strategic Cooperation Partnership. Japan is a major investor in the South African economy, with a presence of approximately 140 Japanese companies providing over 150 000 local job opportunities.

The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) is a strategic partnership between Africa and Japan that was launched in 1993, with a view to serve as a consultative forum for development assistance to Africa. The TICAD remains an important strategic partnership of the AU, with the potential to support African countries to industrialise their economies, create sustainable, inclusive growth and, with it, sustainable employment opportunities and a better future for their people, thus also having the potential to contribute significantly to fulfilling the aspirations of the NDP.

From 2018 to 2019, South Africa's total volume of trade with Japan increased from R97.2 billion to R102.6 billion, while the trade balance, which is in South Africa's favour, increased from R21.5 billion to R21.6 billion.

During 2019, South Africa exported mainly precious metals, minerals, as well as iron and steel products to Japan and imported machinery, vehicles and equipment components. An average of approximately 11 147 Japanese tourists visit South Africa annually.

President Ramaphosa attended three high-profile events in Japan in 2019; namely the 14th G20 Summit, the 7th TICAD Summit and the Rugby World Cup. Following the meeting between President Ramaphosa and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on margins of the TICAD 7 in 2019, there are good prospects of continued strong cooperation within the context of the TICAD, given South Africa's position as AU Chair and Chair of the APRM. South Africa stood ready to avail itself to be the host for the TICAD VIII in 2022, subject to the endorsement of the AU.

In October 2019, President Ramaphosa designated the DIRCO Deputy Minister Candith Mashego-Dlamini to attend the official Enthronement Ceremony of Emperor Naruhito.

Republic of Korea (ROK)

Formal diplomatic relations between South Africa and the ROK were established in December 1992.

Increasingly, the focus of the bilateral relationship between South Africa and ROK is on trade and investment links, as the latter houses some of the world's leading companies such as Hyundai, Samsung, KIA, Daewoo and LG, which have been sources of investment into South Africa.

The ROK is South Africa's fourth-largest trading partner in Asia, and South Africa is the ROK's largest trading partner in Africa. There are approximately 27 ROK companies in South Africa, with investments in the manufacturing, energy, construction, cosmetics, shipping and transport sectors, amongst others. Between 2003 and 2019, FDI projects recorded from the ROK represent a total capital investment of R31.27 billion.

Structured South Africa-ROK bilateral relations are conducted within the Policy Consultative Forum (PCF) framework, co-chaired at Deputy Ministerial level. The first PCF took place in Pretoria in 2003. The 8th PCF was held on 17 October 2014 in Seoul, ROK, where a decision was taken to elevate the PCF to a JCC at Ministerial level.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

South Africa established diplomatic relations with the DPRK in August 1998 and the two countries enjoy cordial bilateral relations. Due to the imposition of various UNSC sanctions against the DPRK as a consequence of the country's controversial nuclear weapons and missile programmes, economic relations with South Africa remain limited.

South Africa has been encouraged by the positive developments on the Korean Peninsula and the efforts on all sides to promote direct contact and dialogue to ensure holistic and durable solutions to the regional security tensions and welcomed the rapprochement, which culminated into two inter-Korean Summits between the DPRK leader Kim Jong-un and the ROK President Moon Jae-in in 2018.

The two leaders adopted the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula, followed by a summit meeting between President Donald Trump of the United States of America (USA) and the DPRK leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore, which also adopted a joint statement in the interest of peace and security.

South Africa has consistently called for the denuclearisation 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

South Africa and Mongolia established diplomatic relations in May 1994. 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 on 30 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.

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 the two countries 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 consultations convene at alternating venues in Kazakhstan and South Africa.

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

The sixth round of Bilateral Political Consultations reviewed progress made since the previous round and 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. The next round of consultations was scheduled to be held in Nur-Sultan in 2020.

Bilateral agreements in a variety of fields, including trade and economic cooperation, immigration and justice are currently under consideration and close to finalisation.

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

South Africa and India enjoy strong historical and fraternal bonds forged through India's steadfast opposition to racial discrimination and its support for the liberation struggle in South Africa.

Formal diplomatic relations were established in November of 1993 and close cooperation occurs within multilateral groupings such as BRICS, the IBSA, the IORA and the G20. Formal bilateral relations are structured via a JMC and Foreign Office Consultations (FOC), which takes place at a Senior Official's level.

South Africa participated in the 5th edition of the Raisina Dialogue from 14 to 18 January 2020. The theme for the 2020 edition of the Raisina Dialogue – India's flagship conference on geo-politics and geo-economics – was "21@20: Navigating the Alpha century".

On 17 January 2020, South Africa co-chaired the 10th South Africa-India JMC. Key achievements of the 10th SA-India JMC included implementation of the Visa Simplification Agreement as of January 2020, as well as the proposed roll-out of the e-Visa system for Indian nationals, the announcement of the

formal launch of the Gandhi-Mandela Artisan Skills Centre at the Tshwane South TVET College, the identification of two agricultural products for Indian market access, as well as positive consideration of customised training courses for South African civil servants.

Progress was recorded in a number of areas, including an agreement to conclude a MoU in the area of water and sanitation, and engaging with India on increased market access for South African products. In order to ensure continued growth in the bilateral relationship, and to ensure progress during the implementation phase, it was also agreed that there would be regular meetings between representatives of the respective high commissions and foreign ministries, with a view to monitoring progress on the implementation of the Three-Year Strategic Programme of Cooperation concluded during the state visit of President Ramaphosa to India in January 2019, as well as exchanging views on issues of mutual concern, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The JMC also noted that trade between the two countries is still continuing to increase, with total trade between the two countries projected to reach R120 billion in 2020. Similarly, tourist arrivals from India showed an increase of 2.3% for 2019.

South Africa and India enjoy a strategic partnership and bilateral relations anchored by a deep and shared history of friendship and solidarity. The two countries share a common vision on a range of global issues and closely cooperate in various multilateral fora.

Pakistan

Pakistan and South Africa enjoy cordial bilateral relations and a strong historical bond. Bilateral relations are structured via a JC. In 2015, a decision was taken to elevate the JC from Senior Officials' level to the level of Deputy Minister.

The 5th South Africa-Pakistan JC was scheduled to be held in Pakistan in 2020. Bilateral trade has shown impressive growth, and in 2019 reached R15 billion, with the trade balance being in South Africa's favour. Both countries are keen to grow the trade relationship further concentrating on deep mining and technology, energy and agro-processing.

Sri Lanka

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Sri Lanka are cordial and conducted under the umbrella of the structured Partnership Forum.

The 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, educational exchanges.

Bilateral trade between South Africa and Sri Lanka has grown significantly since the establishment of diplomatic relations, from R 184 million in 1994 to R2.5 billion in 2019.

The South African High Commissioner in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is accredited to the Maldives on a non-residential basis.

Bangladesh, Nepal and Maldives

The South African High Commissioner in New Delhi, India is accredited to Bangladesh and Nepal on a non-residential basis.

Bangladesh has been identified as a country with enormous potential for the expansion of trade and economic relations with South Africa. Over the recent years, bilateral relations between South Africa and Bangladesh have deepened and grown exponentially, with bilateral trade amounting to almost R5 billion in 2019, with a trade balance of R1.5 billion in South Africa's favour.

Bilateral relations with Bangladesh are cordial and conducted under the umbrella of the structured Senior Officials' Meeting.

The 5th Senior Officials' Meeting was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in September 2019, and coincided with commemoration of the Silver Jubilee of formal diplomatic relations between South Africa and Bangladesh, which was hosted by the Bangladesh International Institute for Security Studies.

South Africa and Nepal share 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, South Africa and Nepal are

near concluding a declaration of intent, which provides for a structured bilateral mechanism at Senior Officials' level, through which bilateral relations would be advanced.

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) has dramatically outpaced the rest of the world in both economic and GDP per capita growth, since the late 1970s. Already some 67 million households in the ASEAN member states are part of the consuming class, with incomes exceeding the level at which they can begin to make significant discretionary purchases. That number could almost double to 125 million households by 2025, making the ASEAN a pivotal consumer market of the future, and hence of strategic importance to South African trade. Trade between South Africa and the ASEAN is growing rapidly. South Africa's largest trading partners in South East Asia are Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam

The ASEAN is of strategic importance to South Africa, which is moving towards deepening political and economic ties with ASEAN (through accession to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation); this will contribute positively to the delivery of national domestic priorities.

This approach could be a precursor for developing broader trade relations between the SACU or the SADC and the ASEAN. Trade between South Africa and the ASEAN is growing quickly.

Thailand

South Africa is Thailand's largest trading partner in Africa, while Thailand is South Africa's largest trading partner in the ASEAN. The South African Embassy in Thailand is also accredited to Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia.

The structured bilateral mechanism through which the two countries optimise existing cooperation is the South Africa-Thailand Senior Officials Meeting which takes place annually.

The massive ongoing infrastructure projects in Thailand provide a base for South African exports of machinery, iron ore and steel as well as mineral products.

Total bilateral trade between South Africa and Thailand in 2019 stood at R46.9 billion.

Malaysia

Malaysia is the fourth-largest new investor into the African continent. Malaysia continues to remain an important partner to South Africa and is instrumental in working together with South Africa on the latter's Operation Phakisa initiatives.

The bilateral mechanism that allows the two countries to optimise existing cooperation is the South Africa-Malaysia FOC, which takes place annually.

Malaysia has made a valuable and ongoing contribution to skills development in the South African Public Service under the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme sponsored by the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There is potential for South Africa to grow value-added trade with Malaysia, especially in specific areas such as defence procurement; agro-processing (to include the exports of Halaal meat) and other consumer goods.

Malaysia is South Africa's second-largest trading partner in the ASEAN region. Bilateral trade between South Africa and Malaysia amounted to R22 billion in 2019 and the partnership shows tremendous potential for further growth in trade, investment and tourism.

Singapore

South Africa and Singapore established diplomatic relations in 1992. The current bilateral mechanism that allows the two countries to optimise existing cooperation is the South Africa-Singapore FOC which takes place annually.

The total value of trade between South Africa and Singapore in 2019 was R15.4 billion with exports at R7.9 billion and the imports at R7.5 billion.

The Singaporean Cooperation Programme contributes to the skills development of South African civil servants annually. It is estimated that the programme trained over 1 500 South African civil servants including the programme that is tailor-made for the development of senior managers.

The Singapore Minister of State, Dr Maliki Bin Osman, and Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini, met on 5 September 2019,

at the WEF in Cape Town and reaffirmed the strong bilateral relations between the two countries. Singapore pledged to a continued support to South Africa's skills development and other areas of technical cooperation.

Indonesia

South Africa and Indonesia established diplomatic relations in August 1994. Consequently, the South African Embassy was established in Jakarta in January 1995.

The bilateral relations between the two countries are managed through the JC for Bilateral Cooperation and the Joint Trade Committee both at Ministerial level. In December 2019, the inaugural FOC meeting, at the level of the Deputy Director-General (DDG) was held to provide an avenue for direct engagement between the foreign ministries geared towards deepening bilateral relations.

The total value of bilateral trade for 2019 was R18 billion, with exports to Indonesia accounting for R8 billion, while R10 billion worth of goods were imported from Indonesia.

Vietnam

Bilateral relations with Vietnam are coordinated through a biennial partnership Forum (at the level of Deputy Ministers). The last session was held in March 2019.

South Africa hosted Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Vuong Dinh Hue on an official visit and held a bilateral meeting in Pretoria on 5 November 2019. The key outcome of the bilateral meeting was the affirmation of the positive relations that exist between South Africa and Vietnam.

The meeting also reflected on measures that can improve trade by removing trade and technical barriers; as such, concluding the necessary MoU as well as bilateral agreements that would regularise and enable trade. South Africa's coal export to Vietnam was highlighted as one of the possible areas of cooperation. It was also acknowledged that the tourism figures needed to be improved and greater efforts should be made to encourage tourism flow between the countries.

The total value of bilateral trade between South Africa and Vietnam in 2019 was R18 billion.

South Africa looks forward to leveraging greater regional cooperation through its chairship of the AU and Vietnam's Chairship of the ASEAN in 2020.

South Africa's relations with Brunei-Darussalam, Cambodia, the PDR and Timor-Leste are cordial.

The South African Mission in Thailand is accredited on a non-residential basis to Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar; the Mission in Malaysia is accredited on a non-residential basis to Brunei-Darussalam; and the Mission in Indonesia is accredited on a non-residential basis to Timor-Leste.

Philippines

South Africa and the Philippines established a structured Bilateral Consultative Forum (BCF) to improve cooperation between the two countries. Although the BCF between South Africa and the Philippines did not take place as planned during 2019, bilateral relations remain strong. A number of outstanding agreements such as the Joint Trade Commission and the Mutual Visa Waiver Agreement are at the final stages of conclusion.

While trade levels remain low, the Philippines received permission to open a Trade Office in Johannesburg – a clear sign that the Philippines regards South Africa and the SADC as a viable future market. Bilateral trade for 2019 was R3.4 billion, with exports at R1 billion and imports R2.4 billion.

Australasia and the Pacific Islands

Australia

South Africa and Australia enjoy cordial relations and interact biennially through a Senior Official Meeting (SOM).

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 South Africa's 23rd-largest trading partner. The majority of exports from South Africa to Australia are finished goods. Exports of high-quality passenger motor vehicles head the list. Total trade between South Africa and Australia amounted to R25.7 billion in 2019.

New Zealand

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

Relations are coordinated through a biennial SOM. New Zealand is South Africa's 33rd-largest trading partner. Total trade between South Africa and New Zealand amounted to R3.1 billion in 2019.

A significant feature of the South Africa-New Zealand relationship is its sporting ties, in particular, rugby, cricket, netball and in recent years, soccer. The two countries also enjoy productive cooperation at a multilateral level.

Both countries are members of the Valdivia Group (Group of Temperate Southern Hemisphere Countries on Environment), which aims to promote the Southern Hemisphere's views at international environmental meetings and enhance scientific cooperation.

They also work closely together within the context of the Antarctic Treaty and Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement, and interact regularly within the context of the WTO and the Cairns Group.

Relations with the Middle East

South Africa shares cordial relations with countries of the Middle East anchored by the strategic objective of strengthening South-South relations.

Within the political realm, South Africa's engagements have been mainly through diplomatic support for conflict resolution to conflicts affecting the region as in Syria 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 the 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

Diplomatic relations between Syria and South Africa were established in June 1994, with Syria having opened an embassy in South Africa in 1998. 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 taking into account 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.

Iraq

Iraq opened its embassy in Pretoria in December 1999 and an Iraqi Ambassador was accredited to South Africa in 2001.

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

In February 2019, South Africa commended Iraqi authorities on the progress achieved in forming the national government. 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. The relationship would be further strengthened by concluding a MoU on Bilateral Consultations between the two countries.

South Africa wishes to further intensify its relations with Jordan, which has the potential to develop significantly, with particular emphasis in the economic sphere as well as in the areas of cultural interaction, tourism, education and people-to-people relations. The two countries are concluding a MoU on Bilateral Consultations, which recognises the importance of constructive dialogue as well as engaging on regional and international issues of common interest between the two countries.

Lebanon

South Africa enjoys cordial relations with Lebanon, with formal diplomatic relations having been re-established on 27 June 1994. At present South Africa has no residential diplomatic presence in Lebanon. The South African Ambassador in Syria is accredited to Lebanon on a non-residential basis. South Africa attaches great importance to the ties that have been built between the two countries.

In June 2019, the relationship reached a significant milestone when the two countries celebrated 25 years of formal diplomatic relations. This event served as an opportunity to further enhance bilateral relations which are based on solid foundations of friendship underpinned by strong people-to-people links.

To give further impetus to the bilateral relationship, South Africa and Lebanon are in the process of concluding a number of agreements and an MoU on Bilateral Consultations. This MoU would institutionalise a regular and structured political engagement should further consolidate and promote practical cooperation to intensify the bilateral relations.

United Arab Emirates

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

Relations were expected to gain momentum during 2020 with the UAE hosting the Dubai World Expo 2020. The event was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. South Africa was going to participate in the expo by managing a country pavilion, which was expected to receive a number of high-level and business delegations focused on increasing South Africa's global economic presence in identified sectors.

The two countries have an agreement on cooperation in social development, focusing on early childhood intervention, research and social studies, teenager development and services to person with disabilities, among other areas of mutual interest.

Iran

The primary mechanism for engagement with Iran is the JC, established in 1995 and allows for a high-level review of bilateral relations and considers areas to further strengthen relations. This commission is supported by an inter-sessional mechanism, the Deputy Ministerial Working Group which further monitors the implementation of decisions and undertakings made during the JC.

The ninth Deputy Ministerial Working Group between South Africa and Iran was held in March 2019 in Cape Town. South

Africa believes in diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. South Africa welcomed and will continue to support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme

The 14th Session of the JC between the South Africa and Iran was held in Tehran, Iran in October 2019. The meeting was co-chaired by the South African International Relations Minister Naledi Pandor and the Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Javad Zarif. The meeting provided the opportunity for the two countries to advance bilateral cooperation in areas such as science and innovation, water resource management, trade and political relations.

South Africa remains committed to support Iran as it currently manages the economic consequences of unilateral and secondary sanctions imposed by the USA; following its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). South Africa remains committed to diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, as a matter of principle, and considers the JCPOA as a significant achievement in this regard. It remains South Africa's belief that it provides the necessary framework and confidence-building measures for Iran to re-enter the global economy whilst pursuing nuclear activities for peaceful purposes; a fundamental principle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The JCPOA was unanimously endorsed by the 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 November 1994. South Africa imports approximately 47% of its oil from the Arab country and regards it as a strategic partner in the Middle East. The country is also a large investor in South Africa, especially in the area of renewable energy. It is also a large investor in South Africa, especially in the area of renewable energy with a view to increasing its portfolio of investments, notably in the petrochemical and refining sector.

In order to grow trade, investment and economic ties, including business-to-business cooperation between South Africa and Saudi Arabia, a number of business interactions

have been arranged with Saudi Arabia and it is anticipated that the Joint Business Council between the two countries may be reformulated during 2020.

South Africa remains committed to solidifying strong South Africa-Saudi Arabia 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

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and the Qatar were established in 1994. 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.

Qatar's investment is expected in line with its 20% stake in the Bulpradda oil and gas discovery.

Minister Pandor met with Qatari Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, during a visit to the country in October 2019. Amongst others, the two Ministers agreed on the expansion of trade relations and the importance of convening the 5th Session of the Bilateral Consultations between the two countries as soon as possible.

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 and several Kuwaiti companies have made multimillion-rand investments in the construction and development of hotels and real estate in South Africa, as well as investments on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Kuwait is South Africa's largest source of FDI from the Middle East, especially in the hospitality industry, through the Zimbali Resort investment and the automotive component investment by KAPICO.

Oman

Diplomatic relations were established in 1995 and are managed through the South Africa-Oman Partnership Forum. Both

countries are keen to attract further investment. A primary project by Oman is the Port of Sohar Projects, which will facilitate the trade of agro-processed products from South Africa.

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.

North America

Canada

Canada has a long-standing and wide-ranging track record of constructive engagement, at bilateral and multilateral levels, in Africa, ranging from peacekeeping and development aid to FDI.

About two thirds of South African exports to Canada relate to minerals and mining equipment, with agricultural and chemical products making up the rest. Canada views South Africa as a gateway into the SADC and the rest of Africa.

Canada's cooperation with South Africa focuses on strengthening service delivery, support for HIV and AIDS programmes and rural development.

United States of America

Formal relations between South Africa and the US are historic, dating back to 1789.

The bilateral relationship is broad and deep, covering political, diplomatic, economic, social, scientific, educational, cultural, as well as regional and global cooperation on issues of mutual interest.

Bilateral relations between South Africa and the US are cordial. The US supports South Africa's domestic priorities and continues to align its assistance programmes to the NDP. The US contributes approximately US\$541,681 million in Official Development Assistance per year and is the biggest international donor to South Africa's HIV and AIDS efforts, via the President's Emergency Programme for AIDS Relief.

The US is a major economic partner for South Africa, an important export market for value-added goods, a source of FDI, technology and of tourists.

Trade and investment relations take place under the auspices of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, under which South Africa gains duty-free and quota-free access to the US market for value-added products.

The US is currently South Africa's third-largest trading partner, absorbing a substantial amount of manufactured exports from South Africa.

Regional organisations

European Union

The EU remains a key strategic region for South Africa and a prominent dialogue partner from the global North.

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.

The strategic partnership expanded the scope of the interaction beyond trade issues, to incorporate a much wider scope of cooperation with structured bilateral mechanisms and high-level meetings (summit, ministerial political dialogue, senior-official meetings and inter-parliamentary meetings) to support South Africa's national, regional, continental, and global priorities and programmes.

The JCC, co-chaired by the DG of the DIRCO and the EU counterpart, covers over twenty sectoral policy dialogues, including diverse issues such as development cooperation, science and technology, space, migration, health, trade, education and skills development, peace and security, and human rights.

The EU is South Africa's largest trading partner, as a block of 28 member states, and largest foreign investor, representing 77% of total FDI stocks in the country.

South Africa is the only African country, and one of 10 countries globally, that has a strategic partnership with the EU. More than 2 000 EU companies operate in South Africa, creating more than 500 000 direct and indirect jobs.

Western Europe

Belgium

Relations between South Africa and Belgium are strong and dynamic, covering a number of areas that are important to South Africa's national development objectives.

Belgium serves as port of entry for the largest portion of South African exports to the EU and beyond.

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Belgium are underpinned by shared values of freedom and democracy and a similar approach to a broad range of international issues, specifically peace and security.

South African exports to Belgium include precious stones, organic chemicals, iron, steel and manufactured goods, while relations between Flanders and South Africa is largely driven by development cooperation, but also includes culture, science and innovation, youth policy, education, economy and trade.

The Netherlands

Since 1994, South Africa and the Netherlands have forged a solid partnership that covers many fields, including economic, trade, science and technology, education, judicial, multilateral and culture. The Dutch has consistently supported South Africa in terms of bilateral and multilateral relations. There are approximately 42 agreements, MoUs and letters of intent in various areas, mainly in terms of water resource planning, science and technology, military cooperation, development cooperation and infrastructure development. Bilateral trade reached R60 billion in 2019. The Netherlands is an important international investor in the South African economy.

South Africa and the Netherlands signed a MoU on the Establishment of a JCC in November 2015, which provides for regular meetings chaired by the Ministers or Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the two countries in order to facilitate consultation and cooperation in various fields.

In February 2020, South Africa hosted the inaugural meeting of the JCC. South Africa was represented by Minister Pandor while the Netherlands was represented by a delegation led by its Foreign Affairs Minister Stef Blok. Both Ministers agreed to promote closer collaboration between the AU and the EU on

issues such as climate change, jobs and investment, as well as migration and mobility.

South Africa and the Netherlands are committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement made at COP21 in 2015. Both nations are staunch supporters of multilateral cooperation in the efforts to implement the Paris Agreement and to reach its objectives. The countries look ahead to an important year to advance collective efforts to address climate change and to strengthen the global push for climate ambition and action for adaptation and mitigation. The two countries are amongst the convening countries of the Global Commission on Adaptation, which aims to catalyse a global adaptation movement. Minister Blok invited a South African delegation to the Climate Adaptation Summit, which would be held in Amsterdam on 22 October 2020.

Science and technology relations between South Africa and the Netherlands are managed by a Joint Working Committee. Two meetings of the committee have already taken place, the most recent of which was held in Pretoria on in April 2019. The third meeting of the Joint Working Committee is scheduled to be held in the Netherlands in 2021.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education awarded 25 PhD scholarships to South Africans to be placed in various Dutch institutions after an agreement in this regard was signed in 2017.

The NRF and the Netherlands Organisation for Research will finance joint research projects as from 2020, focusing on SDGs in the area of Water-Energy-Food Nexus. The Netherlands continues to offer strategic and technical assistance to the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan. The "Blue Deal", which will provide 2.5 million people in South Africa with clean, safe and enough water, was expected to be launched in 2020 with the assistance of the Dutch water authorities.

The two countries also have a joint cooperation in the field of science and technology such as the Square Kilometer Array, the Orange Knowledge Programme and inter-institutional collaboration on student exchange, joint degrees, joint research and PhDs.

The Second Meeting of the JCC is expected to be held in the Netherlands before the end of 2022.

Luxembourg

Bilateral and economic relations, especially in the financial services and funds sectors, remain strong between Luxembourg and South Africa.

Germany

South Africa and Germany's strategic relationship is substantiated by 72 bilateral agreements, providing a legal framework for cooperation in several areas.

These relations are further enhanced through a BNC, spanning foreign and security policy, migration and humanitarian assistance, economy and energy development cooperation, environment, science and technology, arts and culture, labour and social affairs and vocational education and training.

South Africa and Germany have a strategic relationship, with regular structured dialogue and cooperation engagements covering a broad range of areas, including political dialogue, trade and investment, science and technology, the environment, vocational education and training, development cooperation, energy, defence, labour and social affairs, as well as arts and culture. Relations are cordial, multifaceted and of a strategic nature.

South Africa and Germany have served as non-permanent members of the UNSC for the period of 2019 – 2020.

In February 2020, President Ramaphosa hosted the Head of Government of Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel, on an official visit. The visit followed the successful state visit by the Head of State of Germany, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in November 2018.

The 10th Meeting of the South Africa-Germany BNC, which is an instrument used to manage relations between the two countries was held on 20 March 2020, via a video conference. Minister Pandor and German's Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Heiko Maas, led the delegations from their countries and co-chaired the meeting. The two Ministers discussed and exchanged views on political and high-level bilateral issues, including South Africa's priorities as Chair of the AU, Germany's priorities as incoming Chair of the EU, climate change and vocational training.

South Africa is Germany's largest trading partner in Africa while Germany is the third-largest source of overseas visitors to South Africa. Approximately 600 German companies are represented in South Africa. Total trade reached R235 billion over the 12 months to the end of November 2019, while South African exports (at R108 billion) exceeded R100 billion for the first time, narrowing the trade deficit. About 323 000 German nationals visited South Africa in 2019. Germany also has an extensive development programme in South Africa.

Switzerland

Relations between South Africa and Switzerland are based on equal partnership. There are some 200 Swiss companies in South Africa, employing around 36 000 South Africans. Consultations take place at the level of Deputy Minister.

Switzerland has transitioned from a purely development assistance programme in South Africa to focussing on an economic cooperation. The Swiss Strategy for Economic Cooperation with South Africa is implemented by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and financed through the Swiss Framework Credit 2017 – 2020 for economic and trade policy measures.

The planned commitment for South Africa for the 2017 – 2020 period is 55 million Swiss Francs (approximately R740 million), which is allocated in close coordination with South Africa's National Treasury.

Switzerland has granted South Africa special status on the Swiss foreign-policy agenda as one of the focus areas for Swiss interests outside Europe.

South Africa is Switzerland's second-largest trading partner in Africa after Ghana.

Switzerland is the seventh-largest foreign investor in South Africa, with more than 100 Swiss companies having subsidiaries of production in South Africa, sustaining approximately 33 000 jobs.

Austria

Apart from the political dialogue, the two Foreign Ministries have signed a MoU on the Establishment of Bilateral Consultation Mechanism between the DIRCO and the Austrian Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs.

The MoU allows for regular Bilateral Consultations at Senior Officials' level to review all aspects of bilateral relations, exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest as well as on developments taking place in regional and international fora.

Current bilateral programmes supported by the Austrian Embassy in South Africa are as follows:

- supporting tourism schools and curricular developments in hospitality industry;
- supporting renewable energy training, particular solar through the Soltrain II project;
- providing vocational welding training through the Austrian Welding Academy and with the support of the Austrian Development Agency;
- supporting vocational training through the Ithuba College south of Johannesburg; and
- promoting higher education through university to university cooperation.

South Africa enjoys cordial bilateral relations with Austria, focused primarily on economic exchanges.

The bilateral exchanges focus on trade and investment, tourism and technological cooperation as well as vocational training.

South Africa ranks sixth among Austria's overseas trading partners, and is by far Austria's major trading partner in Africa.

Some 400 Austrian companies are engaged in trade relations with South African companies. More than 50 Austrian companies have direct investments in South Africa.

South Africa is Austria's main trading partner in Africa and ranks sixth among Austria's overseas trading partners.

United Kingdom

Bilateral relations between South Africa and the 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, sports and recreation.

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 equally have 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 relationship in wide-ranging areas of cooperation, including energy, science and technology, education, health, arts and culture.

Ireland

Ireland was the only EU member country that did not have full diplomatic relations with South Africa until the dawn of democratic South Africa.

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.

France

France is a significant technological, trade, investment, tourism and development cooperation partner for South Africa.

Bilateral technical cooperation between South Africa and France exist 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.

In March 2019, South Africa and France agreed to strengthen bilateral relations, following their 8th South Africa-France Forum for Political Dialogue held in Pretoria.

During the meeting, the two countries committed to regular, structured bilateral meetings at Ministerial level; defend the democratic values which they share and promote strong multilateralism. They agreed to increase cooperation within the framework of the G20 and in the UNSC, of which South Africa has been a non-permanent member for the period 2019 to 2020. They further agreed to reduce global inequality under France's Group of 7 Presidency, and continue to support the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the common vision on the environment and human rights.

They also agreed to a number of bilateral interactions and cooperation, which include:

- regular interaction and deliberation on addressing peace, security and development concerns in Africa;
- deepen the working relationship between the AU, EU and UN to bolster peace keeping, security, governance and promoting democracy in Africa;
- increase cooperation in the Indian Ocean and continue discussions about France's role in the IORA;
- conclude arrangements for the 2019 Ministerial Joint Economic Commission in South Africa, to advance trade and investment relations; and
- conclude the implementation of the South Africa-France Partnership Framework 2016 – 2019 and renew the framework during the 9th Forum for Political Dialogue in 2020.

During the forum, the two countries signed new agreements, namely the:

- Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Basic Education;
- Declaration of Intent on Establishing a Co-funded Scholarship for master's and doctoral students.
- Framework Agreement between the South African National Space Agency and the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales in Space Cooperation.
- Financing Agreement between the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa Limited and Agence Française de développement.
- MoU between La Réunion National Park and the South African National Parks.
- Cooperation Protocol between the Association pour le Centre de ressources et d'appui sur le risque requin à La Réunion of the French Republic and the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board of South Africa.

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, furthermore, underpinned

by the presence of a substantial and influential Greek professional and business community in South Africa.

Bilateral relations between the two countries continue to grow in a number of strategic and mutually beneficial areas.

Cyprus

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

Italy

South Africa enjoys constructive bilateral relations with Italy, based on a shared commitment to the values of freedom, democracy and a similar approach to a broad range of international issues.

This is due, in part, to the strong cultural links and long-standing diplomatic relations between the two countries underpinned by a dynamic, well integrated and respected Italian community, which also contributes to the economy of the country.

A MoU establishing Bilateral Consultation was signed and entered into force in 2003; with Senior Officials Meeting being a platform set to coordinate political relations at the DDG level.

Spain

Spain is one of South Africa's major trading partners in the EU. There are 100 Spanish companies that have invested in South Africa and they are estimated to have created over 12 000 jobs largely in renewable energy and metals sectors.

Portugal

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Portugal are cordial and cover many areas, underpinned by the High-level Political Consultative Forum, which provides a platform for the two countries to explore the deepening of relations across the spectrum of South Africa's national priorities, political cooperation, the strengthening of trade and investment and development cooperation. In February 2020, Minister Pandor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Portugal, Professor

Augusto Santos Silva, held Bilateral Consultations in South Africa.

South Africa has the third-largest Portuguese community in the world after those in France and Brazil

Holy See

South Africa opened a Mission at the Holy See in 2017. The Holy See is of strategic importance politically and in respect of human rights and international humanitarian law.

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 benefited 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.

Relations in the international arena have seen close cooperation on multilateral issues. 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

The 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. 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 affairs, and environmental affairs.

Denmark supports South Africa in achieving the objectives of the NDP and National Water and Sanitation Master Plan.

The Strategic Water Sector programme addresses issues of financing and research and innovation. Other areas of support include exchange of expertise on affordable and clean energy and sustainable cities and communities.

Estonia

There is no resident Estonian Mission in South Africa. The South African Embassy in Finland is also accredited to Estonia on a non-residential basis.

The ICT sector, science and technology and tourism have been identified as potential areas for strategic bilateral cooperation between South Africa and Estonia.

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 Officials' level.

The main areas of cooperation include education and skills development with special emphasis on the maritime sector and cooperation in the field of science, technology and innovation.

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.

Iceland

Formal diplomatic relations were established in 1995 at an Ambassadorial level on a non-residential basis. The South African Embassy in Norway is accredited to Iceland on a non-resident basis.

In terms of trade cooperation, South Africa's exports to Iceland amount to R78 million and the Iceland's exports to South Africa amount to R70 million.

Latvia

Full diplomatic relations were established in 1991. The South African Embassy in Sweden is accredited to Latvia.

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 Officials' level. The main areas of cooperation between South Africa and Lithuania include trade and investment, energy, transport, science and technology, and academic and cultural cooperation.

Norway

South Africa opened a Consulate General in Oslo in September 1988 while Norway already had a Consulate General in Cape Town. In January 1992, diplomatic relations were upgraded to Ambassadorial level.

South Africa and Norway have a history of working together in the promotion of democracy; good governance and human rights. 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.

South Africa and Norway cooperate in the fields of peacebuilding and mediation. The programme focuses on building capacities for female mediators in conflict situations.

Training provided includes women in government and non-government organisations. In the area of the blue economy,

South Africa and Norway have established a Fisheries Law Enforcement Academy at Nelson Mandela University called FishFORCE.

In the area of science and technology, South Africa and Norway have signed a new framework programme for joint research cooperation, referred to as, the South Africa-Norway Research Cooperation, focusing on the blue economy, climate change, the environment and sustainable energy. The programme began, for a period of five years, from 2018 to 2023.

The goal of the project is to enhance the knowledge base for policies and decisions for sustainable development in the areas of oceans and blue economy, environment – with emphasis on oceans and pollution, climate change and sustainable energy in South Africa and Norway.

South Africa and Norway have developed a close relationship dating back to the early Struggle years when Norway became an active supporter of organised resistance against the apartheid regime.

In the 1990s, a new era of cooperation in higher education and research was initiated, both bilaterally and multilaterally, including a number of joint projects between South African and Norwegian higher education institutions.

South Africa and Norway have also been conducting annual high-level Bilateral Consultations to identify areas of common political and economic interest.

Following the launch of Operation Phakisa, South Africa and Norway re-confirmed their mutual interest in exploring opportunities for development of ocean space and the blue economy, including the maritime sector, marine resources and aquaculture.

The two countries have further agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation on the environment and to explore opportunities in the area of renewable energies.

Sweden

Formal 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 are coordinated through the South Africa-Swedish BNC, which was inaugurated in September

2000 by former President Thabo Mbeki and former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson.

Areas of cooperation include science and technology, maritime affairs, and environmental affairs.

South Africa's relations with Sweden are coordinated at Deputy President's level and the main areas of cooperation.

The Swedish government has extended the 30 fully funded scholarships for South Africans to pursue post-graduate studies in Sweden until 2021. The programme offers 10 scholarships per annum over a period of three academic years.

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.

Cooperation in gas and oil and energy can go a long way towards alleviating South Africa's energy needs.

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 a 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.

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.

South Africa and Belarus mainly engage through the Inter-governmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation led by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic).

The committee is co-chaired at the level of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Belarusian side and at the Deputy Minister of the Trade, Industry and Competition on the South African side.

The primary objective of Inter-governmental Committee on Trade and Economic 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.

The two countries have good bilateral relations and have been cooperating mainly through sport, culture and in the agricultural sector especially through wine making exchange programmes.

Through joint efforts, Georgian and South African links are deepening through increased interactions in culture and sports, such as rugby.

The two countries have established a winemakers exchange programme which has seen student and expert exchanges between Telavi State University (Faculty of Agra-Sciences) and the University of Stellenbosch (Faculty of Wine Sciences).

Russian Federation

South Africa regards Russia as an important strategic partner and close bilateral and multilateral ties exist between the two countries.

With the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, South Africa became the first African state to recognise the independence of the Russian Federation. Full diplomatic relations were established between South Africa and the Russian Federation in February 1992.

Since the re-establishment of bilateral relations, South Africa's relations with Russia have evolved into a strategic relationship

over the past few years through continued high-level political engagements.

One of the primary mechanisms for improving the bilateral relationship and advancing the government's development objectives is the Inter-governmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation which was established in 1999. The committee is the most important mechanism underpinning mutually beneficial trade and economic ties between the two countries.

The Inter-governmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation has proven to be an effective instrument for effective engagement on trade and investment issues, as well as critical skills and technology transfers amongst others. The Inter-governmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation 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 Inter-governmental Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation include agriculture; forestry and fisheries; energy; education; mineral resources; science and technology; transport; water and sanitation; trade and industry and the South Africa-Russia Business Council.

Further substance has been added to the growing relationship through the South Africa-Russia Friendship and Cooperation Agreement, which was signed in 2006 and a Declaration on Strategic Partnership between South Africa and Russia was signed in March 2013.

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.

Areas of cooperation are based on shared interests between the two countries, including consolidation of peace and security, the establishment of democratic values and observance of human rights as embodied in the UN Charter.

Turkey

The South Africa-Turkey strategic partnership is informed by the two countries' growing political and economic profile and their geostrategic location in Africa and Euro-Asia; Turkey's rapidly growing political and economic footprint in Africa, including the Africa-Turkey strategic partnership; the two countries' capacity to project their foreign policies regionally and globally; active participation and membership in various organisations such as the G20 and the UN.

Relations between South Africa and Turkey had since 2005 been coordinated through the South Africa-Turkey Joint Economic Commission.

An Agreement to elevate the relations to a BNC at Deputy President and Prime Minister levels respectively, was signed in Turkey in June 2012 and ratified by the Turkish Parliament in July 2015.

Economic Relations between South Africa and Turkey are coordinated through the South Africa-Turkey Joint Economic Commission, led by the South African Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition. The primary objective of the commission, which was established in 2005, is to promote and deepen bilateral trade relations and economic between the two countries.

The priority sectors for the Joint Economic Commission includes agriculture and agri-business; automotive; infrastructure, energy and construction services; minerals resources; textile and clothing; as well as tourism.

Ukraine

Diplomatic relations between Ukraine and South Africa were established in March 1992. South Africa opened its embassy in Kiev in October 1992, while Ukraine opened its embassy in Pretoria in 1995.

Cooperation between the two countries is guided through regular Senior Officials' Political Consultations. Areas of cooperation between South Africa and Ukraine include military cooperation, education and science and technology.

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, 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.

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 whilst 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.

Relations between South Africa and Czech Republic are governed by the South Africa-Czech Republic Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation, 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. Hungary and South Africa cooperate in the fields of education, science and technology. The two countries also have a bilateral agreement in the field of water resource management.

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 were established thereafter and are coordinated at the Deputy Ministers' level. Poland, with a population of 38 million people, is the sixth-largest economy in the EU.

South Africa is Poland's top trade partner in Africa. Areas of cooperation between Poland and South Africa include aeronautics, automotive, defence and agriculture.

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.

Slovenia

Full diplomatic relations between South Africa and Slovenia were established in 1992. However, both countries do not have resident diplomatic representation in each other's country.

Both countries enjoy cordial bilateral relations. Bilateral relations between the two countries exist at the level of Senior Officials, with meetings taking place alternatively every two years.

Mexico

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Mexico are good and the two countries work closely together in multilateral forums on issues such as South-South cooperation and nuclear

disarmament. South Africa is Mexico's biggest trading partner in Africa.

Latin America and the Caribbean

South Africa's bilateral relations with Latin America and the Caribbean continue to advance the developmental agenda of the South, and strengthen cooperation among developing countries through active participation in groupings of the South at regional, inter-regional and multilateral levels.

In this regard, the need to build stronger and balanced relationships with Latin American and the Caribbean countries is of particular importance. South Africa has observer status in the Caribbean Community and Common Market and acts as the region's voice in the G20.

Brazil

The presidents of South Africa and Brazil meet regularly to discuss issues of mutual interest. South Africa maintains the view that the Rio+20 Conference, which took place in Brazil in June 2012, helped to ensure that the issue of sustainable development remained a top priority on the agenda of the UN and the international community.

Argentina

Argentina is South Africa's third-largest trading partner in Latin America and the Caribbean region after Brazil and Mexico. Regular ministerial meetings ensure continuous improvement in bilateral ties.

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.

Uruguay, Chile and Colombia

South Africa and Chile enjoy sound bilateral relations, which are conducted through the Joint Consultative Mechanism at Deputy Ministerial level.

The Joint Consultative Mechanism continues to serve a constructive purpose in the ongoing political dialogue between the two countries at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

South Africa is Chile's largest trading partner in Africa and the biggest investor in the country's mining sector. The biggest area of trade between South Africa and Chile is capital goods for mining.

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Colombia are cordial and growing. In January 2019, South Africa affirmed its commitment to assist Colombia in achieving lasting peace after years of conflict.

Peru

South Africa is one of the largest investors in Peru, with SABMiller and Anglo-American operating in that country.

The main South African exports to Peru are mining equipment, paper and carton, metal sheeting and specialised structural steel.

Venezuela

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and Venezuela were established in 1993 and in 1995. The two countries share cordial relations premised on mainly political relations.

In January 2019, President Ramaphosa congratulated Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro Moros, following his inauguration for a second term.

Cuba

In 2019, South Africa and Cuba celebrated 25 years of cordial, mutually beneficial diplomatic relations and constructive cooperation at both bilateral and multilateral levels.

The South Africa-Cuba Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Public Health and Medical Sciences has registered much success. Over 732 South Africans, many from previously disadvantaged communities, received their first five years of medical training in Cuba and have qualified as doctors since the inception of the Nelson Mandela/ Fidel Castro Medical Student Training Programme in 1997. Many others continue receiving medical training in Cuba and will also provide in the coming years much needed primary healthcare services to their local communities.

The strong and historic relations between the two countries has seen bilateral agreements and technical cooperation in many areas, including health, human settlements, public works, infrastructure, water resource management, sanitation and basic education, among others.

The deployment of Cuban doctors, engineers and technical experts in all the provinces of South Africa rendering important services, is a demonstration of the strategic partnership and solidarity between South Africa and Cuba and a good example of South-South cooperation.

In April 2020, 217 Cuban health specialists and workers arrived in South Africa to assist with the fight to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This followed a request by President Ramaphosa to President Díaz Canel Bermúdez of Cuba. The experts would support South Africa's efforts to contain the spread of COVID 19.

The group consisted of experts in the fields of epidemiology, biostatistics, and public health; family physicians to guide interventions through door-to-door testing and to assist local health workers in health promotion and disease surveillance at the community level; healthcare technology engineers to assist in maintaining the inventory, deployment and repair of aged medical equipment; and experts to provide technical assistance working with local experts.

Cuba remains a strategic partner of South Africa and the region. Relations between South Africa and Cuba are characterised by high-level political dialogues.

There are over 30 signed bilateral agreements in place between the two countries, covering vast areas of cooperation. The most active of these agreements are in the areas of health

cooperation, human settlements technical exchange, public works technical assistance, cooperation on water resource management and water supply and most recently, the agreement on professional services in the field of basic education.

