**Report of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation on the 1st and 2nd quarters 2022/23 expenditure performance of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund, dated 8 March 2023**

The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (the Committee), having received and considered the 1st and 2nd quarters 2022/23 performance and submission to National Treasury, of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (the Department), and the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF) on 15 February 2023, reports as follows:

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 Mandate of the Committee**

The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation is a committee of Parliament mandated by the sections 55 and 92 of the Constitution of South Africa,[[1]](#footnote-1) to oversee and ensure accountability in the formulation and conduct of South African foreign policy. Consequently, the Committee conducts oversight on activities of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, and South Africa’s Missions abroad, its entity, the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF), on policies, financial spending patterns, administrative issues, and it holds the Department and entity accountable for their operations and functions. The Committee is an important mechanism for ensuring oversight over the conduct of South Africa’s international relations and cooperation policy.

**1.2 Purpose of the quarterly performance reports**

The quarterly performance reports are a building bloc towards the Committee’s annual Budgetary Review and Recommendation Report (BRRR). In accordance with section 5 of the Money Bills Procedures and Related Matters Amendment Act 2009 (Act No.9 of 2009), the National Assembly, through its committees, must assess service delivery performance of each national department and submit the BRR Report for each department, for tabling in the National Assembly. The process allows the National Assembly to evaluate the effective and efficient use and forward allocation of resources; and may make recommendations on forward use of resources. These reports will be considered by the Standing/Select Committees on Appropriations and Finance respectively when they make recommendations to the Houses of Parliament on the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS).

In compiling this report, the Committee based its assessment of the Department and its entity, on tabled service delivery plans as outlined in the Annual Performance Plans 2022/23 of both; and the 2022 State of the Nation Address. The Committee linked domestic priorities to the Department’s Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025 and aligned the information to priorities and measurable objectives as set out in the National Development Plan (NDP).

The Committee also examined the expenditure report as published by the National Treasury. These reports are commonly known as section 32 Reports[[2]](#footnote-2).

The report further gives an overview of the presentations made by the Department and its entity, focusing mainly on its achievements, output in respect of the performance indicators and targets set for 2022/23 and the financial performance. The report also provides the Committee’s key deliberations and recommendations relating to the performance of the Department and its entity.

**1.3 Mandate of the Department**

The overall mandate of the Department is to work for the realization of South Africa’s international relations policy objectives. In terms of the provisions of the Constitution, the President of the Republic of South Africa bears the overall responsibility for the country’s foreign policy and international relations[[3]](#footnote-3). However, the Department is entrusted with the formulation, application and implementation of South Africa’s foreign policy which is derived from South Africa’s domestic priorities[[4]](#footnote-4). The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (the Minister) assumes overall responsibility for all aspects of South Africa’s international relations, albeit in consultation with the President. The Minister also liaises and consults with members of the Cabinet on overlapping issues and on the priorities and programmes of other departments that bear an international relations element. In the same breath, other Cabinet ministers are required to consult the Minister on their international role.

**1.4 Measurable objectives of the Department**

The Department had identified the following strategic objectives for implementation during the reporting quarter, aimed at responding to the domestic priorities as announced by government for the reporting year as follows:

* Provide strategic leadership, management and support services to the Department,
* promote relations with foreign countries,
* participate in international organisations and institutions in line with South Africa’s national values and foreign policy objectives, and
* communicate South Africa’s role and position in international relations in the domestic and international arenas as well as to provide Protocol Services.

The quarterly reports reflect the high level highlights of a number of diplomatic activities carried out by the Department including its Missions abroad. At the time of reporting, South Africa’s representative footprint had grown from 34 in 1994 to 116 diplomatic missions in 2022, situated in 109 countries throughout the world.

* 1. **Opening remarks by Hon SOR Mahumapelo MP, Chairperson**

The Chairperson welcomed all present through the virtual platform. He reminded the meeting that it was an important occasion, as it was all about accountability by the Department. The Chairperson recalled that the Constitution provides for the executive to account to the legislative arm of state. Parliament, guided by the Money Bills Procedures and Related Matters Amendment Act 2009, has since directed that such reports on performance be quarterly assessed by relevant committees to ensure implementation of set targets, and their alignment to the allocated budget. The process is important as a build-up to the annual assessment of service delivery by the Department.

Mr Mahumapelo called upon the meeting to observe a minute of silence in honour of South Africans who lost their lives for various reasons. The Chairperson further extended condolences to the families of victims of the devastating earthquakes in Turkiye and Syria. He recognised the role played by the world to assist, especially South Africans who, in the true spirit of Ubuntu, went to give a helping hand in the search and rescue mission in the affected cities.

1. **Presentation by the Department on the quarters 1 & 2 performance and service delivery for 2022/23 financial year**

The Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Hon Mashego-Dlamini, gave an overview, in the form of introductory remarks, on the overall performance as guided by the delivery programmes of the Department and the ARF for 2022/23.

The Deputy Minister introduced the performance of the Department during quarters 1 and 2 of the reporting year, which covers the period 1 April to 30 September 2022. It was highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic was finally put behind, as the Department resumed its duties in person, a welcome relief after nearly two years.

Hon Mashego-Dlamini informed the Committee that overall, the Department continued to work towards eradicating the triple challenges facing the country. On the other hand, the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF), remained a dedicated tool to contribute towards peace and stability, especially in Cabo Delgado. There were however, some targets not achieved under the ARF.

It was elaborated that during quarter 1, the Department achieved 21 of the 21 targets set for the quarter, in other words a 100% achievement. In quarter 2, the Department also achieved 23 of the 23 targets set for the quarter, which constituted another 100% achievement. It was noted that, moving forward, the Department would continue to utilise its foreign policy to tackle domestic challenges as part of South Africa’s National Interest.

The Deputy Minister further introduced ARF's update on its performance during Quarters 1 and 2 of the reporting year. The ARF continued to be an invaluable instrument in supporting South African Foreign Policy. In line with the foreign policy, the ARF remains an important tool that seeks to enhance development assistance and cooperation, with a dedicated focus on the realisation of the African Agenda. The project in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, would contribute to significantly assist with socio economic issues post the conflict in that part of the region. The Department was reported to have made significant progress in implementing its APP targets. The budget that was allocated would be fully utilised by the end of the financial year.

The Deputy Minister mentioned that the presentation would provide further details of the achievements and how non-achievements would be addressed. Ms Salome Baloi, Acting Chief Operations Officer added details of the 1st and 2nd quarter performances of the Department and that of the African Renaissance Fund.

**2.1 Non-financial performance of the Department per programme: Achievements**

**2.1.1 Programme 1: Administration:** It is aimed to provide strategic leadership, management and support services to the Department.

Progress report was mentioned on the implementation of the Digital Strategy reflecting achievements against the following strategic objectives:

Modernize data, storage, applications, network, and telephony and cybersecurity infrastructure.

The following was also achieved during the reporting period:

* Deployment and configuration for Africa missions
* Washington hub shipment was done
* Finalised the configuration between London and Head Office
* Bill of Materials finalised to be utilised for the purchase order

In respect of the automation of digital business processes and integration of business information systems, a tender was re-advertised; the system prototype was demonstrated to ICT to finalise the statement of work; the project implementation was completed for quarter 4 and workshops were concluded with the Finance team.

One (1) training report on Generic Skills Development Programmes was conducted in line with the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) compiled reflecting nine (9) workshops/training areas. Two initiatives to advance gender equality and woman’s empowerment through gender mainstreaming were conducted.

**2.1.2 Programme 2: International Relations**

The programme is aimed to promote relations with foreign countries to strengthen South Africa’s political, economic and social relations with targeted countries. This is achieved through the outcomes of structured bilateral mechanisms and high-level visits reflecting national priorities, the African Agenda and the Agenda of the South. These remain important vehicles for cooperation and promoting South Africa’s national priorities. The national priorities of government as well as the needs of Africa (such as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) as espoused in the National Development Plan (NDP), are also pursued in bilateral relations. Focus is also placed on the strengthening of economic diplomacy initiatives undertaken by Missions for the promotion of South Africa’s trade, investment and tourism potential and opportunities.

The Structured Bilateral Mechanisms, high-level visits and political engagements with countries in Africa took place against the backdrop of political and economic developments on the continent and focused on:

* **Kenya**: The objective of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the first Kenya-South Africa Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) held in Nairobi, Kenya was to review the status of implementation of the Agreed Minutes of the Inaugural Session of the JCC, as well as to consider new areas of cooperation and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to be signed during the State Visit in November 2022. The Mid-Term Review also discussed regional, continental and global matters of mutual concern and established a way forward, mindful of the respect for sovereignty of each county and in line with the African Union principles and the rule of law. The two countries agreed to lobby the remaining countries that had not signed the Tripartite Free Trade Area, to address market access challenges.

During the State Visit by President Ramaphosa to Kenya, the Heads of State witnessed the signing of several MoUs in various areas of cooperation including Correctional Services, Housing and Human Settlements, National Schools of Government, as well as Audio Visual Co-Production.

* **Nigeria**: The Midterm review of the 10th Bi-National Commission (BNC) with Nigeria evaluated progress on the implementation of decisions made during the 10th Session of the BNC. The BNC furthermore assessed and evaluated the progress of all outstanding decisions and commitments as well as joint projects. The BNC also served to reaffirm and deepen the warm and cordial bilateral relations that exist between the two countries.
* **Western Sahara**: The incoming State Visit by President Ghali ended with the Heads of State exchanging views on the recent developments related to the question of Western Sahara. This included the mobilisation of regional, continental, and international support toward finding a sustainable resolution to the Western Sahara conflict. President Ghali held meetings with the Tripartite Alliance and South African Solidarity Movement with Western Sahara.
* **Liberia**: In the visit conducted by Deputy-Minister Mashego-Dlamini, Vice-President Howard-Taylor expressed appreciation regarding South Africa’s support and partnership, during discussion on the details of the COVID-19 vaccines and handover.

Structural Mechanisms with other regions unfolded as follows:

* **USA:** The period under review saw the continuation of high-level engagements between the Biden Administration and the South African Government. Minister Pandor and Secretary Blinken held a meeting in the margins of the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia ahead of President Ramaphosa and President Biden’s bilateral meeting at the G20 Summit, to discuss issues of common interest. The deliberations at the Summit covered thematic areas which are aligned to South Africa and Africa’s priorities, including: AGOA Trade Ministerial; Peace, Security and Governance Forum; Partnering for Sustainable Health Cooperation and Health Security; Conservation, Climate, Adaptation and a Just Energy Transition; US-Africa Civil Aviation and Commercial Space Forum; Leaders Working Luncheon: Deepening Multilateralism and Promoting Food Security.
* Minister Pandor had a telephonic engagement with Secretary Blinken ahead of the US-Africa Leaders’ Summit. The conversation focussed on discussions including Minister’s Pandor’s participation in the Summit and the bilateral relationship, US sanctions against Venezuela and the extension of the SA-US Agreement for Cooperation on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. The Minister also concluded scheduled bilateral meetings with Secretary Blinken and US companies, Pfizer and Google, on the margins of the US-Africa Leaders’ Summit. The opportunity was used to advance bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.
* **Canada:** The Missions in Canada mostly focused on economic diplomacy work during the period under review. This included the economic outreach visit to the Saskatchewan Province and an engagement with the Canadian Pension Funds, to consider South Africa as an investment destination. In terms of political work, the High Commission in Ottawa had meetings with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the SADC Group, and reported on political developments in the Mission Monthly Reports of October and November 2022. The High Commission in Ottawa also facilitated a study visit by the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence (JSCI).
* **Guyana:** Virtual Political Consultations were held with Guyana in terms of regularised Consultations to facilitate cooperation in areas of mutual interest. There were agriculture and food security, arts and culture, energy (oil, gas and renewable energy), environment, health and tourism and private sector inclusion. South Africa expressed support for the ongoing judicial process that is intended to bring a peaceful and definitive end to the long-standing Guyana/Venezuela Border matter.
* Both sides reiterated the importance of building a foundation for lasting robust socio-economic and political engagements and partnerships between the CARICOM and the African Union for a collective prosperous future. Guyana expressed optimism for the foreseeable progress of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which serves as mechanism for regional economic integration and the strengthening of trade and economic relations between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.
* **Belgium:** The Fourth Meeting of the South Africa – Belgium Joint Commission was held in Pretoria and hosted by DM Botes. The Commission reviewed the progress made with the implementation of decisions of the Third Joint Commission held in 2009 and discussed bilateral and international issues. The two principals committed to holding the JCC more regularly and reflected on the forthcoming State Visit by the Belgian King Phillippe, in March 2023, and possible areas for the agenda.
* **Madrid**: The 4th Spain-South Africa Bilateral Consultations discussions focused on areas of common interest, including bilateral economic and trade relations and multilateral and regional cooperation. The two countries agreed to work together to address obstacles to bilateral trade; ensure closer coordination to maximize business opportunities and the diversification of trade and bilateral investment. Spain and South Africa reaffirmed the existing ties of friendship and solidarity.
* **Czech Republic**: The SA-Czech Republic Political Consultation was chaired by Deputy Minister Botes. The Political Consultations assisted in enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Both countries committed to strengthen co-operation and collaboration in regional and multilateral issues on areas of common interest.
* **Poland:** The SA-Poland Political Consultations was chaired by Deputy Minister Botes. It served to highlight the areas in which steps needed to be taken to improve the economic relationship between South Africa and Poland. Skills development was identified as one critical area of interest in the economic relations between the two countries.
* **UKRAINE**: Senior Officials participated in Political Consultations during the SOPC. Discussions included bilateral agreements and cooperation, the latest developments in the security situation in Ukraine and a summary of Ukraine’s contribution towards food security in Africa. The Ukrainian side provided a background and a summary of conflict manifestation. The Ukrainian side expressed condemnation on the referendum and the Russian occupation. The South African side expressed its commitment to multilateralism and also cautioned against Ukraine’s push for duplicating and diluting the multilateral institutions such as the International Criminal Court, to a new special tribunal for crime against humanity.
* On bilateral cooperation and agreements, the South African side clarified its non-aligned foreign policy position, especially the reasons behind voting in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). On Ukraine’s contribution to Africa and mediation efforts, the Ukrainian side noted the successful distribution of grain to Africa through Djibouti.
* The South African side expressed concern over the implications of the conflict on food and energy security. The Ukrainian side indicated its appreciation for Turkey’s peace talks facilitation and showed disappointment in Russia’s withdrawal because of clashing preconditions.
	+ 1. **Programme 3: International Cooperation**
* The Department undertook the following initiatives in support of Peace and Security Initiatives (amongst others) during the reporting period:

Peace Building Commission (PBC): A Ministerial memorandum was prepared recommending that South Africa seeks re-election and continue serving on the PBC.

South Africa’s missions participated in the following meetings of the PBC:

Central African Republic (CAR) & Columbia. Discussions on the Lake Chad Basin emphasised post conflict reconstruction and development in the wider region.

In Liberia, the focus was on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In a meeting on the impact of climate change on Peacekeeping in the Pacific Islands, the importance of adequate, predictable, and sustainable climate-specific financing towards addressing climate related projects, already existing mechanisms, and efforts of national governments was underscored. In terms of youth, peace and security, member states underscored the importance of the need to ensure adequate, predictable, and sustainable financing for youth organisations and the removal of barriers for access to funds through capacity building, training and exchange of best practices. South Africa focussed on the role of youth in building sustainable peace.

* The Open meetings of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in which South Africa participated included:

The Debate on Palestine calling for international action to condemn Israeli violations of international law and adherence to Security Council resolutions.

An Open Debate on Conflict and Food Security saw South Africa express concern regarding rising numbers of people affected by food insecurity in conflict settings. It also highlighted the exacerbating effects of economic and unilateral sanctions and COVID-19 pandemic on food insecurity.

The Open Debate on strengthening accountability and justice for serious violations of international law stressed accountability for serious violations of international law.

In the Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, South Africa reaffirmed its commitment to the WPS agenda and highlighted gaps which prevented the pursuance of the WPS goals.

During the Intergovernmental Negotiations framework (IGN) on Security Council Reform, South Africa actively participated in the negotiations and highlighted the Common African Position on UNSC Reform.

A reconvened Session of the 5th Conference of States Parties (CSP) to the Treaty of Pelindaba was held where South Africa was elected as Rapporteur. States Parties were called to honour their obligations to the Treaty, towards nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

**2.1.4 Programme 4: Public Diplomacy and Protocol Services**

The programme is meant to communicate South Africa’s role and position in international relations in the domestic and international arenas. It is also aimed to provide protocol services.

Twelve (29) sets of key messages were distributed to missions and Head Office on domestic and global developments. Three (6) Public Participation Programmes were held by political principals where audiences were engaged on domestic and international developments and Three (6) opinion pieces were published.

A total of 100% of protocol services rendered to all incoming and outgoing visits, 100% of consular services rendered and 100% (32001) of documents were legalized.

**3. Financial performance of the Department**

**3.1 Quarter 1 expenditure**

The actual total expenditure for the 1st quarter of 2022/23 financial year amounts to R1.732 billion compared to the cash drawings of R1.994 billion representing a variance of 13% lower than what had been projected. The variances were explained as follows:

* + 1. **Programme 1** spent R335.1 million of the projected expenditure of R415.1 million. The low spending was mainly attributable to the lease contract for the State Protocol Lounges that has not been renewed by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure as well as property maintenance projects as missions are finalising the procurement process for property maintenance projects.
		2. **Programme 2** spent R745.9 million of the projected expenditure of R890.7 million. The low spending was mainly on operating leases due to the delays in securing of permanent accommodation for transferred officials, who went on posting in the first quarter, because of summer months in Europe, and shortages of accommodation in America due to high demand during this season.
		3. **Programme 3** spent R113.5 million of the projected expenditure of R135.6 million. The lower spending was mainly due to high vacancy rate in the Branch at SMS level. The Department is in the process of filling the positions.
		4. **Programme 4** spent R63.5 million of the projected expenditure of R72.0 million. The low expenditure was attributable to projected international travel which did not take place.
		5. **Programme 5** spent R473.5 million of the projected expenditure of R480.7 million. The low spending was mainly due to lower exchange rate on the payments for 2022 annual membership contribution for international organisations.
	1. **Quarter 2 expenditure**

Actual total expenditure for the 2nd quarter of 2022/23 financial year amounts to R1.486 billion as compared to the projected expenditure of R1.621 billion representing a variance of 8% lower than what had been projected. The variance analysis per programme was explained as follows:

* + 1. **Programme 1** spent R350.6 million of the projected expenditure of R501.3 million. The low spending was mainly due to delays in the appointment of professionals for planned projects for renovations and maintenance. In mitigating the slow spending on capital projects, the Department has signed a MOU with Government Technical Advisory Committee (GTAC) to assist with the Capital projects.

**3.2.2 Programme 2** spent R891.4 million of the projected expenditure of R894.0 million. Spending was in line with the projected expenditure.

**3.2.3 Programme 3** spent R154.3 million of the projected expenditure of R126.6 million. The high spending was mainly attributable to education allowance that was paid in August 2022.

* + 1. **Programme 4** spent R75.9 million of the projected expenditure of R74.8 million. The high spending was mainly due to increased international travel.
		2. **Programme 5** spent R13.4 million of the projected expenditure of R23.8 million. The low spending was mainly attributable to Humanitarian Assistance that was projected in quarter 2 but not paid, as Humanitarian Assistance are mainly re-active.

**4. The African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF)**

During the 1st and 2nd quarter reporting, the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund continued to be an important instrument in pursuit of South Africa’s foreign policy, particularly the African Agenda.

The ARF was able to achieve three out of its nine targets and four were partially achieved. There was non-achievement on two targets. Two projects evaluated for mediation and conflict resolution were still under consideration, leading to the target not being achieved.

No project for technical assistance to support elections was received, however it was anticipated that the project for technical assistance to support elections would be received and funded in the following quarters, leading to target not being achieved.

The agricultural project considered in quarter 2 was subsequently funded in quarter 3 for R34 million. The Receivable from Cuba is payable bi-annually in June and December, the June repayment was received as per the agreement. Total liabilities are made up of committed projects and amounts payable to the Department for project implementation.

Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini emphasised that there is a process currently underway to use underutilised ARF funds.

**5. Findings by the Committee**

After due deliberations on the contents of the 1st and 2nd quarter reports for 2022/23 of the Department and its entity, the Committee made the following findings:

5.1 Based on the regular reports by the Department that the Republic of Cuba has not defaulted in its repayment of the loan it received from South Africa, it should be congratulated for its efforts to honour the terms of the Agreement between South Africa and Cuba on Economic Assistance. Furthermore, the selective emphasis on Africa in the work of the ARF, excluding ‘international cooperation’ is incorrect. Relations with Cuba should continue to grow from strength to strength.

5.2 South Africa has always taken a principled stand that it is guided by its independent Foreign Policy approach. It deals with a revolving world, and will relate to anyone who serves its interests. It was observed that the understanding of South Africa’s non-aligned position was obscured.

5.3 The Constitution of South Africa 1966, provides that injustices of the past should be addressed and the lives of the previously marginalised, improved. The interventions through the work of the Department and its Missions abroad, should show how they assist to transform ownership and channel economic benefits to the needy. The People-centred oversight on Foreign Policy dictates that there be quantification of how and at what percentages, the investments, trade and tourism flows assist to address the injustices of the past. The SBMs should show how they assist the poor and the unemployed. Economic diplomacy should, in the future, be discussed to unpack how it qualitatively and quantitatively address the issues of the poor in the country.

5.4 It was noted that the Department still has not aligned its goals and objectives. The Department had a chance to align its performance indicators to better measure performance. It was further note that the Department needs to look at how it will grow as an organisation and put performance indicators that would measure growth. It was urged that the Director-General to relook at their performance indicators, and ensure they are in line with the SMART principles. It was observed that some of the targets were things that are beyond the Department and the ARF control and some were not realistic. The Committee rather sought indications of productivity and not quantities on how many meetings were attended.

5.5 It was observed that low spending in all the programmes was becoming a concerning trend quarter after quarter. Despite this, the Department has reported it has a 100% achievement of planned targets. This was noted to have been caused by delays in finalising ICT processes and on the ceiling on compensation of employees. It was also observed that there were vacancies, especially at SMS level, and more information was sought as to the plans to address the situation.

5.6 The Committee noted that a meeting needs to be held with the Department on ICT and property matters and on the progress towards the migration of the ARF to the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA). The Department needs to report on progress on these issues to the Committee every quarter.

5.7 More information was sought to see turnaround strategies to address accommodation challenges for some heads of mission abroad and cost of rentals, including addressing misconduct by some ambassadors. It was advocated for more trade with the free world, rather than risk sanctions with the BRICS military exercises.

5.8 Another concern was raised regarding an alleged slow pace of granting incoming heads of mission, earlier slots to present their credentials.

5.9 Clarity was sought, as to the way the work of the Structural Bilateral Mechanisms is assisting the country to achieve its goals under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), especially regarding the Rules of Origin, to improve the economy. It was further probed whether there is a link between the work the Department and of the Department of Trade Industry and Competition (DTIC), regarding harmonisation of policies towards the negotiations of bilateral trade agreements, and the benefits accruing from AfCFTA.

5.10 There was a recommendation for a dedicated meeting be set up, between the Department and the Committee to discuss Programme 2, with emphasis on Structural Bilateral Mechanisms and the outcomes of these engagements. The aim is to assess whether they respond to national interest and address the triple challenges the country is facing.

5.11 Information was sought on how South Africa was assisting the victims of the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. The joint naval exercises between the BRICS countries, namely South Africa, China and Russia were welcomed. A need was identified for the Committee to discuss and unpack South Africa’s alliances to recommend accordingly.

5.12 It was noted that the Committee had previously asked the Department to submit a report on Multilateral positions held by South Africans. It was further noted that there are currently 65 South Africans holding these positions but the Committee does not know in which organisations. The Department was again asked to submit a list and what their roles are.

5.13 A Member sought clarity on why Cuba received an ARF loan, as the understanding is that the ARF funds should be used on the African continent only. Further clarity was sought on the duration of the Cuba loan and how much has been repaid so far.

**6. Responses by the Department**

6.1 South Africa is providing assistance and aid to Syria and Turkey, and has deployed search and rescue teams. South Africa also provided sniffer dogs through the K-9 team. The Department was also assisting through the Humanitarian Aid directorate and this was going through approval processes within the Department to provide aid to organisations on the ground. The Department was also looking at how ARF could provide aid to Turkey and Syria.

6.2 On targets and indicators, the Department noted the recommendation and would incorporate the changes in the new financial year. There would be a special focus on making performance indicators speak more to the business of the Department and consular services rendered.

6.3 It was agreed that underspending is a problem across directorates in the Department, and senior management was dealing with the matter. This was a serious issue since there were only weeks left of the financial year. External factors also contributed to underspending, but senior management has prioritised the issue. ICT is one area where management is looking into decisively addressing challenges.

6.4 The Department agreed to a dedicated session with the Portfolio Committee for the Department to present on the work that is being done, including the issue of expenditure. The Department will also speak on progress it has made on key projects.

6.5 All issues raised by the Committee have been noted. A list of all multilateral positions held by South Africans would be submitted.

6.6 Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini said the issue raised on the Cuba loan, has been answered several times by the Minister, Director-General and by the President. In 2017 Cuba was allocated a loan of R147.6 million, and so far, Cuba has paid back R63 Million, and at times in advance, in line with the terms of the Loan Agreement. According to the Agreement, Cuba will make full settlement of the loan in June 2026.

6.7 The report on the accommodation of ambassadors and consular generals was regarded not part of quarter 1&2 reporting. The Department was willing to present on the matter if the Committee needs information on it.

6.8 The delay in processing presenting of Letters of Credence by incoming heads of mission is not unique to South Africa. In actual fact, the accreditation of ambassadors’ process does not take longer than 6 months in South Africa. At times, the concerned countries contribute to further delay, by not submitting all accreditation information. For example, sometimes an ambassador would be having South African citizenship and personal businesses and own properties in the country, then it would mean such an individual would have to relinquish all the possessions and citizenship, before presenting credentials.

6.9 There would be a progress report on SADPA, and the report has been discussed by top management. The report would be presented to Cabinet and tabled in Parliament soon.

6.10 Cabinet has not yet discussed how to support Syria and Turkey and the Department appreciates what the Gift of the Givers is doing in this regard. Syria is under US sanctions and its airspace controlled by the US. It is therefore currently difficult to provide aid to the country. However, South Africans have been asked to donate blankets to assist the people devastated by the earthquakes in both Turkey and Syria.

6.11 The Department has been very slow on filling vacancies and the Director- General is in the process of sorting this matter since it might become an audit query. The Department undertook to submit a progress report on filling of vacancies and on properties sold and missions that have so far been closed.

**7. Recommendations**

In order to further assist the Department to enhance its performance, the Committee recommends that the Minister ensures that the Department implements the following and report to the Committee within one month of the adoption of this report by the National Assembly:

7.1 Submit quarterly performance reports on how the work of the Department and Missions in the reporting period, have quantitatively and qualitatively addressed the injustices of the past, through economic diplomacy, trade and tourism interventions.

7.2 Prioritise the filling of vacant positions at headquarters and in Missions abroad.

7.3 Present a progress report quarterly on the modernization of ICT infrastructure project.

7.4 Submit a list of all multilateral positions held by South Africans and their roles.

7.5 Submit a progress report quarterly on property management processes, and on Missions so far closed down.

7.6 Ensure that performance indicators are aligned to SMART principles, and speak more to the business of the Department and consular services rendered.

7.7 Submit a quarterly progress report on the processes towards the migration of the ARF to SADPA.

7.8 Submit a report on a turnaround strategy to address the trend of underspending in the Department and Missions abroad to avoid an audit query.

7.9 Ensure that the ARF achieves all its set targets in furtherance of South Africa’s national interest.

7.10 Ensure that interactions with the Biden Administration advocate for the renewal of AGOA.

7.11 Continue to pursue the agenda of the Reform of the UN Security Council, in line with the Common African position espoused in the Ezulwini Consensus.

7.12 Continue providing humanitarian assistance to Cuba, Palestine and Western Sahara, in line with South Africa’s Foreign Policy prescripts.

Report to be considered.

Sources

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1. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) 1999 (Act 1 of 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Department of International Relations and Cooperation Annual Performance Plan 2022/23 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Department of International Relations and Cooperation Strategic Plan 2020-2025 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)