

Budget Vote 6 Speech by Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation, Hon Siphosizwe Masango, MP

21 May 2015, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

Honourable Chairperson
Honourable Minister Nkoana - Mashabane
Honourable Deputy Ministers, Landers and Mfeketho
Honourable Members of the PC on IR
Distinguished Guests
Fellow South Africans

It is only proper for me to congratulate the Minister for a comprehensive, reflective and forward looking speech, which sets the tone for the Department's work over the stipulated budget period.

The ANC supports the Budget of this Department because it continues to deepen the seminal internationalist tradition so deftly crafted, and so tirelessly worked hard for, by President OR Tambo.

OR Tambo gave the fullest possible expression to the Freedom Charter's injunction "There Shall be Peace and Friendship" when he said, 1977, in Luanda "We seek to live in peace with our neighbours and the peoples of the world in conditions of equality, mutual respect and equal advantage"

I hereby pay my special tribute to this gigantic revolutionary and insightful thought leader of the ANC.

Honourable Chairperson,

Thus do we lower our banners in fond memory of Mme Ruth Mogomotsi Mompoti, Isithwalandwe, a people's tribune, and a first generation of the Ambassadors of a democratic South Africa to Switzerland, 1996.

She represented South Africa excellently in this part of the world, informing them that we had just begun constructing a non-racial, non-sexist, and a democratic South Africa that would be at peace with its neighbours and willing to contribute to world peace. May her soul rest in perfect peace.

Before 1994, the ANC already had 52 Missions whilst the apartheid regime only had 38 Missions. Democratic South Africa has 126 Missions abroad and is accredited to over 180 organisations.

The advantage that these Missions bring to South Africa is as follows:

In two decades, trade with Asia and the Middle-East, surpassed Europe and increased 19-fold from R40.2 billion in 1994 to R760.2 billion in 2013. In the same period, trade with Africa increased 35-fold from R11.6 billion to R 385 billion.

Europe remains SA's main strategic trading block while it continues to recover from the impact of

the global financial crisis.

This massive network to various countries and organisations is due to the unsurpassed and visionary leadership of Presidents Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and currently Jacob Zuma. Unwele olude Msholoz

South Africa is today a respected and a responsible global player, a mediator and a capable partner in peace-making and peace-keeping efforts.

Indeed the ANC's belief in a humane, a just, and a caring world order, wherein there is development, democracy, human rights, peace and security remains sacrosanct.

Hon Minister, my observation is that the creation of "peace" as envisaged by the Freedom Charter is woefully elusive.

Peace is a conditio sine qua non for development in the world.

For instance, in June 2013, the Peace and Security Council of the AU expressed a disquiet over the continued terrorism and insurgency threat in Africa, particularly in the Sahel-Saharan region, the Horn of Africa, including Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti, the Central African region with the attacks carried out by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), as well as the atrocities perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

We must be heartened by the President's response to the Debate on his State of the Nation Address, dated 20/06/2014 that "There is a need to strengthen the continental Peace and Security architecture and to redefine the instruments that deal with unconstitutional changes of government and discourage illegitimate rebellions. Thus we need to treat with urgency, the need to establish the African Standby Force for rapid deployment in crisis areas without delay".

Flowing from the aforesaid by the President, it is worth noting that the leadership of the continent is giving peace-building a high premium as envisaged by the AU Peace and Security Council.

Hon Chairperson and Members,

In 1991, President Mandela visited CUBA to thank them for supporting our liberation struggle and his own release from the apartheid dungeons.

Strangely, there was a lot of brouhaha from the reactionary world blaming President Mandela for giving President Castro a warm comradely hug. Only 24 years later, is the USA and others realising the correctness of the ANC and the far-sightedness of Nelson Mandela on CUBA.

The ANC and the global progressive movement stood firmly to support Cuba and its people in the wake of the economic embargo imposed by the USA and the arrest of the Cuban Five. In 2014, our Parliament passed a resolution calling upon the USA to lift the embargo and to release the remaining three of the Cuban Five.

In view of the recent rapprochement between CUBA and the USA, I wish to congratulate both Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama, respectively, for their pragmatic leadership as evidenced by the release of the remaining three of the Cuban Five on 17th December 2014.

As we know the USA was highly isolated in the UN General Assembly on the Cuban issue.

Hon Chairperson,

Western Sahara remains one of the last bastions of colonialism on the African continent and our Parliament calls on Morocco to end the occupation of Western Sahara. The Saharawi people demand self-determination, and national sovereignty like all other nations of the world.

Finish en klaar.

Recently we were privileged to travel to Algeria to visit the Saharawi Refugee Camps, as we attended the 7th Congress of the National Union of Saharawi Women (UNMS). We were able to communicate the ANC message that supports self-determination and freedom for the Saharawi people. Morocco must be pressurised by all progressive movements to release Western Sahara from colonial bondage.

On this matter of Western Sahara, the future will prove that the ANC is on the right march of history.

With regard to Palestine, we call upon the Israeli government to release all political prisoners, to immediately cease the expansionist settlements in the West Bank and to stop the wanton destruction of property and consistent attacks on Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

Not many people are aware that close to 700000 Palestinians were forced out of their homes into refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere. They remain refugees to this day.

Whilst we support the two-state solution and a peaceful co-existence of the two nations, the Palestinians are almost stateless because of the expansionist settlements into their territory.

We hope that all belligerents will collaborate with the Special Envoys from South Africa, Dr Zola Skweyiya and Mr Aziz Pahad, who are brokering peace that will benefit all in the Middle East region.

Honourable Minister and Members,

The Committee noted with regret that the Budget of this Department has been reduced by R405 million.

The Department has to carry out its mandate within an unpredictable, at times a turbulent, external environment to advance South Africa's national interest.

The National Development Plan prescribed that the Department should position itself to assume a greater leadership role in Africa, leading development and growth in the continent.

The interplay between foreign policy and national interest continue to be the baseline for the Department's success in the conduct of South Africa's foreign policy.

However the Department has assured us that they will still pursue all the fundamental priority areas of our national interest.

In our interaction with the department, we also noted that the perennial challenge of the fluctuation in foreign currency further reduces the budget of this department. For instance the department has to pay salaries and rentals in foreign currency.

I hope that Treasury will intervene to assist this Department during the Mid-Term Policy Budget Statement (MTPBS) in October 2015.

Minister,

The construction of the Head Quarters for the Pan African Parliament is of quintessential importance and we would like to see the plans before the end of the Fifth Parliament.

Failing which, other African States will bid for hosting the Pan African Parliament.

As the Committee, we recommend that the Ministry attends to ICT Infrastructure and Asset Management in the missions abroad.

Ngqongqotjhe,

Isitjhaba sekhethu KwaMhlanga, eMarapyane, eSekhukhune, eMsinga, eMamelodi, eMdantsane ne Khayelitsha, ngingabala ngithini kufanele sazi begodu sigkome ukutjheja bonyana uRhulumende wabo we Dimokhrasi wakha itjhebiswano elihle kangangani namazwe wangaphandle.

Amazwe akafana nabo Tjhayina, Ratjhiya, iMerika, iYurophu nalapha e Afrika begodu netjhebiswano elihle eenhlanganweni ezifana nalezi ezilandelako: SADC, AU, UNO, G20, G77 plus China ne WTO, ngingabala ngithini.

I Palamende yethu noRhulumende bayazikhakhazisa nge "Freedom Charter".

That will be Public Diplomacy at work.

In February 2015, the Department conferred Ubuntu Awards to eligible South African individuals and companies who have done us proud in various fields internationally. We join the President and yourself Minister in congratulating these companies and patriotic individuals who fly South Africa's flag high in various fields.

Hon Minister, recently the leadership of Africa attended the USA-Africa Leadership Summit and we have been informed that the USA intends renewing the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

This is a good development but only to the extent that it not only opens markets for the USA in Africa, but also opens markets for Africa in the USA. We must progressively change the current trade relations with USA and Europe to benefit all. Currently, there is a trade deficit against Africa.

Because the OAU now AU, was founded on the 25th May 1963, it is opportune in this Africa Month to pay our solemn tribute to the propounders of the Pan-African Movement in the continent and in the Diaspora, as we pursue their dreams of “The Africa We Want”: African Agenda 2063.

As I conclude, in the wake of attacks on foreign nationals, the Committee noted the briefing given by this department to the Ambassadors as well as the President’s briefing to the recent SADC meeting, hopefully, the upcoming AU Summit in Sandton will provide a holistic African solution to this phenomenon.

We are aware that this week the Pan African Parliament also debated the outbreak of xenophobic attacks. As part of the Peace and Stability Cluster of Parliament the Committee supports the strategic intent of Operation Fiela.

The committee further notes with concern, the tempestuous political instability around the Great Lakes Region, particularly Burundi. We are satisfied that the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) held in Luanda, recently, has averted the implosion of Burundi whilst a long term solution will be sought.

The ANC supports this Budget.

U Zimu atjhudubaze i Afrika.

Ngiyathokoza.

- See more at: <http://www.anc.org.za/caucus/show.php?ID=4017#sthash.fj0N5RT0.dpuf>