

**Budget Vote Debate 6 International Relations and Cooperation**  
**By**  
**Hon. MA Mncwango MP**

21 May 2015

First of all, as the IFP we support this budget, despite the fact that we do have some issues that still concern us.

We acknowledge that the global environment which the department is operating in is now characterised by shifts in political, economic, social and cultural dynamics, which has given rise to realignment and the emergence of new economic powers.

There are also other forces at play, including climate change, escalation in the demand for scarce resources and the changing nature of conflict and insecurity. All these have been instrumental in bringing about changes in how diplomacy is conducted between nations.

We note that the spending focus during the year under review is aimed at sustaining political and economic relations, participating in global governmental forums and enhancing operational capacity by strengthening policy and coordination. We are also aware that the focus is also on work related to the AU Agenda 2063. However, in light of all the budgetary cuts experienced in this department, as well as all other government departments, we wonder if our foreign policy ambitions will match our budgetary reality.

In other words, are we not punching above our weight?

As the IFP we are concerned that the South African image and prestige in the international space has been dented. The xenophobic violence caused us great harm in the diplomatic circles and this could not have come at a worse time for South Africa, when our star, as a global player, had already started to wane.

We seem to have abandoned the issues that have put us firmly on the continental and global stage; for instance, we championed the cause of transformation on the continent, helping in the transition of the OAU into the AU, as well as successfully locating Africa where it belongs in the community of nations. Examples include the transformation of the G8 into the G20, which raised the prominence of African voices.

Through our efforts we created AU structures such as the Pan-African Parliament, NEPAD, and the Peer Review Mechanism for example. Unfortunately, we seem to have lost the initiative and we are no longer seen to be giving proper leadership in these areas, which has seen these bodies losing direction as a consequence. There is deafening silence on the implementation of NEPAD programmes, something that was designed to get African countries out of the socio-political and economic doldrums.

On the global governance level, we have lost the initiative again in bringing about the reform as far as UN systems are concerned. Our African brothers look to South Africa for leadership but we are continually losing the plot. It would be interesting to know what obligations South Africa has towards the International Criminal Court for instance, because we keep dropping the ball so much.

The IFP commends the role of South Africa in the resolution of international conflicts, as we are aware that the department is engaged in very comprehensive diplomatic interventions in places like the Western Sahara, the Palestine/Israel question, South Sudan, the DRC, etc. While this is

indeed commendable, we are however not addressing the real causes of conflict - which is failing states.

We are equally aware of the growing threat of terrorism and religious extremism, which is running through the Sahel Belt and this is detrimental to the economic growth path of Africa as a whole.

As a member of regional, continental as well as multinational bodies, it is of particular interest to us to know if other African countries are meeting their membership obligations in these bodies. We are concerned because issues such as the reimbursement of the country due to being involved in AU or UN military interventions has still not happened; we need the department to ensure that we are reimbursed speedily and timeously on this matter.

We commend the role that South Africa is playing in many multinational organisations, including G77 + China, BRICS, IPSA and FOCAC and we hope that we will truly reap benefits that impact our society.

We are waiting with bated breath on developments on the South/South cooperation and we are hopeful that some critical economic spinoffs will come out of these interactions, which will enable us to achieve the economic growth goals of the NDP.