**­­­­­­­­­­­­­2. Report of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation on the White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy, dated 3 May 2017**

The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (the Committee), having considered the White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy, reports as follows:

1. **Introduction**

As part of a process to consider the White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy, the Committee held a panel discussion on 5 November 2014 to benefit from an independent analysis and perspective on the contents of the document. The panel discussion was aimed at assisting the Committee in unpacking and understanding South Africa’s strategic foreign policy orientation from a regional, continental and global perspective. The presenters were Dr Siphamandla Zondi, Director; Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), Ms Sanusha Naidu, Senior Researcher, Institute for Global Dialogue, Professor Chris Landsberg, South African Research Chairs Initiative Chair on African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy, University of Johannesburg and Ms Michelle Pressend, Independent Analyst.

The Committee further received a series of briefings from the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (the Department), aimed at giving a general overview on the White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy on 12 November 2014 and 16 March 2016 respectively. On the 12 November 2014, the presenters were, Mr Kgabo Mahoai, Acting Director General, and Mr Fadl Nacerodien, Acting Deputy Director General: Policy Research and Analysis. On the 16 March 2016, led the delegation of the Department.

1. **Panel discussion on the White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy: 5 November 2014**

**2.1 Presentation by Dr Zondi: Matters of paradigm, orientation and Africa**

A bit of history was provided that South Africa had formerly had a Green Paper on foreign policy, but that had been abandoned because it confined South Africa to a concise paradigm. Countries that had ascribed their foreign policy to human rights based foreign policy, had withdrawn their statements because it was impossible to hold that line.

A conscious decision was made by the late Head of State and former President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela, that South Africa should allow some space in its foreign policy. The process of discussion on the Green Paper was too long, and it was felt that, if it was pushed too far, it could cause difficulties among the constituencies. If the Green Paper was abandoned by the first South African democratic government, then he questioned the reasons for having the White Paper at this time.

The African National Congress’s policy conference of 2007 had taken a decision on that point. However, whether the conditions that had led to the abandoning of the Green Paper had changed was another question. The other topics that needed to be discussed were whether South Africa had the capacity to choose a specific foreign policy framework, in a fluid global environment.

It was pointed out that the question of "What is South Africa's outlook on world affairs" was not a static point. The response has to be based on the fact that a foreign policy must be based on both the world today, South Africa’s aspirations and the diplomatic efforts it was making.

It was observed that the paradigm behind the white paper was the diplomatic ideal inherent in Ubuntu. However, the question was whether the concept amounted to abandonment of the African Renaissance narrative. At this stage, it was also suggested that it was necessary to decide what "ubuntu" meant, and whether that idea - in terms or otherwise - was expressed in the white paper. Although it was generally accepted that ubuntu, means kindness, humanness and cooperation, ubuntu could also mean destruction and confrontation for anything that was not compliant with the ubuntu ideals. A statement was made to the effect that "the tiger does not announce its turpitude, but it pounces". A consideration here was whether South Africa should be announcing the diplomacy of ubuntu, or should it express ubuntu through its actions.

In conclusion, it was pointed out that the white paper stated that foreign policy has to support institutions, and promote an African common position on structural changes in the continent. However, it did not explain what that meant. Given the fact that there might not be consensus on what constitutes national interest, South Africa should get to the time where the issue would be addressed.

**2.2 Presentation by Ms Sanusha Naidu: South Relations and Global Governance**

The white paper essentially had two main tenets: South-South solidarity and Pan Africanism. South-South solidarity had been dominant since 2005, with South Africa recognising that the global South had a homogeneous group of actors, although some actors were more powerful than others. The question was where the South African identity lay in that equation. The white paper stipulated the need to reform the architecture of the global system, because it was outdated, and it excluded the voice of Africa. South Africa wanted to champion the concerns of the South, but wanted to reassure others that the South would not become a block too powerful in itself. It was necessary to recognise the new ideas from the global South, in relation to terrorism and environmental management.

The intentions of South African foreign policy did not come out clearly, in the white paper, in relation to championing the realisation of the South agenda, or to say whether it was to give room to a more inclusive legislative based system where countries in the periphery had a say in global issues.

A question was raised as to how the white paper and its concerns related to the ever changing global environment. It seemed that South Africa had shifted towards "the global South Africa", as evident from the discussion on the role that the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) formation could play.

In conclusion, it was noted that actors in the global South had vested interests, and South Africa’s interests were not clear. The question was where the policy of ubuntu fitted in all of that, and where South Africa's own paradigm fit, in the context of the global South. It was pointed out that the definition of economic diplomacy was not only about access to markets, but was a process where the regime of global trade was defined. However, the white paper fell short of mentioning the difference in its aims and narrative.

**2.3 Presentation by Professor Chris Landsberg: Matters relating to the North and decision-making in South Africa**

It was noted that South Africa was a member of BRICS and spent approximately the same amount of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as its counterparts, per capita, on Research and Development (R&D). However, the statistics showed that one university produced 5 000 PhD graduates in India, while in South Africa a total number of PhD graduates produced by all universities combined is only 2 000. Perceptions had been noted that the foreign policy reflect a mixed bag of approaches. The question was whether South Africa could sustain a highly incoherent foreign policy that sought to please everyone.

The initial triggers for ubuntu, were that the new administration, post-democracy, felt the desperate need to prove that the new South Africa was radically different from the former attitudes. Although the consultation done in 2011 had cautioned against the idea of having foreign policy documented, those recommendations were not considered. The white paper was a reflection of world politics when it was written, which raised the question of how relevant it would be in the coming years. It was noted that new alliances were rising: MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, Australia) and MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey) which were competing with BRICS. A question was being asked elsewhere whether South Africa should be the only country in the G20, and in BRICS.

It was regarded unadvisable to include foreign policy in a white paper. If anything was stated along those lines, it should only pertain to non-negotiable constitutional elements and values that everyone in South Africa agreed to.

It was felt that there was a serious mis-characterisation of foreign policy during the Mandela era, from 1993 and when he assumed the office of President. The foreign policy was seen as pursuing human rights on the global platform. The policy emphasised regional integration in Africa. Twenty years later, it should be asked whether South Africa was committed to driving the African agenda and whether there was a fundamental commitment to the rule of law. The "DNA" of South Africa’s politics was of a multilateral approach to issues, and that it was South Africa’s identity that set South Africa apart from many other countries. The question was also whether South Africa made enough capital to invest in this identity.

Another point that would have to be discussed was whether South Africa confused positional leadership with strategic leadership, and whether it did indeed have the latter. On paper, there was continuity, (with the late South African President, Mr Nelson Mandela, former President Mr Thabo Mbeki and the current President Mr Jacob Zuma), insofar as foreign policy was concerned, but in reality, it was felt there was a large gap.

It was pointed out that the document touched on the most fundamental weakness of the previous foreign policies. There was a fundamental gap between the domestic and foreign affairs. Ubuntu was poorly defined in the document, and there could have been more done. Ubuntu in the sense provided in the white paper, could suggest that South Africa did believe in confrontational, "big brother" ideals.

In conclusion, it was recommended that the Committee should play a part in the implementation of the foreign policy, utilitarian and economic development policy. It was said there might be, however, a risk that emphasis on economic diplomacy could be seen as a regime agenda in foreign policy rather than national driven policy.

**2.4 Presentation by Ms Michelle Pressend, Independent Analyst**

It was felt that the white paper appeared to be "obsessed" with the idea of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), with the hope of aiding economic growth and alleviating poverty and creating jobs. It was felt that twenty years on from the time that it was adopted, there were still not enough jobs created. The white paper was regarded contradictory. It emphasised the need to enhance its competitive advantage, at the other end, emphasising cooperation, and hence it was trapped in neo-liberalism. It was felt that South Africa seemed nervous to lead.

It was stated that in a recent vote, when South Africa voted for Ecuador, Ecuador lost three votes. That process was regarded as highlighting how the rest of the world tended to view South Africa, as manipulative. Co-operations had become more powerful than many states on their own. Wal-Mart and the Royal Dutch Shell had bigger revenues than cooperation could seek to achieve. There was a need to re-align this imbalance. It was also felt that the white paper also fell short in that it did not mention civil society engagement.

1. **Observations and concerns raised by the Committee**

In the discussions following the panel discussions, these were highlighted:

* South Africa had to improve on its education policy, citing the 2 000 PhD graduates produced by South Africa per year, in comparison with the 5 000 graduates at one Indian university alone. In the light of the several document trying to shape South Africa’s foreign policy, it was not clear whether there was then a need to amalgamate the previous foreign policies with the present.
* More clarity was sought on what was meant by saying the national policy was in the interest of government.
* In the light of shortage of skills in the country, South Africa should consider to offer free education.
* Clarity was sought on the rationale to title the document "Ubuntu" or if it would be advisable if it were to be left to be observed in the practice of foreign policy. The conditions had changed, from when the white paper was crafted. There was a need for the country to assess whether the contents of the white paper would still be of benefit.
* Clarity was sought as to whether South Africa was continuing to benefit from the BRICS alliance.
* Whether South Africa’s foreign policy would help achieve the domestic imperatives. The meaning of ubuntu needed more detail to it. The white paper appeared to be more of a trade policy than a foreign policy. It was further asked whether South Africa was closing out relations with the Global North and opening up to the Global South.
* A question was raised regarding how South Africa could navigate to become a competitive nation, and how that would translate into cooperation versus competition. It was wondered what role the foreign policy should play in influencing or changing the global order. It was felt that other member countries in the BRICS had a strategy of what they wanted. It was asked if South Africa had a strong enough idea of what it wanted, and the value BRICS would bring to the country.
* More explanation was sought regarding the challenges of getting increased number of PhD graduates.
* Vietnam foreign policy was cited as taking care of its citizens first, before any others, and asked how this compared to South Africa's foreign policy. There was a need to prioritise the national interest. It was felt that South Africa should continue to lead the implementation of programmes of the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).
* It was felt that codification of a foreign policy of any country could bear positive or negative results. It could be good for informing the nationals and foreign nations where a country stands in global issues. On the other hand, it could create expectations and obligations on which the country could be measured. Due to the fluid nature of trends influential to foreign policy objectives, it would be advisable for the white paper to also take on board the developments in the global economic balances of power shifting to the emerging powers. Since 1945, democratic states have emerged, and therefore in order to drive own economic development, emphasis should be on economic diplomacy. There seemed to be a new scramble for Africa’s resources and the foreign policy should recognize that factor.
* Ubuntu should be sufficiently articulated in its geostrategic strength and how it would be engaged in the multilateral forums. There was perhaps a need for further research into the definition of ubuntu which people could resonate with what it stands for.
* A point was made that the former President of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki, was not the brainchild of the African Renaissance but that he only gave life to it.
* The Committee requested the panelists to highlight key issues in the white paper and map out some alternative measures to improve the document.

**3.2** **Responses by the presenters**

Although the foreign policy was formulated in consultation with other relevant departments, its implementation would be the responsibility of the Department. It would be beneficial to have comments of the other relevant departments on the finished white paper. While there was unanimity in the need to implement NEPAD projects between the government and private sector, the question was why the government then allowed that to lapse.

It was said to be prudent for the Committee to ask the Department as to who initiated Agenda 2063, what had South Africa done about it, and had South Africa agreed to the Agenda 2063. It was mentioned by way of example that initially NEPAD had workshops which were comprehensive, and it was wondered if the same would be done in respect of Agenda 2063. It was noted that there was under representation by some diplomats in South Africa’s missions abroad. Some of the officials seemed to be more interested in domestic affairs, even though they were representing their country abroad, and seemed to know less of their mission in those countries.

It was cautioned that economic diplomacy was a dense topic in itself and was not limited to improving foreign markets access. It also included what should be done to change the structure of trade and the need for equitable trade. It was necessary to consider what the role was of South Africa in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and this would change the monopoly of power. It had to do with regimes in the architecture of the global economy. Improving access to markets had more to do with commercial diplomacy.

It was added that there was trade between the Euro Zone and South Africa, as reflected by the current rates. It was not feasible to close down in the Euro Zone trade in preference to the Global South. The point to consider was where South Africa would position itself in the African narrative, given that there were African states that had emerged in the continental economic dominance, such as Angola and Rwanda. The point was whether South Africa was going to be seen as advancing the African agenda.

Regarding the questions raised on education, and said that this was not so much to do with funding or affordability, but policy decisions. It was far easier for students to go to university in other countries than in South Africa. Since BRICS had a developmental policy, in order to stay relevant, South Africa had to address its monetary policy and improve its manufacturing sector.

It was added that there had not been improvement in South Africa’s industrial sector. South Africa was depended upon foreign currency and reduced capital outflows; while countries like India had better monetary policies through capital control. It felt like South Africa had given up all its policy space in trade and finance. The question was therefore how it could re-take that, and learn from the ubuntu principles. Whilst South Africa was still speaking in terms of ubuntu, countries like Ecuador had a different foreign policy implementation methodology. It was more individual-centred, in contrast to South Africa, which created the impression of a corporate-centred foreign policy.

It was observed that there was an implementation crisis, and too much time was spent in crafting and drafting policy rather than implementing it. John F Kennedy was quoted as having written a foreign policy that lasted for 50 years, entitled "Diplomacy without diplomatists”. It became a concern whether South Africa had diplomatists who could differentiate between economic diplomacy and commercial diplomacy. Although every province had foreign policy, there was no national coordination in foreign policy. There was thus a need to call upon the Department to explain what exactly it meant by ubuntu and what was its vision for the BRICS. It was felt that there was a need for South Africa and Nigeria to work closely together and nourish the solid relations that exist between the two countries.

It was agreed that although former President Mbeki was not the brainchild of the African Renaissance, he did give life to it. Out of Mr Mbeki's initiatives came NEPAD, which was very instrumental in creating change. It was felt that the underwriters of that, South Africa and Nigeria, later distanced themselves from something they led and crafted, because of their country's own internal politics.

The Committee noted the input by the stakeholders and thanked them for their independent views on the white paper. It was agreed that they would still be engaged in the future as the need arises.

1. **Briefing by the Department on the White Paper**

The Department stated at the outset that the process on the white paper had been long and it was relieved that it had been finalised. The white paper was said to be in alignment with the National Development Plan 2030; and the Annual Performance Plan 2014/15 of the Department, thus towards a better South Africa in a better world. A brief background was that, in 2010, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (the Minister) had initiated an assessment of South Africa’s foreign policy against a backdrop of a rapidly changing international relations environment. Widespread engagement and consultation took place and the result was the white paper, which was approved by Cabinet in December 2012.

It was highlighted that the white paper grounded foreign policy in South Africa’s domestic priorities. Foreign policy was a projection of domestic policy. Of great importance was the need to balance the values of South Africa with that of its interests. The concept of “diplomacy of ubuntu” was used to explain South Africa’s foreign policy approach of collaboration, cooperation and partnership, rather than conflict and competition. South Africa’s soft approach was what elevated it to a higher category than other countries. The document took into consideration drivers and trends in the global system, and how South Africa positioned itself in the fluid systems of international relations.

The Department noted that some of the pillars of South Africa’s foreign policy were Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African continent itself. The Department’s work also extended to strengthened relations with the North, and a commitment to a rules-based multilateral system. There would also be the promotion of global equity and social justice. Key foreign policy principles were that states were dependant on one another. High on South Africa’s agenda was the pursuit for unity and economic, political and social renewal of Africa. The upliftment of the spirit of internationalism, pan-Africanism, and South-South solidarity was a priority, in addition to the rejection of colonialism and other forms of oppression. Drivers and trends in the global system were identified given the rapidly changing economic and political order.

The white paper could therefore not be too specific as it was a long-term process and it had to remain relevant for five to ten years. Some of the factors to consider were demographics, the realignment of economic power, innovation, the heightened demand for scarce resources and the changing nature of conflict and insecurity. South Africa would continue to strengthen development partnerships and the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) would be an important instrument to promote more effective development cooperation.

The developing world, especially Africa, had a limited voice. Participation was needed in the decision-making and policy-making processes of global trade, economic and financial institutions. There was thus a need for comprehensive reform of the architecture of global governance. These would include the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, to make them more effective, legitimate and responsive to the needs of the developing world. Groups such as the G20, the Major Economies Forum and the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) bloc, had grown in prominence and were focused on global issues related to political, security, environment and economic matters.

The issue of economic diplomacy was elaborated upon. It was important for countries to pursue economic interests. This was especially relevant to South Africa given its National Development Plan (NDP) and Operation Phakisa imperatives. The success of economic diplomacy was linked to the achievement of domestic priorities. The focus of South Africa’s international engagements should therefore include the creation of sustainable jobs and scaled up investments in employment-intensive sectors in South Africa. South Africa’s economic diplomacy would therefore provide guidance to government and the business sector on economic developments and markets. It would furthermore attract investments and tourism whilst removing barriers to trade.

* 1. **Observations and concerns raised by the Committee**
* Members appreciated the white paper on South Africa’s foreign policy, as it was a long time in the making. Given that the concept of ubuntu was the basis of South Africa’s foreign policy, concern was raised about what the proper definition of ubuntu was, as there seemed not to be consensus on it. The suggestion was consequently made that the concept of ubuntu needed to be properly articulated.
* It was also asked what the definition of the term “national interest” was and what South Africa’s national interests were. The issue was raised that there was a perception that South Africa was more focused on relations with countries in the South at the expense of relations with countries in the North such as Europe.
* An explanation was sought on the meaning of economic diplomacy and the difference between economic diplomacy and commercial diplomacy. The Department was further asked to unpack the need for the reform the United Nations Security Council and Bretton Woods institutions.
* It was also asked whether South Africa’s foreign policy would address the issue of national interests versus global realities; and whether South Africa’s foreign policy was still relevant given the rise in militarism and unilateralism. It was pointed out that the emphasis of world diplomacy had shifted from political diplomacy to economic diplomacy. There was in addition a new scramble for resources in the world. South Africa and Africa needed to be aware of the world intending to exploit its resources.

The Committee agreed to have a follow up meeting in 2015 on the issues raised in the meeting. Engagement would however take place on a more political level, as the political heads of the Department would be invited to the Committee. Other issues to be dealt with could be the Foreign Service Bill, South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) and the benefits of South Africa’s membership in BRICS.

**4.2 Responses by the Department**

The Department noted that in a nation state all things were guided by policy, hence a foreign policy was necessary. The challenge was for the policy not to become outdated. The white paper should therefore not contain detail on operational things. One had to take into consideration South Africa’s transition from the old apartheid state to South Africa’s democracy. There was a need to look at what had significantly changed. Consideration needed to be given to South Africa’s values and interests. The white paper provided the founding principles of South Africa’s foreign policy. The principles of foreign policy remained the same; nuances had changed. The former president Thabo Mbeki had championed African Renaissance and NEPAD but there were many things that were attributed to South Africa that was not South Africa’s doing. South Africa needed to be modest about the influence that it had. South Africa needed a foreign policy that spoke to the issues of the day and should not become outdated.

It was further noted that ten years from now South Africa’s foreign policy should be revisited to relook at South Africa’s interests and values. The white paper should have been done in the 1990s already and revisited now to check on whether the values and interests of South Africa were still the same. Foreign policy was not abstract but was concrete. Cabinet had discussed the issue of national interests. There were discussion documents. To South Africa, national interests were the promotion and protection of South African citizens and the African continent. Ubuntu did not define national interest narrowly in a materialistic way. South Africa’s foreign policy encapsulated Africa as a whole and South Africa was not neglecting the North. It was vitally important for South Africa to deal with whoever could sustainably develop South Africa. In today’s world South Africa had to deal with where the benefit was. On the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the US wished to exclude South Africa from it as they felt that South Africa had graduated from it. South Africa needed to negotiate with the US to remain in AGOA as its exclusion from it held dire consequences. There was a debate going around that South Africa was being too soft with China.

Economic diplomacy was different from commercial diplomacy. Economic diplomacy was about how South Africa could influence among others, international trade, and the G20. Commercial diplomacy dealt with goods and services. It had to be remembered that peace and security was still critical. It was important that ambassadors and mission staff receive training on economic diplomacy. A training toolkit was in place. Engagement with provinces and other departments was also important for economic diplomacy. Economic diplomacy was in itself in flux. It was all well and good to train someone but it was another issue to be able to respond to changing dynamics.

South Africa’s involvement in BRICS was not directed to neglecting the US and Europe. The BRICS had become a phenomenon that needed to be factored in on the world stage. It was a game changer. South Africa needed to have its own plan in terms of what it wished to gain from being a member of BRICS. On alliances further calibration was needed. Sometimes the media painted South Africa as being mutually exclusive. It was important to understand that mini-laterals were just as important in a multilateral system. It was not about making friends with countries but more about negotiating until you reach consensus.

It was explained that the United Nations reform was not about South Africa wishing to be in the United Nations Security Council. The understanding was that if the African continent was better off then South Africa would consequently also be better off. The United Nations structure had gone through reforms.

The reform of the Bretton Woods institutions was critical. At present there were unfair trade relations. The effect of such practices had brought down South Africa’s credit rating. A formula was used for the restructuring of the World Bank.

It was pointed out that the process from a Green Paper in 1996 to a white paper had been a long one. It was asked if the Department checked on the relevance of the inputs that had been made given the long timeframe in between the processes. I was further asked whether foreign policy would address the issue of national interests versus global realities.

The Department responded that it had done a great deal of work to get South Africa on the world stage. South Africa was the new kid on the block and had to stand its ground. The issues contained in the green paper were looked at given the huge timeframe until the completion of the white paper. There were differences between the green paper and the white paper. In the green paper, the new world order was mentioned. At the time of drafting the white paper, South Africans were living in the new world order. A huge amount of the language in the green paper had to be updated. The principles of foreign policy remained the same.

1. **Conclusions**

After discussions during the briefing, the Committee concluded as follows:

The Committee thanked the Department for sharing the document on the white paper for foreign policy. Due to the fact that the policy was already at the white paper stage, the Committee could only note the contents of the white paper.

The Committee further concluded that:

* The National Assembly notes that there is a White Paper on South Africa’s Foreign Policy.
* The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation should assess and enrich the White Paper through a widespread consultative process.
* The Committee should undertake Outreach programmes on the White Paper to ensure public participation on South Africa’s foreign policy.