**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THURSDAY, 20 MAY 2021**

**Watch video here:** [**Vote No 6 – International Relations and Co-Operation**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMlG79v5Dr8)

***PROCEEDINGS OF MINIPLENARY SESSION – NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAMBER***

Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform at 14:00.

The House Chairperson Ms M G Boroto took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

The Chairperson announced that the virtual mini-plenary sitting constituted a meeting of the National Assembly.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 6 - International Relations and Co- Operation:

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon

Chairperson, members of the executive, hon members and guests

joining us today, thank you very much for this opportunity to lead the debate on Vote 6. We return to Parliament for this Budget Vote debate following an unexpectedly tumultuous financial year. While we have made every effort to act on the priorities we signalled in 2019, much of our work had to be adjusted to focus on supporting government in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. Adjustments also had to be made due to significant budget cuts.

In 2020-21 was our African Union chairship year and we had plans to advance our policy agenda of a better Africa and a better world. The key focus for 2020 was the priority of silencing the guns in Africa and advancing the economic participation of women. We were also committed to ensuring implementation of all the steps necessary to give effect to the African Free Trade Area Agreement and further implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism, APRM.

Our budget for 2020-21 was R6 850 179 000 as announced in

April 2020. It was reduced to R6 314 968 000. The DIRCO budget

for 2021-22 was announced as R7 038 531 000 in the 2021 budget speech and was finally reduced to R6 452 372 000 for this financial year.

The funding pressures we continue to experience have caused severe cutbacks in key areas. Low levels of economic growth and declining investment in our country and on the continent are a severe constraint on our international ambitions.

South Africa is fortunate to have a dedicated body of DIRCO men and women who work very hard to ensure that we do achieve our objectives and who tolerate significant sacrifices to ensure we succeed. We have done even more to focus missions overseas on economic diplomacy as we must secure more growth and jobs.

Chair, we observed the positive character of DIRCO officials in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Our consular services branch and all our missions ensured the successful repatriation of thousands of South Africans stranded overseas. The department’s efforts benefited from support of portfolio committee members and from the general public. I wish to thank all who played a role in the repatriation efforts.

With respect to our AU chairship President Ramaphosa gave sterling leadership to the bureau, the AU Commission and our continent. The AU chair ensured a co-ordinated African

response to the pandemic, help develop an Africa Strategy and secured the support of African leaders through an open consultative approach. Agreement that Africa should use its own resources to support the African Centres of Disease Control as the scientific adviser on our pandemic response was a critical factor in Africa addressing the pandemic’s effects. Furthermore, the decision of the chair to create an African Medicines platform as a web-based platform for equal access to health equipment, treatment and diagnostics was innovative and impactful.

The role of chair went beyond the health response and focused on the economic impact of the COVID-19 virus. The economic envoys appointed by the AU chair and the commission engaged financial institutions and government leaders to secure debt relief and debt standstill for indebted African countries so they focus on the pandemic and have liquidity for focus socio- economic recovery. We have not yet secured new funding sources to provide investment for growth on the continent. We continue to engage multilateral financial institutions to provide such new funding and not more debt loans as they prefer.

While focusing on our COVID-19 response much was done to continue our engagements with the globe including support to the President’s annual investment conference. The objective of securing recovery funding continues to be pursued by President Ramaphosa and other African leaders. The Financing Africa Summit in Paris this week focused on the urgent need for the International Monetary Fund, IMF, to finalise the matter of Special Drawing Rights and the issue of expanded vaccine production as well as the call for the World Trade Organization, WTO, temporary waiver of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, TRIPS, regulations as part of a global response to the pandemic.

Hon members, even in the worst effects of the pandemic, the one feature that was prominently confirmed was the vital importance of multilateralism in global collaboration. Faith was restored in multilateral institutions that had been confronting negativity for several years. The COVID-19 revived and affirmed global cooperation. Multilateral and regional bodies enjoyed a long denied prominence and leadership. This reality has assisted our long held belief that multilateral institutions matter and are a more inclusive and equitable global option for managing global affairs. We have continued

to engage in the UN and to uphold the rights of the people of Palestine to statehood, those of Western Sahara to self- determination and the need for the UN and the AU to assist Africa to finally achieve continent-wide peace and focus on development.

Our 2019-20 annual report and that of 2020-21 show the progress we have made in meeting our goals and objectives. They show that while our strength is diminished by inadequate resources we continue to punch above our weight in international cooperation. We will seek even greater impact in 2021-22. We will do more to support Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt to negotiate an agreement on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, GERD. We will also work closely with South Sudan and Libya to promote and support post conflict reconstruction, and much more will be done to achieve the gender agenda mandated by the AU adoption of 2020-30 as the decade of the financial inclusion of women in Africa.

Our response to the impact of COVID-19 resonates strongly with the legacy we have inherited from Mama Charlotte Maxeke. She was a woman who believed that it is possible to build back better. In the unquenchable spirit of this great woman of

Africa, it is imperative that we focus this year on building back better.

The negative impact of COVID-19 has clear directives for our future agenda. We will continue to promote the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all our contributions in the UN and AU. Working closely with the AU special envoy on gender and the commission for peace and security, we will consult women leaders in post-conflict areas and work with them to ensure their contribution to reconstruction and development in their countries.

We are very pleased to be serving in the UN Peacebuilding Commission for 2021-22 as this will help us contribute towards the maintenance of international peace and security, just as we did during our term in the UN Security Council. Peace and security are extremely fragile or absent in many parts of the globe. The recent vicious attacks by Israel on Palestinian people and the apartheid style forced removal of Palestinians from their homes is clear evidence of the absence of peace and security. Sadly, we all watched as Palestine suffered more and more brutally. Greater effort must be exerted to achieve peace in the Middle East. Powerful nations must accept that we all

depend on each other and even the most powerful will not achieve peace and security through unilateral actions and neglect of the poor, the oppressed and marginalised. We call on the UN and middle-eastern countries to be more resolute in pursuing freedom for the people of Palestine.

Charlotte Maxeke was a bold agent of change. We must be as bold and determined in seeking concrete practical reform of the UN Security Council. I am pleased that early steps toward text-based negotiations are in motion in the UN. There is significant resistance to changing the status quo and we must continue to insist that change is urgently necessary. We need a representative and 21st century relevant security council responsive to today’s challenges. There were 51 member states in 1945, we have grown to 193 member states, yet the most important mechanism of the UN remains untransformed.

Building back better also means we should utilise our global co-operation to secure Africa’s ability to effectively respond to complex challenges such as a global pandemic. We must increase our research and innovation capacity and be more ready to rely on our ingenuity, our products, and our institutions in future. Charlotte Maxeke and all our great

heroes and heroines believed in our innate abilities, let us use them to free ourselves from post-colonial dependency.

Hon members, Africa lies at the heart of our international agenda. We firmly believe we should ensure Pan-African ability to determine our affairs and shape Africa’s future. We have begun a process of reviewing our Africa strategy so that we respond to the new realities on the continent through an approach that is consistent with our Agenda 2063 of the Africa we want.

We have comparative advantages as South Africa that can support and promote increased African success. We intend to build strategic partnerships and political alliances in a far more rigorous manner. We will strengthen bilateral relations and co-operation and build strategic partnerships with clear goals and objectives. We plan to begin in southern Africa, and to ensure that Southern African Development Community, Sadc, plans are reinforced and concretely implemented.

Mama Maxeke did not limit her world to South Africa and as with our dialogue series icon Mama Shope. She was a remarkable internationalist. This is one of the reasons why we are

robustly strengthening our trade co-operation and people exchange with south east Asia. We are thrilled that our portfolio committee recognised the exciting opportunities in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, and we thank the chairperson for her leadership in ensuring that our entry into the treaty of amity and co-operation of the ASEAN was supported by Parliament.

In August South Africa will assume chair of the SADC organ on politics peace and security. The organ has been deliberating on the extremist attacks in Mozambique. Ministers of the organ have developed SADC proposals for support to Mozambique that we hope will soon be adopted at the end of this month by the heads of state in an organ summit.

The year 2020 was our second year as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. The feedback we received indicates that that the role of South Africa in the council was deeply appreciated due to South Africa’s principled position on issues on the council’s agenda. Our relatively independent position, together with a compelling commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes and a fair and balanced approach in engaging with member states, allowed South Africa to play a

bridge building role in a divided security council. During our tenure we continued to advance UN and AU co-operation on peace and security matters particularly with reference to Libya, the SAHEL region, and the transitional process in South Sudan. We note with hope the positive progress in Libya and further actions on the comprehensive Agreement in South Sudan. The Department of International Relations and Co-operation will remain closely attentive to support for post conflict reconstruction in South Sudan, and we are in constant contact with the government there. We also welcome the efforts by various organisations in South Africa to assist Sudan in the transition and constitution making processes.

Our President has also worked closely with G20 countries, with our BRICS partners and the EU to continue supporting South Africa and Africa in implementing our international agenda. We also directed efforts at addressing inadequacies in our department. We have adopted an audit action plan whose intention is to support DIRCO in achieving improved audit outcomes. We have a lot to do before we attain a full clean audit, but we are making progress. Our skills need enhancement in the finance division and we must make changes as indicated in various portfolio committee reports in our Parliament.

Action has also been taken following reports on the New York land project. We have confirmed that we will act when public resources are not used according to policy and regulatory requirements.

The budget cuts I referred to earlier resulted in changes in our operations. This and the continued economic impact of COVID-19 have led us to review South Africa’s diplomatic footprint globally. In an effort to reduce costs while ensuring a presence throughout the world, we are in the process of closing 10 of our 122 missions during the course of this year. The missions in closest geographic proximity will provide diplomatic and consular services to countries that no longer host our missions. We plan to use improved information technology services to ensure efficient consular support to our citizens who live in those countries. We also intend to appoint honorary consuls to enable us to continue to have a presence and uphold established relations. I have been most grateful for the understanding shown by my foreign Minister colleagues in all these difficult actions.

In addition to reducing our mission footprint we have made concrete progress toward finalising our organisational

structure. We plan to have a department structure that does not cause us to exceed our budget allocation while also ensuring we attract and retain talent within DIRCO. The continuing decline in our compensation of employee’s budget has been a challenge for DIRCO, and I am hopeful we will resolve this particular challenge. I do believe improved allocations need to be considered for our international work, but I am fully appreciative of the constraints to growth that we all need to overcome together.

It is due to the need to support the economic ambitions of our government that we have directed increased attention to the promotion of economic diplomacy through all our missions. We are also working hard for increased trade opportunities from our major trading partners. China is one of our most significant trading partners. Hon Chair and hon members would be aware that our two-way trade with Asia and middle East region has grown from R45 billion in 1990 to a staggering

R984 billion in 2020. The COVID-19 caused a contraction of 1,6% in our trade with Asia and the middle East, but importantly even in this time our trade with China continued to expand. In 2019 two-way trade with China stood at

R413 billion and grew to R437 billion in 2020. The agriculture

sector has led this growth. This has resulted in more jobs, more small and medium-sized business growth, more small commercial farmers and enhanced trade exchanges. Most pleasing is that trade is beginning to be a surplus gain for our exporters with an increasing number of countries in that regions.

Added to this welcome progress are the improved trade figures for South Africa in the ASEAN region. In 2020 two-way trade between South Africa and east Asia grew to R119 billion. I have asked our missions in that region to help identify increased opportunities in the massive halal market and in citrus and other commodities. The statistics on current trade indicate significant growth in the ASEAN — a fast growing region with a GDP of over 3,1 trillion dollars — and we want more of that — and a market of over 650 million people.

This evidence of progress links well with our progress in BRICS, especially in the work of the New Development Bank. Charlotte Maxeke was a team player who sought to benefit all in her circle. She did not shy away from a challenge as shown by the support to her choir when stranded in the USA. Similarly, we have been steadfast advocates of a vibrant

active collaborative BRICS. We are hopeful of expanded bank membership this year and fully appreciate the 2 billion dollars we secured from the bank to assist us in our response to COVID-19. We also secured a billion dollars for our non- toll road infrastructure programme in 2020.

Our trilateral IBSA Forum with India and Brazil has been a glowing example of a new blueprint for South-South co- operation. Since its inception in 2005, the IBSA Fund for poverty and hunger alleviation supported over 30 development projects in 22 countries of the global south to the value of

32 million dollars. In 2020 the fund approved new development projects in several African countries including Senegal, the DRC, Benin, Uganda, Sudan, Mali, Niger, and Eswatini.

Our focus in international relations includes our promotion of the values and ethos of our constitution through advocating for human dignity, democracy and equality. We continue to stand in full solidarity with the people of Palestine and will work even harder to persuade the African Union and the United Nations to robustly pursue freedom for the people of Palestine. The cruel bombings and killings of the innocent we witnessed in the past two weeks are a sad testimony of the

cruel impunity the world has granted to Israel. The international community must stop this impunity. South Africa should support the International Criminal Court, ICC, in the planned investigation of the abuse of human rights by the Israeli government. We hope sanctions and other measures to show the worlds offence at this brutality will soon be evident.

The people of Cuba also continue to be victims of an unwarranted blockade that should be finally ended by the new USA administration. We will continue to support Cuba and work closely with that solid friend of South Africa.

A better Africa continues to be the key foreign policy imperative. Working closely with Trade Industry and Competition, we will support implementation of the Free Trade Area Agreement. We must do everything possible to ensure its successful implementation. For many African countries, free trade means more productive capacity, economic infrastructure and new trade opportunities.

Our department has supported countries that held elections in 2020 providing funding for expertise via the IEC or relevant

non-government partners. The support to Central African Republic supported an election that many judged as free and fair.

While pursuing our Africa agenda vigorously, we will also build on the excellent trade relations with the United States of America, the European Union member states and the United Kingdom. These are significant trading partners for South Africa and we plan to grow the trade, people, and cultural links through our embassies. Several ambassadors have called on us to do more on cultural diplomacy. I am told DJ Black Coffee could fill Wembley stadium and profile South Africa, but when he performs overseas, there is an insufficient association to his South African identity. We have great talent in our country and we must mount international cultural events to show our diversity of talents worldwide. This is an area I hope to focus on more as we begin to refocus our foreign activities.

Finally, hon members, I wish to assure you that we are working hard to build back better as Charlotte Maxeke expected us to. We must provide skills opportunities to young people, enhance our innovation and digital capabilities so we rank with the

best among the world and build a South Africa, Africa and world that will be of service to humanity. I thank you, Chairperson and hon members.

Ms T MAHAMBEHLALA: Hon House Chairperson, Minister, Deputy Ministers, Members of Parliament, and members of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Co-operation, the self-determination of the people of Palestine is now more urgent than ever. The fearless impunity and the total disregard of the lives of Palestinians by Israelis, especially women and children must be condemned with contempt.

If what we have witnessed in the last 10 days is not tantamount to apartheid, then nothing will ever be. We associate ourselves with the statement by President Ramaphosa in support of the Palestinian people. We call for the right to self-determination for the people of Palestine and the end to the Israel bombardment of Gaza.

I will now attend to the APP. Based on the recent briefing of the department, I must hasten to acknowledge that the covid-19 pandemic has brought about challenges for the department in carrying out international work. Digital diplomacy is the new

normal. The department has to adapt and ensure the implementation of its digital strategy.

Upon its assumption of duty to Parliament, this committee prioritised the promulgation of the Foreign Services Act 2019. It is our concern that, despite that the Act has not entered into force yet, to us, this must be a priority, Minister, because there has never been a legislation that provides for management and administration of foreign service.

On the other hand, the revival of the Partnership for Development Bill intended to repeal the current African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund, ARF, Act is long overdue. The governing party, the ANC, has long directed that there should be a paradigm shift towards a development partnership approach as opposed to a donor/recipient setup. To this end, the South African Development Partnership Agency, SADPA, should have already been operationalised.

It has come to our attention that the department is considering many options as a means of containing the compensation of employees within the start-up ceiling, including the reduction of missions. We know that about 11

missions are earmarked for closure. In this regard, a political view has been expressed by the committee that the reduction of mission should not impact on the central position of Africa in the country’s foreign policy principles.

The department should also consider acquiring properties abroad, as opposed to renting to save costs. Rentals are also a cost driver on the budget of the department and missions abroad.

The department should continue dedicating efforts for regional integration based on economic development through monitored implementation of South Africa’s obligation to SADC and the African Union and contribute to the operationalisation of identified Agenda 2063 flagship projects. The department should approach its work with the mind-set that foreign policy is informed and shaped by domestic policies.

The department should therefore strengthen focus on economic diplomacy through structured bilateral mechanisms, as the important vehicle of the department for contributing to the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan presented by

President Cyril Ramaphosa to Joint Sitting of Parliament on 15 October 2020.

To achieve this, we expect the department to aim at having more foreign direct investment into South Africa and Africa, finding access for our products to foreign markets, improving investor confidence and increasing tourism arrival to South Africa. The review of structured bilateral mechanisms therefore becomes very urgent to enable the department to use this tool to address domestic challenges.

The advancement of African interests remains pivotal to South Africa’s foreign policy. In pursuit of this country’s Pan- Africanist vision of unity, solidarity and common African destiny, we hope for harmonised policies between relevant departments to ensure that South Africa benefits from the creation of the African continent free trade.

The operationalisation of the Border Management Authority becomes crucial in this regard. Harmonisation of policies is needed to ensure that Beitbridge border post becomes a focal point to connect South Africa to rest of the continent in the north.

The department should also continue to focus on the promotion of greater peace, security and stability on the continent. It is the committee’s political view that South African should remain committed to multilateralism as one of the principles underpinning South Africa’s foreign policy. We continue to advocate for the reform of global governance institutions and the department should keep this agenda item alive for the democratisation of the UN system, especially the UN Security Council.

Compliance with international reporting obligations is crucial and such reports should be tabled in Parliament for a political view being opened for international scrutiny.

As the committee, we have oversight interest that the department should continue to advocate mutual beneficial south to south co-operations and also continue alliances with the countries of the north in support for the President’s investment initiative. Particular focus on should be on the sectors that promote industrialisation and increase beneficiation and those that can transform South Africa’s economy.

We commend that the department for handling the procurement of PPEs properly and for not falling prey to tender corruption.

The pandemic has opened up an increased need for consular services by South Africans abroad. We again applaud the work of the department and missions abroad in this regard, since the advent of the pandemic.

As parting shot, the Minister will recall that we had engagements recently regarding the new projects whereby the committee was not fully informed about the consequence management to the implicated officials. It is disheartening to observe how this matter was handled despite oversight recommendations of the committee and the AG’s report on the subject.

We must reiterate that it is not in the interest of the committee to intervene in the international matters of the department, but the oversight role of Parliament must be taken seriously. I therefore ... [Time expired.] The ANC supports the Budget Vote. Thank you very much.

Mr D BERGMAN: Hon Chair, I would like to say we pray for peace and calm in the Middle East. We place a value on all lives and

one life or injury is one too many. The DA reiterates its call for a Two-State solution. Diplomacy helps its countries to build relationships that could assist in the advancement of technology, stimulation of trade and to keep peace.

Unfortunately, South Africa delvers in clarity between its internal culture and its external policies. When it comes to being the champion of human rights it would be more credible and appreciated if South Africa was more consistent.

In Africa we fight for countries like Western Sahara but you remain silent, on our neighbour in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Uganda and Cameroon. We fight for countries outside but remain silent on the treatments of the Igbos and the Yugos. This could lead many people wondering what is it that is driving the foreign affairs of South Africa? Is it blind loyalty, is it a policy that continues to stay stoic and refuses to just look in the future?

At one stage we could have set our relationship with Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, Brics but that seems to have seen somewhat. Maybe someone finally realised that we were heading for our next era of colonisation. It just goes to say that South Africa has been spending millions upon millions

to all these organisations and yet when it comes to Covid-19 at home it seems that we learnt who our real friends are. By now we should know that these organisation we should not have belonged to them and our monies could be better spent domestically.

We should also prioritise our delegation accordingly saving our best for the best. With regards to the Department of International Relations and Co-operations, we have a director- general who has been suspended for the New York shenanigans.

But I remember a few weeks the Minister went to great lengths to point out that she never said that the director-general was suspended for that reason and through her spokesperson under the bus for daring to allegedly say that it was that reason.

The CFO who was there at the time has been suspended but obviously when your subordinates are investigating you and having to find against you, you are pretty safe. There are no surprises as to why the CFO is still there. Department of International Relations and Co-operations has now become a Hollywood blockbuster with a whole lot of actors; an acting DG, an acting CFO. What we need is the people who are going to

act for the best interest of the public and start servicing the public at our missions abroad.

We have a second biggest footprint but we are ... [Inaudible.]

... to the services of the foreign affairs. When they decide to process passports, ID document and other documents, it is a thumb suck guess on its own. When Department of International Relations and Co-operations finally gets the diplomatic bags delivered is another mystery all on its own. In the end we had these lovely looking officers with tired and battered looking officials that can only rarely offer our citizens excuses and half-baked smiles.

When we have a joint committee in the interest of our citizens abroad, some people would come here and talk about the punishment of closing embassies would scare us all; they thought. When they saw China had recalled their ambassador.

The DA has been calling for the decreasing of our footprints and consular where it does not make any sense, cost, technology or trade wise.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Hon Bergman, just a second, I see a hand here.

Mr A H M PAPO: Hon House Chairperson, on a point of order: I wanted to check if the hon member is prepared to take a question on his pro-Israel right wing views?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Hon member, are you prepared to take a question?

Mr D BERGMAN: I do not think that the hon member was listening. It was a very balanced deal but now, no I am not prepared to take a question; he was not listening.

It should be something that is fair to the oversight committee for comments and inputs before it became a decision.

Unfortunately, with our current track record, we are bound to be to close embassies that are beneficial to trade and technology or those that are Visa intensive causing more burden to the citizens of our country in terms of job losses, lack of tourism and in trade.

You cannot expect much more from our country when around 75% of our heads of mission are political appointees. Most of our officials in the department are career diplomats and they hold up a lot of our functions and these require specialisations

that could help South Africa protects itself from ourselves. Thank you very much.

Mr D W MACPHERSON: Hon House Chairperson, on a point of order: Hon chair, I did not want to disturb the hon member while he was on the floor but really if hon Papo want to please ask silly questions, he must that in terms of the law and not do that by casting aspersions on members, thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Thank you, hon member.

Ms T P MSANE: Hon House Chairperson, we are having this debate at a very critical moment for world peace. The apartheid and criminal state of Israel is bombing and killing Palestinian women and children as we speak. Beyond the huge rhetoric condemning the criminal state of Israel and the murderous conduct of Benjamin Netanyahu, the country has not done anything that will materially show our support to the people of Palestine.

The UN Security Council, UNSC met a few days ago in the meeting that was requested by China in order to discuss the killings of Palestinians by the apartheid state of Israel. All

African leaders have chosen to remain absolutely silent in this matter. South Africa is continuously making meaningless noise here in the country but continues to house Israel within our borders and in our land. Minister, is there something that we are not aware of? Is South Africa owing its allegiance to the apartheid state of Israel? Why are you steadfast of keeping the embassy of these murderers in our country? What does having a mission or embassy in a country truly mean?

We want the South African government to recall our ambassador to Israel and close the Israel embassy here for good. Well, closer to home, we have allowed our neighbour in Mozambique to be infiltrated by terrorists and we have folded our arms in a growing security and humanitarian disaster in Mozambique. A strategic meeting that should have taken place, the SADC Troika summit which was meant to bring assistance in saving lives of Mozambique had to be cancelled as the President of South Africa was busy answering to questions of the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture.

How is the country of the African continent meant to have better life when their leaders have demons they need to rid themselves of? We need to act to stop the rapid increase of

terrorism in Mozambique because inevitably this will spill over into our country. South Africa has been privileged to lead the African country in many strategic bodies such as being the president of the UNSC in December 2020, The African Union Chamber in 2020 and also being the non-permanent member of the UNSC in more than three terms. That is just mentioning the few. However, South Africa has not advocated for any structural changes to these important bodies.

The UNSC remains unreformed; the African Union has not met any of its Agenda 2063 targets; and insurgencies and political instabilities continue to rise with no tangible solutions in place. African states continue to rely on private military security run by apartheid agencies and the United States Africa Command, US Africom. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement, ACFTA, will remain in its implementation stage and not be fully implemented for many years to come. This is because the AU suffers from institutional and capacity deficit like that of the African Peace and Security Council, APSC.

Africa is calling on private military security instead of establishing a permanent African defence force to replace the African standby force that was established in terms of article

13 of the protocol relating to the establishment of peace and security council of the African Union. This month is celebrated as Africa Month across the African continent. This year marks 58 years of the formation of the African unity.

The founding fathers of independent African states wanted to unite the continent. They knew then as we know now that Africa will never prosper as long as we are divided. They knew then as we know now that a single prosperous country among the sea of suffering in the continent will never taste true freedom unless all African countries are free, prosperous and free of conflicts.

This is only possible through a united continent under a single federal government with a centrally planned economy, a single defence force, a single reserve bank and an independent judiciary. You have betrayed this ideal, you even betrayed the limited quasi African rhetoric espoused by Thabo Mbeki. Your approach to matters of the continent and the world at large is driven by no single guided vision. You just move along to whatever direction the wind takes you. Well, the EFF rejects this budget, thank you Chairperson.

Mr M HLENGWA: Hon House Chairperson and hon members, at the outset, on behalf of the IFP, let me thank the foreign services officials across the world who have kept the South African flame burning in a very difficult time brought about by COVID-19. During this time, we have also seen the domestic, regional and international inequalities, which have beset the world, forcing us to reimagine how we interact politically, socially, and economically.

The key driver to this new change is, of course, the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, Dirco, which itself is still trying to press the reset button on its own operations, amongst other things. Thus, the failure to implement the foreign services bureau is this systematic problem.

So, we are also calling up again that the rationalisation of the foreign missions, which is currently an exercise underway, to be done with the necessary urgency, as a cost cutting exercise, but without compromising the country's strategic and diplomatic obligations, regionally and internationally.

Speaking about the global inequalities and Dirco being at the central position of these changes, the Minister and the President who recently returned from France, from another summit. What we have seen and evidenced was that yet another country inviting a continent for economic matters. It was nothing short of being naughty school boys being filed into the headmaster's office. That should tell us just how far behind Africa is.

The New York building scandal’s existence has blot on the hopes of the department to achieve a keen audit. And the IFP fundamentally believes that the implementation of the portfolio committee's recommendations in this regard should be followed. Hon House Chairperson, we meet at the time of heightened global instability, and then escalation of violence in the Middle East, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms.

We call for a peaceful resolution to the challenges that beset Israel and Palestine. We called for a ceasefire and we call for a return to the negotiations table to save lives. The situation as it stands is untenable.

In the same vein, we once again draw the attention of this House to the key question of consistency, particularly on issues of human rights. The one China policy exists as an albatross on the South African diplomatic outlook, as the people of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Tibet, and many around the world continue to want to have their own independence and self-determination, free off the clutches of China. This is something which we must take with the seriousness that it deserves.

Hon House Chairperson, bring it closer to home. There is a collapse and dysfunctionality of the domestic and regional intelligence services, as evidenced by the terror attacks which we witnessed in Mozambique. Notwithstanding, the fact that warnings in this regard had been given to South Africa and the region. Yet again, we are playing a game of catch up to the very advanced terrorist networks, which beset the global community.

For South Africa to prosper on the international stage, we need to begin doing things right here at home as well. The Minister speaks about budget cuts, which of course have happened. However, if you don't want those budget cuts, we

need economic growth and economic development, so that we can be able to pull together the necessary economic resources to fund our international initiatives.

Therefore, it is important that we find a healthy balance: Between our domestic country responsibilities and obligations; and our international outlook of South Africa that plays a pivotal role in the global community.

All these things said, we do need to reimagine how we do things for the greater good, and that begins with doing things right here at home. Charity begins at home, if we want to be impactful on the global stage. I thank you.

Dr C P MULDER: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Minister and members, the Covid-19 pandemic will have an effect on South Africa and all South Africans for a very long time to come. The question is: What role could and should the Department of International Relations Co-operation play in assisting us to get through this new reality?

It is good to have key priority areas for the next five years, such as enhancing the African agenda and sustainable

development, as well as participating in the global system of governance. However, they should not and cannot be our main focus. These priorities are nice to have, but not things we can’t do without. A mind focus should be on what is of immediate importance, and without which all other priority areas will become completely irrelevant.

The Department of International Relations and Co-operation should focus in totality on how the department can contribute to the economy, recovery and reconstruction plan for South Africa - to do what: To increase foreign direct investment; to improve South Africa's access to foreign markets; to contribute to increase tourism arrivals in South Africa; and to improve investor confidence. Without that - without huge debt - we are dead in the water!

In my limited time, I would like to touch on a few aspects hon Minister, the department can't afford to spend almost

R1 billion on rentals per annum. This is more than 16% of the total budget. I know that there's a process to scale down on our number of missions abroad, but we just have to go much further, rather than a much smaller but effective

international footprint in those places that really matter. They don't want to start!

I would like to come to the embarrassing case of Adv David Nkosi. A letter was sent to you regarding the news in March 2021 that the South African diplomat left the apartment he occupied in Vienna in such a damaged state, that the estimated cost to repair and restore amounts to around R715 000.

According to the owner of the apartment, Mr Carol Widdy, when the guest moved out in August 2020, all the electrical appliances in the kitchen were destroyed, and all the valuable category was missing. There were no glosses left. The fridge and the microwave were destroyed. The window frames and door frames with damaged. The sink, bowl and toilets were stained. The walls and floors were dirty, stains of black pseud, and the place was infested with cockroaches.

This behavior by a South African diplomat is totally unacceptable and taxpayers should not be burdened with paying for these damages. The department has allegedly launched an investigation to these allegations. The spokesperson from the department said the matter was receiving urgent attention and

an investigation is underway, which will also determine liability. The matter is disgusting and a huge embarrassment for all south Africans when a person representing us abroad behave in this manner. It is not good enough for the department.

If the department is going to pay for the damages, the department will pay with taxpayer's hard earned money. No, we insist that: The culprit that caused it, personally pay for each and every cent; and that all relevant money must be recovered from him. Even if private prosecution may be necessary.

Lastly, I would like to come to the question of Israel and Palestine. It's quite clear that the Minister, as well as the ANC members - and I know the NFP will do the same - and Al Jama-ah will do the same today. Clearly, that gives a lace of solidarity.

I just demonstrated its sort of narrative of the Palestinians and the mass. You said we all watched the vicious attacks by Israel on Palestine. Then you said we stand in full support of Palestine. But, you did not say one single word about the

fact that 4 000 - more than 4 000 - rockets were fired at civilians in Israel: Not only Israeli “We side with the Palestinians. Our support as a country for Palestine is based on principle.”

And then I said don't prepare to play a role through which we could help the two sides to get together. All women in President Ramaphosa are usually to understand that South Africa has zero influence or credibility in the Palestine- Israel conflict. Israel is not the former new national body. They don't have a death wish they do not plan to commit suicide, or they don't want to surrender remember Masada.

So, if you understand that, therefore don't expect any call soon from the Middle East for South Africa to myriad. We have destroyed. We've got no credibility whatsoever. You have sided, you have sided to Palestine and you do not recognise the right of Israel to exist.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Thank you. Who has been making that noise? I couldn't see. Please die refrain from doing that. I unfortunately I'll, I'll ask the, I have to one the person first, so I didn't see the name appearing. I'm

sorry, but I think the table staff can assist me. Don't repeat.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-

OPERATION (Mr A BOTES): House Chair, Minister of Department of International Relations and Co-operation, DIRCO, Dr Pandor, Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini, Chairperson of the portfolio Committee of DIRCO, hon Mahambehlala, hon members, diplomatic community, ladies and gentlemen,

The values that inspires and guides South Africa as a nation are those that we accumulated during decades of struggle for liberation. And we were beneficiaries of many acts of selfless solidarity in the past and therefore, South Africa believes what it wishes for its own people, it is what it wishes for the rest of the world.

As we build back better, our foreign policy therefore, draws on the spirit of internationalism and is intertwined with our pursuit of a better Africa in a better world. As we celebrate 27-years of freedom, as a generation we should always be conscious that there is a dialectical relationship between our

27-years of freedom and the 27-years of imprisonment, which sought to break the resilient spirit of Nelson Mandela.

As we celebrate the silver jubilee of South Africa’s Constitution, we are conscious that the constitutional values embedded in the bill of rights should reflected on the outlook of our foreign policy disposition**.** It therefore holds according to Nelson Mandela that and I quote:

Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.

It therefore holds that the global solidarity and to deepen south to south co-operation become an important attribute in our foreign policy repository.

Today, heralds 119-years of the independence of Cuba from the Spanish Empire and the end of the first US military occupation on 20 May 1902. Cuba remains a site of struggle. It remains a country on which South Africa draws leafs.

We regret therefore, the continuation of unilateral sanctions against Cuba and will continue to support the annual

resolutions in the UN General Assembly, UNGA, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, that includes the Helms-Burton Title III Extra- Territorial Act and it’s a resolution, which will receive South Africa’s unequivocal support. However, we trust that the leadership of President Biden will be inspired by the foreign policy initiative of 2015, when President Obama which authorised a process of back-channel negotiations and normalised diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cuban people and Henry Reeves International Medical Brigades have been an instrumental combination of young people which is firmly embedded within solidarity mantra. Even before the pandemic began, Cuban doctors and health professionals were already providing medical support in 59 countries of the world.

As we build better, we must reiterate our unwavering support for the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and call on the USA to reconsider its stance on Venezuela in light of the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Sanctions and Human rights, Ms Alena Douhan who published her

initial recommendations calling for the lifting of unilateral coercive measures.

Within the Western Hemisphere, the Americas and the Caribbean span a vast geographical area which includes, developing and least developed economies. I must confirm that the United States is a strategic partner for South Africa and our bilateral relationship continues to grow.

We are pleased, therefore, to note that the new administration under the leadership of President Joe Biden, has taken steps to return to the of multilateral fold by re-joining the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organisation, WHO, and a leadership on negating the matter of vaccine nationalism.

The USA and South Africa have quite extensive relations focus in particular around areas of health, education and science. I think this House should note that the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, PEPFAR, allocation by the USA still amounts to USA $465 million and the African Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA, agreement continues to facilitate trade amounting to R173 billion.

As African Diaspora in the Americas, particularly in the Caribbean, continues to be a significant light for South Africa given its historical support for our struggle. Pan Africanism remains an important cornerstone of our foreign policy dispensation.

As we speak about Canada, we are depositing a recognition that Canada have been instrumental in constructing this developmental state and will continue to draw our bilateral relation inspiration from the Canadian people for the construction of a capable and a developmental state as well as the flagship gender empowerment programmes and building social cohesion.

As DIRCO will continue to work to promote trade in Latin America presented by the SACU-Mercosur Preferential Trade Agreement and the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, ASFTA as well as continue to work with co-operation with G20 countries in Latin America, such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

We congratulate Mexico for her re-election to the United Nations Security Council, UNSC, and we will continue to work

with Mexico to advance at a multilateral level the implementation of UNSC Resolution, amongst others 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, as well as UN reform.

Chair, the countries of Western Europe are well-placed to support South Africa’s post-COVID-19 economic recovery. This applies in particular how South Africa are able to harness the South Africa-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement, which is pivotal if we wish to re-imagine a post COVID-19 dispensation. It is evident that this type of partnership will be able to contribute significantly towards the presidential US$100 investment initiative.

The new South Africa-EU Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the period 2021 to 2028, which will be under the European Union, EU’s, newly-created Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument we hope that South Africa will be able key and critical as the EU re-imagine itself up until 2028.

South Africa’s trade relationship with the United Kingdom, UK will continue to deepen and remains unchanged after the UK left the European Union categorised as the Brexit.

As it relates to our comprehensive strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, it resonates quite well with the priorities of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. This includes the possibilities at the bilateral level for industrialisation through localisation, the strengthening of agriculture and food security partnership and the energy security issues.

These will be pursued in earnest as we prepare to host the 16th South Africa-Russia Intergovernmental Trade and Economic Committee, ITEC, later this year. We also as South Africa looking forward to consolidate our Strategic Partnership with Turkey with a view to host the inaugural South Africa-Turkey Binational Commission, BNC, in the near future.

This House should note that South Africa’s relationship with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, OACPS, and specific states to old OACPS has undergone some re- imagination. Most importantly countries from Africa, the Caribbean specifically jointly will be able to re-calibrate its approach towards global governance multilateralism and international partnership as it relates to meeting the goals of the Millennium Development Goals, MDG.

In conclusion, as we build better, this year marks the 60th Anniversary of the Non-Alignment Movement, NAM. The NAM is a structure that sticks deep in the root of struggle and solidarity. It will be Africa’s turn to chair the NAM in 2022. In this regard, Uganda has been endorsed as the incoming chair of NAM and it is expected that the 19th Summit of the NAM will take place in Kampala, Uganda, in 2022.

The AU theme of the year for 2021 was developed by the AU policy organs as: “Arts, Culture and Heritage; Levers for Building the Africa We Want**”.** Charlotte Maxeke posits that and I quote:

Cultural texts are necessarily ambiguous sites in the struggle to confer power over lived experiences … that we need leaders who will humble themselves, so that the nation may lift them up to be the stars of Africa for future generations.

We thank President Ramaphosa as the custodian of South Africa’s foreign policy and constitutional persona, and Dr Pandor, Minister of DIRCO, for her meritorious stewardship in providing leadership to the rest of the world and Africa. We

continue to build better. Thank you very much, hon Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): Thank you hon Botes, you are proudly South African. I like your broj and your tie.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-

OPERATION (Mr A BOTES): And this label also here.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms M G Boroto): And your background too. We proceed as I invite my colleague hon Xasa to take over. The next speaker is hon Mpanza.

Mr T S MPANZA: Thank you, House Chairperson, greetings to the Minister and two Deputy Ministers, the portfolio committee chairperson, hon Thandi Mahambehlala, and the rest of the members of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Co-operation, the achievements of South Africa’s foreign policy since 1994, when the ANC came into power, have enhanced its stature as a member of the international community. These have boosted its political influence and increasing its economic standing to the point of being regarded as a globally significant emerging economy. There is a link between South

Africa’s national interest and Africa’s stability, unity and prosperity. The department should continue placing the advancement of the African agenda at the centre of our foreign policy trajectory. We note with gratitude that the department has had considerable success in promoting the interest of Africa in different forums.

We have noted that South Africa would continue to promote peace and stability on the continent through preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts. We commend the department for ensuring that South Africa remains a power broker for several conflicts in the subregion and on the continent. It continues to participate as a troop-contributing country to AU and UN authorized peacekeeping missions, also being the largest contributor to AU budget and top African contributor to the UN budget.

The committee has noted that South Africa is generally accepted on the continent and around the globe, as an influential state and is the only African country in the G20 and BRICS, as well as being one of the top 10 strategic partners of the EU. The department should ensure that South Africa continues placing the African continent and the global

south on the agenda of BRICS, to synchronize policies, such as Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It has been reported in the annual performance plan, APP, that the continent has witnessed increasing sustainable economic development. This was said to be so, despite remaining pockets of instability and insecurity mainly due to intrastate conflict on the continent. We urge the department to channel its engagement in the continent to the fact that increased growth would be possible if the drivers of growth could change. In our view, manufacturing, infrastructure development, telecommunications, energy, transport, logistics and technology are sectors that have huge investment potential for the continent. The agricultural sector also has the potential to become a driver of economic growth.

Against this background, the department should continue enhancing regional integration with increased and balanced trade within the Southern African Development Community, SADC, and on the continent. This would be achieved through supporting the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, AfCFTA, and promoting greater peace, security and stability on the continent. We view the

establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which entered into force on May 2019, as a key priority of Africa’s Agenda 2063 and a flagship project for the continent. The department should ensure the implementation of the AfCFTA for the prosperity of South Africa, the region and the continent.

The committee notes that there is an increase on the budget allocation for capital projects. However, the committee notes further that the identified state-owned properties for repairs would be for those that are still occupied, and mostly these properties are in Europe. We urge the department to prioritize those in Africa, in line with our foreign policy.

In conclusion, hon Minister, the intended reduction of missions should not impact on South Africa’s missions in Africa. Infrastructure projects planned should prioritize missions in Africa. Land parcels and state-owned properties abroad donated by friendly countries should be given the necessary attention and put back to a state where they can be used to accommodate officials and chanceries abroad, especially in Africa.

Our clarion call as South Africa is that South Africa and Africa in general, would not be free or enjoy freedom until Cuba is free. South Africa would not enjoy its freedom until the people of the Western Sahara are free. South Africa would not enjoy its freedom until the Palestinian people are free. I thank you, House Chairperson.

Ms B SWARTS: Thank you, House Chair, the ANC 2019 election manifesto has reaffirmed the priority of building a better Africa and a better world. The priority was further outlined in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTSF, adopted by government as the seventh one. Furthermore, in his state of the nation address, President Ramaphosa elaborated on this priority as one of the key deliverables of government in this financial year and beyond.

The advancement of our foreign policy objectives in general and the achievement of this 7th priority of government specifically requires a department with requisite skills and capacity to operate in a dynamic and complex international environment. Therefore, a dynamic, agile and capable human resource at the disposal of the department is imperative to achieve South Africa’s national interest.

As a committee, we have noted that due to the ceiling imposed on the compensation of employees, the department is not able to fill vacancies to replace the employees who leave the department due to old age and other natural attrition factors. We are therefore supporting the Minister in her attempt to review the department organisational structure to reposition it in line with the available resources without compromising delivery of its mandate. The reality is that the Department of International Relations and Co-operation is one of the departments that are highly human resource intensive. It is against this background that the portfolio committee has urged the department to expedite finalisation of review of the departmental organisational structure and prioritise the filling of critical posts aligned to the implementation of the Foreign Service Act that was passed by Parliament at the beginning of the Sixth Administration.

Hon members, we have been briefed during the tabling of the department’s revised strategic plan and the annual performance plan, that the department has undertaken to build a modern effective department with capable and skilled employees, that are committed to the excellent execution of South Africa’s foreign policy, with the Diplomatic Academy being central in

creating a foreign service training for a capable foreign service. The department should not dare fail in this noble objective.

House Chair, in our engagements with the department, there are a number of recommendations which we have made for the department to implement. This includes, amongst others, the implementation of effective financial management through the application of sound financial management systems, including management, and financial accounting, as well as supply chain management.

We are alive to the reality that this Budget Vote and the budget in general is presented under very difficult socioeconomic situations, both in our country and over the world. In this case we acknowledge the inevitable reprioritization within the budget. We reiterate the view of the portfolio committee. The committee was encouraged by the department’s commitment and resolve to achieve its strategic objectives albeit within the budgetary constraints. We further acknowledge that the budget would still be further affected by the imminent foreign exchange currency fluctuations and unavoidable and unforeseen mandates and responsibilities in

its diplomatic endeavors and conduct of international relations.

In conclusion, we would like to urge the department to continue improving its internal controls and its audit outcome following its achievement to have a credible asset register in the last financial year. In addition, we implore the department to implement consequence management in incidences where there were financial misconduct cases and matters related to maladministration. I submit that the ANC supports Budget Vote 6 of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-

OPERATION (Ms K C Mashego-Dlamini): Thank you very much, House Chair. Minister Pandor, Chair of the portfolio committee, hon Mahambehlala, hon members, ladies and gentlemen, hon House Chair, during this financial year, the department will focus on the following objectives in line with the government’s Medium-Term Strategic Framework for 2019–2024: Increase Foreign Direct Investment into South Africa and Africa, improve South African access to foreign markets, contribute to

increased tourism arrivals to South Africa, and improve investor confidence.

In our five-year strategic plan, we have said that we are striving towards a united and a politically cohesive continent that works towards shared prosperity and sustainable development, enhanced regional integration with increased and balanced trade within the Southern African Development Community, SADC, and on the continent by supporting the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent and using South Africa’s membership and engagements in various international forums to advance the African Agenda. We are pursuing these objectives in a global environment that continues to grapple with the effects of the coronavirus disease 2019, Covid-19. We are making use of innovative ways, such as digital diplomacy, to achieve our objectives within the global environment that continues to grapple with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I have taken serious note of the audit opinions presented by the office of the Auditor-General on the department, and we are attending to the matters raised. For example, we are

working on a property management strategy to move away from rentals to developing properties on state-owned land for our missions abroad and the residences of our diplomats. Hon House Chair, in his first speech to the United Nations as President of a free and democratic South Africa, delivered in October 1994, President Nelson Mandela said, I quote:

South Africa will help to create for themselves and all humanity a common world of peace and prosperity.

This is a mission we continue to pursue, especially on our continent. In our own neighbourhood, we continue to focus not only on the situation in Mozambique, as alluded by our Minister, but we also remain seized with the political and security situation in the Kingdom of Lesotho. We cannot overemphasise the importance of a stable, secure and prosperous Lesotho. It is our mutual interest as South Africans and Basotho that our neighbourhood is safe and secure.

You will recall that His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, in his capacity as the SADC Facilitator to the Kingdom of Lesotho, appointed a Facilitation Team led by retired Deputy

Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke, assisted by three Deputy Ministers, to support him in his facilitation in the Kingdom of Lesotho as per the decision of the SADC Double Troika Summit, held in Luanda, Republic of Angola, in April 2018. The 40th Ordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and government, held virtually on 17 August 2020, decided that the role of the SADC Facilitator, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, should continue.

The summit also recognised the important role played by the SADC Facilitation Team to the Kingdom of Lesotho, leading to the inauguration of the National Reforms Authority on 6 February 2020, which will manage, co-ordinate and lead the national reform process from October 2020 until September 2021, with a possible extension until April 2022, if circumstances require. The latest visit by the SADC Facilitation Team to Maseru in the Kingdom of Lesotho, took place from 11 to 13 March this year. The objectives of the visit to Maseru was to receive a status update on the implementation of the reform process since the last visit in October 2020. The current mandate of the SADC Facilitation Team to the Kingdom of Lesotho is valid until the next SADC Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and government in August

2021, where the facilitator is required to report on the status of this processes.

Hon House Chair, in July, the Republic of South Sudan will mark 10 years of its existence. South Africa enjoys cordial bilateral relations with South Sudan and the two countries have a long-standing historical relationship that pre-dates South Sudan’s independence from the Republic of Sudan in July 2011. An agreement establishing official bilateral relations was signed in September 2012. In 2019, South Africa committed to provide humanitarian assistance to the Republic of South Sudan through the African Renaissance Fund in the form of food aid and medical supplies. These initiatives were intended to address socioeconomic challenges facing vulnerable communities, including the refugees and internally displaced persons, comprising mainly of women and children who were negatively affected by the conflict in South Sudan. The last intervention we made was to send a consignment of food items donated by the South African government to the people of South Sudan. This humanitarian aid package formed part of a series of other interventions by South Africa towards alleviating the humanitarian challenges facing the people of South Sudan.

At the request of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, hon David Mabuza, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, in his capacity as the Presidential Special Envoy to the Republic of South Sudan, was invited to facilitate a series of meetings between the parties to the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to resolve the impasse. His mediation efforts significantly contributed towards an amicable political settlement among the signatories to the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. On 22 February 2020, the parties of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan reached an agreement, which paved the way for the establishment of a Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity. On 22 February this year, the country marked the first anniversary of the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity.

Hon House Chair, the Middle East region is very important economically. Our trade with the Middle East for 2020 amounted to R122 billion. There has been export growth in a number of key areas, particularly in agricultural products such as live animals, citrus, nuts and vegetables. We are also exporting

precious metals, iron, steels, aircraft and machinery to a number of countries in this region. South Africa is intensifying its economic diplomacy efforts, and we are looking at some of the economies that continue to grow despite the difficulties associated with Covid-19. Some of these are found in Asia. South Africa’s bilateral trade with India amounted to R108,7 billion in 2020. There are more than 130 Indian companies present in South Africa. Our strategic partnership has important dimensions beyond the bilateral facets, and also relates to multilateral institutions, of which both countries are members. These institutions include the Group of Twenty, G20, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, Brics, and India, Brazil and South Africa, IBSA.

Hon House Chair, I wish to conclude by appraising Parliament on the important work that department does to provide assistance to the South Africans in distress abroad. Following the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic early last year, we set up a Consular Incident Command Centre in order to facilitate assistance to South African citizens who found themselves stranded abroad due to unforeseen circumstances and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the other instance was during the insurgence attack in Mozambique. During the 2020-21

financial year, the total number of consular cases attended to were approximately 700. In dealing with South African citizens in distress abroad, it became evident that the concept of consular services was misunderstood by the South African society and many of our citizens are unfamiliar with the nature of assistance they can expect when stranded, destitute and distressed abroad hence the ongoing need to encompass consular awareness campaigns, especially for citizens travelling abroad.

The department has created an application for South Africans to register themselves during a major disaster, be it natural or manmade, so that an accurate database of South African citizens globally can be maintained. This database will assist to expedite the process and time to render consular assistance to our citizens abroad. The training phase of this application will commence during the course of this current financial year. These are some of the measures to ensure that we remain of service to South African citizens wherever they find themselves in the world.

Finally, House Chair, let me say that South Africa is committed to remain an influential actor and partner on the

international stage, while effectively contributing to the delivery of the country’s domestic priorities and advancement of the African Agenda. I call on this House to adopt the budget of this department. I thank you.

Mr M CHETTY: House Chairperson, Minister, Deputy Minister, chair of the portfolio committee, fellow members, Minister Pandor, your statement during your recent interview with ENCA, all corrupt ANC officials must go to jail. Two discrepancies caught my eye. Firstly, what about the corrupt ANC politicians, surely they could also go to jail as well.

Secondly, allow me to correct you as you were quoted, it is not that President Ramaphosa who is trying ... [Audible.] ... to the absence of ethics and integrity in the country. The absence of ethics and integrity with the ANC. You also further stated that the president has resolute in his intention to adjust malfeasance prevalent in our country. Again, it is not to malfeasance prevalent in our country, but within your ANC. This corruption and corrupt officials you speak about is not a South African problem, Minister, it is an ANC problem.

Minister Pandor, talk is cheap. You have failed to take action when the behaviour tantamount to insubordination of the current suspended Department of International Relations and

Co-operation’s chief financial officer, CFO, Caiphus Ramashau which was imported here in 2019 after his inappropriate behaviour when he lied to the portfolio committee and dismissed staff members before they can appear before the committee. It was only the DA has put pressure you, you succumbed and suspended the CFO after two months ago.

Minister, after continued pressure from the DA regarding the highly controversial R118 million New York pilot project, you have suspended other senior officials. Minister, contrary to your opening statement, no one has been charged in your department for this fruitless and wasteful expenditure as exposed by the Auditor-General in 2016. Clearly Minister, you are not stepping aside by side stepping the issues.

Furthermore, the DA has now indicated in our call that the appointment of ambassadors should be the responsibility of Parliament, and not the President.

The Zondo Commission has exposed the flaws and concerns raised by the DA as the President uses this power to disperse political patronage as retirement packages for disgraced comrades. Specific mention was made of the ambassadorship appointment of the disgraced ... [Inaudible.] ...who

immediately after intentional embarrassing Gupta’s Waterkloof saga, he was appointed as an ambassador to Denmark. Once again Minister, you failed to act and act decisively in the portfolio committee that commented and support adopted by this Parliament to suspend the ambassador Jerry Matjila for his misconduct who incidentally was also appointed as the ambassador to New York, immediately after the R118 million New York pilot project debacle in 2016. This is yet another act of dispensing political patronage to comrades, Minister.

Clearly, there must be something in the Zondo Commission that ambassadors donate a portion of their salaries to the ANC – not as a donation as implied by the President during the ... [Inaudible.] ... at the Zondo Commission recently, but has paid it back to the ANC for this lucrative deployment. The law-abiding South African citizens are sick and tired of the corrupt ANC and abuse by senior politicians and officials who through the ANC cadre deployment committee had plundered the coffers of the whole country.

Minister, this time around, not a friend ... [Inaudible.] ... would be able to allow you to spin the corrupt antics of your corrupt ANC from deceiving the South African public and

international world anymore. And at the polls, on 27 October, the South African public will punish your ANC at the ballot boxes and vote for change to save South Africa from this corrupt ANC. I thank you.

Mr B S NKOSI: Chairperson, democracy is defined by the principles of representative and public participatory democracy. The legitimacy of our policies is enhanced by ownership and participations of members of the public, both in the formulation of and execution of policy. This is consistent with the nature and character of the ANC which at all times engage with society in formulating its policies as well as implementation.

The principle of Batho Pele ensures that at the centre of any development, the people are the driving force and the terms of reference of anything that we do resonates with them. An effective public policy provides the groundwork necessary to forge links between the state and society in order to legitimise the acceptance of the country’s foreign policy and its actions. Public diplomacy further includes the communication of our policy, its priority objectives through direct and indirect communication using various media

platforms including face-to-face communication – a new social media. In what is an all-inclusive transparency with the view to share a debate and an understanding of our policies and our role at an international level, including in economic relations. The Department of International Relations and Co- operation continues to work towards an increased understanding of South Africa’s foreign policy engagements by both local and international audiences. The department use various platforms to involve the public including though engaging political office bearers in media briefings. Our communication of these policies is further enhanced by foreign policy think tanks who provide both critical analysis and assessment of our foreign policies as well as new knowledge on international relations which may in one way or the other influence the state in executing policy.

The department also offers protocol services on a continuous basis to facilitate the arrival and departure of dignitaries through the state protocol services. The Department of International Relations and Co-operation render consular assistance to South Africans travelling, working, studying and living abroad. Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent nationwide lockdown, the department has

continued to provide consular assistance to South African citizens abroad who due to unforeseen circumstances and events became stranded and distressed, and even destitute as a result of the pandemic and the global lockdowns that were to follow.

This consular support is provided to South African citizens even during any other time they require that support whether or not there is COVID-19. In the recent past we have witnessed how our consular support - especially in the US – assisted with the repatriation of one of our compatriots who lost his life tragically in the United States allegedly in the hands of the police.

We take this opportunity to send our heartfelt condolences to the family of Mr Myeni. We commend the role played by our ambassadors and consular services to ensure a dignified return of the remains of Mr Myeni to his family and his beloved ones, notwithstanding a marginal decrease in the allocation to the programme public diplomacy which may lastly be due to COVID-19 health protocols which discourage face-to-face interactions.

We believe that the department will find alternative ways of engaging with both local and international audiences to

communicate pour foreign policy priorities in this term. This may include utilisation of what is seen or termed the digital diplomacy that we are beginning into. We urge South Africans to take serious interest in the trajectory that our country is taking in international political environment. The ANC supports Budget Vote No 6 - International Relations and Co- operation. Thank you.

Mr M G E HENDRICKS: House Chair, the Cabinet has issued a statement to condemn Israel. President Ramaphosa has also condemned Israel in a special presidential statement. The Chairperson of the portfolio committee of International relations today has vehemently condemned Israel and called it an apartheid state. It is a revolutionary duty to support this budget. ... [Inaudible.] ... support the charge laid by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation with the International Criminal Court that Israel committed a crime against humanity by killing in air strike eight children at the Al-Shati refugee camp. Let us honour these victims. The

Al-Shati camp eight: Suhayb al-Hadidi who was 14-years-old, Yahya al-Hadidi who was 11-years-old, Abderrahman al-Hadidi who was eight-years old, Osama al-Hadidi who was six-years- old.

Rev K R J MESHOE: Chairpersons, a very dangerous situation is developing in neighbouring Mozambique, yet our government has said and done very little to bring peace to the area, or to prepare for a possible influx of refugees should the situation worsen. President Ramaphosa, on the other hand has written a letter about the current Middle East crisis. He said, amongst others, that intractable conflicts can only be solved through peaceful negotiations, but take sides and refuse to condemn the more than 3 500 rockets that have been fired from Gaza into Israel’s densely populated residential areas to maim and kill as many innocent women and children as possible.

The ACDP condolences goes to the families of the more than

200 victims of the current violence in both Palestine and Israel. We find it hypocritical that some from the international community, including South Africa would condemn Israel for using their air power in response to the thousands of rockets fired by Hamas and its associates into Israel. Why are they refusing to condemn Hamas for their aggression and their rockets?

The ACDP condemns such hypocrisy. We would also like to affirm

Israel’s rights to defend herself against any foreign

aggression and to live within safe and secure borders. Taking the Palestinians side in the conflict will never bring peace in the Middle East. It will only prolong and increase the violence, and it also disqualifies South Africa from being a credible mediator in the conflict. Ladies and gentlemen, the fact is that nobody can succeed to destroy Israel while the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is alive. He said that no weapon formed against Israel, His people, shall prosper.

The ACDP is concerned with what appears to be the department’s refusal to be transparent in some matters, particularly in the New York pilot project matter. Among the findings of the portfolio committee’s fact-finding mission to New York was that there is strong likelihood of wrongdoing in the pilot project. Questions around the R118 million that was paid on the basis of misrepresentation to the department have not been answered.

The portfolio committee further saw a need for an investigation to determine the root causes of all the noncompliance areas around the New York pilot project. To our dismay, and while waiting for the investigation, Director- General Kgabo Mahoai, who was not a director-general during

the negotiations and payment of the R180 million for what was supposed to be a piece of land was suspended by the Minister and until today, we don’t know why. The ACDP would ensure that this matter will not be swept under the carpet and Director- General Mahoai would not be made a scapegoat in matters of corruption. Until all questions around the New York pilot project are satisfactorily answered and that there is full transparency in the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, the ACDP will not support Budget Vote No 6.

Thank you

Mr D L MOELA: House Chair, hon Minister, Deputy Ministers, the chairperson of the portfolio committee, all hon members present here today, distinguished guests, thank you so much.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen many difficult events unfolding in the international system. But few strike to the heart of the progressive movement around the world like the plight of the Palestinian people. The situation in Palestine makes us all question the significance and the effectiveness of the global system of governance. The world is watching as people of Palestine endures a continuous onslaught by the Israel Defense Forces. The question that arises is that how long should the people of Palestine suffer whole the world

watches. The Palestinian Ambassador to the United Nations, UN, Riyad Mansour said it best when he asked a simple question and I quote:

Where should the weak and the poor go? The UN is supposed to be the house for all people. It is supposed to be the house for the vulnerable.

He went further on to say and I quote: “If the UN cannot support the vulnerable, then what is the business of the UN?’ Hon members and House chair, we must not forget the words of Ambassador Riyad Mansour when we reflect on the effectiveness of the united nations. Our conviction is that International Relations and Co-operation should contribute to the world peace not the other way round. Our frim believe is that international conflicts must be resolved peacefully within the parameters of multirealism.

To this end, we encourage hon Minister for the departmental commitments to the following priorities, especially for Africa 2020-21 financial year, that a united and political cohesion continent that works towards a shared prosperity and sustainable development, and further than that enhance

regional integration with increased and balanced trade within the Southern African Development Community, SADC, and of the continent by supporting the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and again promotion of greater peace, security, stability on the continent.

Lastly, using the South African membership and engagements in various international forums to advance the African Agenda. We remain committed to the Ezulwini Consensus which calls for more representatives and democratic security council in which Africa, like all other world regions, is represented. Our advantage of the foreign policy objective requires that we should form part and participate in alliance with other countries to develop a common consensus in addressing international ... [Inaudible.]. This also include the Alliance for Socioeconomic Issues, one of the key deliverable for this financial year will be around the participation of the Southern African Development Community which is SADC organ on politics, defence and security co-operation, the Troika, as an incoming chairperson of the SADC organ.

Our relationship with SADC from part of our commitment to the African Agenda and that of the regional integration. In

addition to support of the African Agenda, we continue to advocate for the strengthening of South Africa Development Co- operation and in our approach to international politics. We also strive for the strengthening and maintaining of the

North-South co-operation.

This represent an aspiration of the reality of the global politics and it is in line with the committee’s view that South Africa should maintain relations with the Global South and maintain historical relation with countries of the north. It is understandable that the work of the department, with regards to its international co-operation continues to be affected by the global pandemic.

However, the use of digital diplomacy has ensured that international co-operation continues to be advanced through technological platforms. The portfolio committee has affirmed that the partnership such as the International Political Science Association, Ipsa, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, Iora, and Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Brics, remains relevant to the international interest of South Africa and the African Agenda. All Brics countries are committed to

Brics Bank and South Africa welcomes the effort of the Brics bank in assisting South Africa with the impact of COVID-19.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our view that the department enhances the management of its assets to the contribution to the image of the country as it pursues its national interest. Furthermore, the department must address its administrative challenge in ensuring that it is able to effectively achieve its mandate.

I just want to remind my fellow hon member Chetty that maybe today he is lost. Today we are debating Budget Vote No 6, we were not debating something else. Probably, you have listened to the minister today while she was addressing the media.

Today you were totally lost hon Chetty. We were debating Budget Vote No 6 of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation. Therefore, the ANC supports Budget Vote No 6 the Department of International Relations and Co-operation.

Thank you so much, House Chair.

Mr A M SHAIK-EMAM: Chairperson, the NFP supports your Budget Vote. I have a very simple message today and particularly to the rogue state of apartheid Zionist Israel and the rogue

elements of the DA, FF Plus and of course the ACDP who will sell its soul just to maintain some level of relevance in society.

Palestine shall be free. Palestine will be free. Free Palestine! Free Palestine! Free Palestine! Free Palestine! Free Palestine! Free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Palestine shall be free. Palestine will be free.

Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free, Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Palestine shall be free. Palestine will be free. Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free. Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Palestine shall be free. Palestine will be free. Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Palestine shall be free. Palestine will be free.

Palestine will be free. Palestine will be free. Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine!

Palestine shall be free. Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Palestine will be free. Free, free Palestine! Free,

free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Free, free Palestine! Long live the people of Palestine. Thank you.

Mr W F FABER: Thanks, hon Chair, thank you members, now, let us look at how we are doing so far under the ANC government during the last few years. President Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance Fund was a call for the economical regeneration of the African continent by providing humanitarian assistance to struggling countries.

This African Renaissance Fund now became an open wallet for the Department of International Relations and Co-operation paid by the South African taxpayer. A few years ago, an internal audit found R530 million had been irregularly spent. The New Partnership for Africa's Development, Nepad, provided information showing that more than R770 million of South Africa state fund has been used to prop up rogue states and countries and that had a history of human rights abuses or non-democratically elected governments.

While Zimbabwe received R600 million from the African Renaissance Fund, even though the committee at that time had

heard that South Africa did not even track how this fund was spent. Now, for those of you who don't know yet, Cuba is also part of the African continent. Yes. You heard me correctly.

It's the only country outside Africa that also benefits from this African Renaissance Fund. Now, the Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, made it very clear in his Budget speech this year that we owe a lot of people a lot of money that we don't have. But during this time, when South Africa is borrowing money from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to respond to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, it's at the same time making generous donations for medical material supplies, with tens of millions of rand to the Cuban government.

The African Renaissance Fund recently also made available a loan package to Cuba of $140 million. This is just over

R2 billion. This history with Cuba comes a long way since as in 2010, a debt of R1,1 billion owed by Cuba to South Africa for diesel engines bought was just scrapped and cancelled. The ANC government also brought in doctors and engineers from Cuba while we have enough health workers and qualified engineers ourselves unemployed sitting at home.

Is this ANC government looking at the interest of our people first? Obviously not. I believe that the African Renaissance Fund should be put directly under the Treasury to stop abusing the taxpayers' money. And for now, rather look at South Africa’s health first by providing enough COVID-19 vaccines in time to our citizens. And in conclusion, the chaos in the ANC is affecting our country to the point of no return. The Secretary-General of the ANC, Ace Magashule has put South Africa in an international predicament by maintaining that he suspended the President of South Africa. And now it becomes clear every day that the ANC government should use their step- aside clause and step aside to let the DA govern well. I thank you.

Mr X NQOLA: House Chair, members of the executive, members of the portfolio committee, officials of the department, hon members, good afternoon in this Budget Vote debate, the value of any budget and allocation is not only on the amount of money allocated but also on how the funds are dispersed and utilised. We often talk of the concept of value for money.

Budget allocations are good as to how they are managed and utilised.

The main objective of the Public Finance Management Act is to regulate financial management in the national government and provincial government; To ensure that all revenue expenditure assets and liabilities of those governments are managed efficiently and effectively to provide for the responsibilities of persons entrusted with financial management in those government. The Auditor-General further recommends that all role players in the national and provincial government should continue to work together to strengthen the capacity, processes and controls of departments and public entities which will enable and financial and performance and reporting compliance with key legislation, sound financial management and the delivery of services. Sound financial planning and management for any business or any state entity are more than just keeping an accurate set of books or balancing your double-entry accounts to zero. Finance is the lifeline of a business or a state institution. So any state institution that mismanages its financial aspects has no chance of standing over the long haul.

Sound financial management involves a deliberate and consistent control of all income, expenditure, asset and liability potential to ensure not only the sustainability and

profitability but also the efficiency of the state institution. As a portfolio committee, we have engaged with the department in our Budget Review and Recommendations Report on matters relating to irregular, unauthorised, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

The department has provided an account of gaps with regard to areas that require tighter financial controls. We welcome the fact that investigations are undertaken on incidences of financial irregularities. As part of the interventions by the department, as a portfolio committee, we have made a number of recommendations to which the department committed to implement to ensure sound financial management. Amongst these recommendations they include; the need to maintain the standard of unqualified audit opinion on performance reporting and apply the strategies to be used to improve the financial reporting; immediately conduct a forensic investigation into unexplained transactions totalling and report to the committee on the findings, recommendations and the implementation thereof; to consider approaching the Office of the Accountant- General in the National Treasury to conduct a thorough competence assessment of the finance function as well as provide support to the identified skills deficiencies in the

finance branch; to recruit new employees, including qualified accountants, including personnel accredited by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in the near future or through other means; to conduct a skills audit in the finance branch to determine whether there is appropriate capacity; to capacitate the branch accordingly to address the root causes and rooting out qualified audit opinions.

We are re-emphasising these recommendations because they will remain part of our focus in this financial year through our oversight role on the department. We are doing this to ensure that there are no leakages in the system which may deprive the provision of services to our people. The ANC indeed supports this Budget Vote, hon House Chair. Indeed, let me follow on from hon Moela, it is not only hon Chetty that was out of tune, hon Faber, just before me, just came here and said nothing but we are not surprised because they are following the tune of their boss which is John Steenhuisen who is the most illiterate and confused man in the world. Thank you very much, hon Chair.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon

Chairperson, thank you very much. I wish to thank all the hon

members that have made a contribution to the debate, in particular, I want to thank the hon Mahambehlala, for her leadership of the portfolio committee and the advice that she constantly provides both to the ministry and the department, alongside very robust oversight. Chairperson, we are working hard to finalise all regulations and directives, redefine the following oversight, as highlighted by the Chairperson, Mahambehlala.

We are also redrafting the ... [Inaudible.] ... Bill, in order to address concerns raised by Cabinet with the original draft Bill. We certainly confirm to all members that raised this matter that no closure of a mission in Africa is currently in our plans. I am choosing my words carefully, Chairperson, because, situations or financials constraints may change from time to time, and so, while Africa remains fully covered by us, I am saying currently there is no plan to close any embassy on the Continent.

We do support the objectives that the hon Chair referred to including, continuing to work on the security council reform agenda, despite the massive resistance that I referred to. Hon Chairperson, I wish to repeat that South Africa’s government,

the ANC in its policy, have always supported the two states solution in the Middle East challenge that all of us have referred to, today. We will not dessert Palestine, nor the surge for freedom. This does not, in any way, have an anti- Semitic intention of creating an impression that we are against the existence of the state of Israel.

So, hon Meshoe and his new friends are totally mistaken in their view that we do not hold to a two-state solution. We held on to it before they enter politics, and we will still be holding to it when they exited politics. Chairperson, I also want to welcome the remarks made by the hon Mpanza, particularly, his reiteration of the important need to ensure that we focus on productive capacity in Africa on digitalisation on modernising agriculture and growing it for agro-processing and export, and ensuring that the Free Trade Act is utilised for expanding African growth.

I do confirm to the hon Mpanza that, the property management portfolio is being attended to, and that we will take the steps that he and the Chairperson, hon Swarts and other hon members have referred to, including hon Mulder, of ensuring that we reduce the funding that we are directing towards the

rental costs. Indeed, I agree with the hon Mulder that, those members of the department who incur costs through damage to property for the department, should in future be responsible and the ones who pay such costs.

We are amending our rules in this regard to ensure that the responsible party bears that particular type of costs. Of course, we continue to be committed to the freedom of the people of Western Sahara, their self-determination, which they have fought for, so hard. I thank the hon Botes, particularly, for the attention to the regions that he referred to, that he gives in the work that he has been assigned, the work with

Cuba, Venezuela, his work in the Non-Aligned Movement, NAM, the important contributions he has made, as we seek to reform the old African, Caribbean and Pacific, ACP, into a new body more responsive to development priorities.

I am also so grateful that the hon Botes reiterated the AU theme of 2021, because it resonates with our focus on culture and heritage that we wish to strengthen and endorse. I thank hon Deputy Minister Mashego-Dlamini for the hard work she does, in support of the Deputy President as envoy of the President to South Sudan and I have seen him dancing as the

humanitarian aid arrived. I thank her for the support to the facilitator in Lesotho, and all the work she does to support us in our African agenda.

I wish to really thank all the speakers of the ANC, for their important contributions, and I thank the hon Swarts in particular, for recognising that we are working hard to review our organisational structure. It’s not easy to try to balance costs, alongside retaining your staff and in particular, strengthening your talent pool. We will all report to the portfolio committee as we finalise this work. We also do agree that hon Chetty has clearly watched a very old interview, and because he didn’t have much to contribute, he had to use it here, including directing some pointed insults to me.

Unfortunately, I didn’t know that an insult is the last refute

of a scandal, so, I will not take his remarks seriously. However, I do thank the hon Bergman for commenting and affirming that the DA is committed to a two-state solution. We are consistent in our approach, and we do pay attention to Zimbabwe. We have made clear statements on the suffering of the Rohingya and we objected to the coup *Myanmar. So, we don’t*

*reserve ourselves to one part of the world, we are attentive to all international issues.*

*I thank the hon Hlengwa, and assure him that, the France Summit achieved commitment that the special drawing rights we*

*have been calling for of the reserve in the International Monetary Fund, IMF, was agreed upon, and this is something*

*that we will assist Africa to have resources, particularly the poorest of these developed countries on the Continent to have*

*resources to revive their economies.*

*In conclusion, Chairperson, let me thank each of the members*

*who indicated support for the Budget Vote. I also thank the hon Msane for her comments and assure her that there is no*

*intension at this moment, to appoint an ambassador to Israel after we withdrew our ambassador in 2019. Thank you, hon*

*Chairperson. [Time expired.]*

The ACTING HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr F D Xasa): Thank you very much, hon Minister, thank you very much, hon members.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary rose at 16:13