**Report of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation on Budget Vote 6: International Relations and Cooperation, dated 8 May 2023**

The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) having considered the directive of the National Assembly to consider and report on the Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans and Budget allocations of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as the Department) and the African Renaissance Fund (hereinafter referred to as the ARF), tabled by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, in terms of the Public Finance Management Act (Act No 32 of 2003), reports as follows:

1. **Background**

Parliament plays an important role in overseeing planning and performance of government departments and public entities as well as Chapter 9 institutions. Section 27 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) stipulates that the Minister must table the annual budget for a financial year in the National Assembly before the start of the financial year. Subsequent to that, the Money Bills Amendment Procedures and Related Matters Act, No. 9 of 2009, section 10 (1) (c) clearly stipulates that the relevant members of Cabinet must table updated strategic plan and annual performance plan for each department, public entity or institution, which must be referred to the relevant Committee for consideration and reporting.

In considering the strategic and annual performance plans, the Committee ensured that the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and the African Renaissance Fund plans and budget allocations are in line with Medium Term Strategic Plan 2019/24. The Budget allocation serves as a key instrument for government to promote socio-economic development. It plays a critical role as an economic instrument of the government to reflect on the country’s socio-economic policy priorities, by translating priorities and political commitments into expenditures. Furthermore, the Budget serves as a vital tool to operationalise government activities towards the achievement of its intended priorities. It also gets to highlight the constraints and trade-offs in policy choices.

1. **Introduction**

The Committee met on 3 May 2023 to consider presentations on the Department’s Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2023/24 and the related budget allocations. The Committee further considered the Annual Performance Plan 2023/24 and Strategic Plan (2020/25) of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF) and its budget allocation. This report summarises the said presentations of the Department and the ARF, their budget allocations as well as allocations over the MTEF.

* 1. **Opening remarks by the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee of International Relations and Cooperation, Honourable Mr Supra Obakeng Ramoeletsi Mahumapelo MP**

In his opening remarks, Honourable Mahumapelo welcomed both the Members and those representing the Department, led by Deputy Minister Ms Candith Mashego-Dlamini. He further acknowledged the presence of Hon Powell, who replaced Hon Bergman as the DA Shadow Minister of International Relations and Cooperation.

* 1. **Overview by the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Candith Mashego-Dlamini**

The Deputy Minister introduced the Department’s presentation on the strategic plan and the annual performance plan for 2023-2024. The Deputy Minister noted that the Annual Performance Plan 23/24, is reflective of the priorities in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. As we draw to the end of this MTSF period, the Department continues to support the **seven** strategic priorities of the MTSF, working closely with other government departments and focussing on the execution of South Africa’s foreign policy.

The Deputy Minister expressed that “Economic diplomacy” is one of the key mechanisms in the achievement of national interests through diplomatic means and complements traditional “political diplomacy.” In this new reality, the Department will aggressively embark on economic diplomacy in order to contribute in a more direct and concrete manner to achieve poverty eradication, job creation and socio-economic development and growth, primarily by utilising the resources it has in its missions abroad. The missions, in particular, have a key frontline role to play in the pursuit of economic diplomacy and its component pillars such as FDI pledges, as well as the contribution to tourism promotion for South Africa.

The Department recognises that bilateral engagements remain the pre-eminent basis for advancing national priorities, as well as for effective engagement in multilateral fora and will therefore continue to strengthen its bilateral political, economic and social relations. This will be pursued through structured bilateral mechanisms, as well as high-level visits.

The Deputy Minister stated that South Africa’s multilateral interests at regional level are focussed on its membership of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), at continental level, the African Union (AU) and at global level, the United Nations (UN). Other interests which intersect with these, include South Africa’s membership of, among others, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the G77, the G20, the Commonwealth and partnership arrangements.

Regarding peace and security, the Deputy Minister stated that South Africa will, among others, continue to focus on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, will continue seek membership of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and pursue representation on the AU Peace and Security Council.

South Africa is pursuing partnerships with other countries and civil society to translate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda into action through our role as the Co-Chair of the Global Network of National Focal Points of Women, Peace and Security and as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This action embodies the idea of cooperation between states and regional, international organisations, as well as civil society, asa source for innovative and transformative strategies to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda.

On sustainable development, the Deputy Minister emphasised that South Africa will continue to advance the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In addition, South Africa’s membership in the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the period 2023-2025 will provide a platform for South Africa to continue engaging in the development of norms and standards in the field of human rights that will foster the promotion, protection and practical realisation/enjoyment of all human rights by all people across the world. Given South Africa’s commitment to multilateralism, its presence in the HRC will provide space to push for the transformation of the global system of governance from the power-based system to a rules-based system and to enhance the efforts to create a just and equitable global order.

Public Diplomacy (PD) will focus its budget allocation on expanding the reach of its platforms, with a specific focus on taking “foreign policy to the people”.

Consular Services provide effective and efficient consular and notarial services to South African nationals travelling, working, studying and/or living abroad. The target for notarial services is now drafted in line with the Service Delivery Charter.

The Department is committed to placing ICT as an enabler in the process of improving organisational functioning, working towards the automation and modern digitisation of business processes, to reduce turnaround time and improve service delivery. The Department further acknowledges the need to incorporate the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in their policies, programmes, and projects and will continue to engage in initiatives that support gender mainstreaming, youth development and people with disabilities.

The Department is also in the final stages of obtaining approval for its new organisational structure that supports its strategy and plans.

In terms of the implementation of the Foreign Service Act, Act 26 of 2019, the Deputy Minister noted that all the steps necessary for the coming into force of the Act were completed and the Act and the Regulations entered into force on 25 August 2022.

The draft text of the Regulations was published for public comment in the Government Gazette on 24 June 2022, thereafter the text of the Regulations was finalised. The implementation process is under way with the implementation committee finalising the drafting of Policies and Standard Operating Procedures of the Act. The coming into operation of this Act will ensure efficiency in the implementation of the Foreign Service throughout the country.

1. **Presentation by the Department on Budget Vote 6: International Relations and Cooperation 2022/23 and Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) expenditure focus**

The Department presented on its work towards the realisation of South Africa’s Foreign Policy objectives. This was accomplished through:

* coordinating and aligning South Africa’s international relations,
* monitoring developments in the international environment,
* communicating government’s policy positions,
* developing and advising government on policy options, and creating mechanisms and avenues for achieving objectives,
* protecting South Africa’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,
* contributing to the creation of an enabling international environment for South African businesses,
* sourcing developmental assistance; and assisting South African citizens abroad[[1]](#footnote-1).
  1. **Strategic linkages to the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030**

It has been highlighted that South Africa’s foreign policy finds its inspiration from the country’s domestic agenda. It endeavours to address the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment through the implementation of an independent foreign policy[[2]](#footnote-2), within a highly VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) and dynamic international environment.

According to the APP, the conduct of South Africa’s foreign policy would be driven by the quest to realise the aspirations of the NDP Vision 2030 and its development trajectory. This would be done with full recognition of the challenges posed by international environment the Department operates in.

With regard to international relations and cooperation, Chapter 7 of the NDP focuses on the need to enhance South Africa’s position in the region and the world, and to increase trade and investment[[3]](#footnote-3). The plan further states that the country’s foreign policy should be shaped by the interplay between diplomatic, political, security, environmental, economic and regional dynamics that define international relations. The plan envisions the country positioning itself as one of Africa’s powerhouses, leading development and growth on the continent; and deepening integration with the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) group of countries[[4]](#footnote-4).

There has been a clear and deliberate move to ensure there is a link between the activities of the Department and the implementation of Chapter 7 of the NDP Vision 2030. The NDP underscores the importance of building a nation that contributes to the prosperity of the southern Africa region, the African continent and the betterment of the lives of the marginalised throughout the world.

The NDP further requires that South Africa build a resilient economy which would contribute towards creating a working nation, in order to narrow and eventually eliminate the gap between the rich and poor[[5]](#footnote-5). The Department recognises that the national priorities as contained in the NDP are inextricably-linked to the aspirations of the African continent[[6]](#footnote-6). Hence, economic diplomacy would be used to promote the country as a trade and investment destination, thereby attracting foreign investment and also boosting its tourism sector.

The aspirations of the NDP have also found expression inthe Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)’s development mechanism, the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). These aspirations are also found in the continental programme as encapsulated in the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063 Vision, and in the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The economic development integration of SADC remains a key focus area.

* 1. **State of the Nation Address (SoNA) February 2023**

In his SoNA of February 2023, President Cyril Ramaphosa set the strategic course for the country for 2023/24. He emphasised the need to grow the economy[[7]](#footnote-7), in light of the present situation of deep poverty, unemployment and inequality in the country, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this directive given by the President, the Department would continue with its focus on economic diplomacy in support of the President’s initiatives. This work would build on the foundation of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP), which remains the common programme to rebuild the economy. In this regard, he indicated that the African Union had resolved that trade could resume under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In this regard, South African companies are poised to play a key role in taking up the opportunities this presents for preferential access to other African markets[[8]](#footnote-8). President Ramaphosa emphasised that the AfCFTA is about Africa taking charge of its destiny and growing its economies faster[[9]](#footnote-9). The President further emphasised that South Africa would increase its efforts to develop Africa’s ability to manufacture vaccines[[10]](#footnote-10). In this regard, the Department is looking forward to the support of its Missions, especially in Africa, to make this a reality[[11]](#footnote-11).

1. **Planned policy initiatives**

The Department intends to enhance its operational capacity in this financial year. In addition, the revival of the Partnership Fund for Development Bill remains a priority of the Department. The Partnership Fund for Development Bill aimed at repealing the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund Act (51 of 2000) will be revived.

1. **Legislative mandates of the Department**

According to the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, the Department is further responsible for regulation and implementation under the following Acts[[12]](#footnote-12):

* *The African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF) Act, 2001 (Act 51 0f 2001)*: The Act establishes the Fund to enhance cooperation between the South Africa and other countries, in particular, African countries. This is achieved through the promotion of democracy, good governance, the prevention and resolution of conflict, socio-economic development and integration, humanitarian assistance and human resource development.

The Foreign Service Act, 2019 (Act 26 of 2019) (the “Act”) and its Regulations came into force on 25 August 2022. The purpose of the Act is to professionalise the Foreign Service to represent the Republic in an effective, coherent and comprehensive manner abroad. The Act also provides a legislative mandate to the department by providing for the management, administration, accountability and functioning of a professional Foreign Service and the operational requirements that are suitable and supportive of the operations of the Foreign Service in a global environment.

**Oversight area**: There are conflicting narratives in the APP, with the one part reporting that the regulations, codes and directives are currently being drafted to guide the implementation of the FSA, 2019. The other section of the APP notes that the Foreign Service Act, 2019 (Act 26 of 2019) (the “Act”) and its Regulations came into force on 25 August 2022. In 2022/23, the APP provides that the regulations are currently being drafted in order for the FSA 2019 to be operationalised and for it to come into force.

* *The Foreign States Immunities Act, 1981 (Act 87 of 1981)*: This Act regulates the extent of the immunity of foreign states from the jurisdiction of courts of the Republic and provides for matters connected therewith.
* *The Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges Act, 2001 (Act 37 of 2001)*: This Act provides for the immunities and privileges of diplomatic missions and consular posts and their members, heads of state, special envoys and certain representatives of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and other international organizations and of certain other people. Provision is also made for immunities and privileges pertaining to international conferences and meetings held in South Africa.
* The *Measures and Guidelines for Enhanced Coordination of South Africa’s International Engagements* and its annexures, approved by Cabinet in 2009, establish more effective measures and mechanisms to coordinate the conduct of international relations and the implementation of South Africa’s foreign policy.
* *The White Paper on Foreign Policy*, approved by Cabinet in 2011, assesses South Africa’s foreign policy against the rising expectations of the critical role of foreign policy to meet domestic priorities.
* Foreign Service Dispensation (FSD) is implemented in terms of the provisions of Section 3(3) (c) of the Public Service Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994), as amended, and is applicable to designated employees who serve in a foreign country at a South African mission abroad and fall within the scope of the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council.

The Department is also a custodian of international agreements (bilateral and multilateral) concluded by the Republic in terms of relevant constitutional provisions (sections 231(2) and 231(3) of the Constitution.

1. **Strategic outlook in the Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

International responsibility is to build the country’s role as an influential continental and global actor and partner. Key deliverables would be around the participation of South Africa in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics Defence and Security Cooperation (Troika), as the Chairperson of the SADC Organ.

1. **Performance delivery environment**

According to the APP, the Budget Vote for 2023/24 is being delivered in an environment that is still characterised by fiscal constraints, however, the department has embarked on a process to develop identified systems to improve operations’ efficiencies and effectiveness in automating business processes. There have been marginal improvements in the implementation of the Digital Strategy 2020 – 2025, where several ICT infrastructure projects have been implemented. The remainder of these projects will be finalised in the next financial year.

According to Vote 6 of the 2023 Estimates of National Expenditure, in the 2023/24 Financial Year, the Department received a total budget allocation of R6.6 billion (decrease). In terms of allocations per programme: Programme 1 received a budget allocation of R1.7 billion (decrease), Programme 2 received a budget allocation of R3.3 billion (increase), Programme 3 received a budget allocation of R562.3 million (increase), Programme 4 received a budget allocation of R257.0 million (decrease) and Programme 5 received a budget allocation of R769.1 million (decrease).

In response to the challenges posed by the constrained fiscal environment, the Department engaged in a process of reviewing its global footprint and seeking accreditation on a non-residential basis, in a bid to contain costs. This process resulted in the closure of several missions.

Due to the shortfall on the Compensation of Employees (CoE) budget, only critical vacancies can be filled, which has impacted negatively on service delivery and the achievement of the department’s mandate. To mitigate the associated risks on the shortfall of the CoE, the department will focus on upskilling and reskilling its human resources. In addition, responding to the challenges posed by the constrained fiscal environment, the department is engaged in a process of reviewing its global footprint and seeking accreditation on a non-residential basis, in a bid to contain costs.

**Oversight area**: The Department’s work is mainly realised through the 116 diplomatic missions in 102 countries in which South Africa has representation[[13]](#footnote-13). As such, compensation of employees is the Department’s main cost driver. The Committee has asked whether the process of reducing missions impacts positively to easing the burden related to the ceiling on the compensation of employees. The Committee has further recommended that the Department have discussions with National Treasury on how to further manage its budget on the compensation of employees, without impacting on the mandate of the Department.

**7.1. Strategic focus areas**

The Department is committed to continue to focus and deliver on the following strategic areas in the 2022/23 financial year, in line with the MTSF 2019-2024:

**7.1.1 Building a better Africa**

The Department has put emphasis on the centrality of Africa as the centrepiece of South Africa’s Foreign Policy. At the core of this focus, is South Africa’s Pan-Africanist vision of unity, solidarity and a common African destiny. Africa remains at the centre of South Africa’s foreign policy trajectory. Cognisant of the intrinsic link between South Africa’s national interest and Africa’s stability, unity and prosperity, the country has placed the advancement of the African Agenda at the centre of its foreign policy and has had considerable success in promoting the interests of Africa in different fora[[14]](#footnote-14). South Africa remains a relevant and significant player in issues relating to the regional agenda. This role is played both through bilateral and multilateral platforms. The ability to contribute to humanitarian relief efforts and peace and mediation initiatives, places the country in a strategic position of influence[[15]](#footnote-15).

With regard to the AU, Morocco has been observed as active since re-joining the organisation[[16]](#footnote-16). The issue of Morocco has been of concern to the Committee in terms of its non-action in facilitating self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, since its return to the AU. As far as the situation in the Saharawi Arab Republic is concerned, it has been observed that the AU support for the cause appears to be weakening[[17]](#footnote-17). During 2021, South Africa objected to the granting of observer status to Israel, a decision taken by the Chair of the AUC. The Committee has also impressed upon the Department that the African Agenda should continue to be prioritised, even when rationalising missions, as far as possible, those in African countries should be assisted to remain relevant.

The APP provides that South Africa remains a relevant and significant player in issues relating to the regional agenda. This role is played both through bilateral and multilateral platforms[[18]](#footnote-18). It has been argued that the ability to contribute to humanitarian relief efforts, peace and mediation initiatives, positions the country in a strategic pole position of influence[[19]](#footnote-19). The economic outlook for sub-Saharan Africa is, therefore, “clouded”. COVID-19 has had severe negative economic implications and impacted on the attainment of the SDGs.

In terms of threats to security and safety, it has been reported that the continent has seen an increase in terrorism in all regions with involvement by outside players, including in the SADC region. The situation in Cabo Delgado, in Northern Mozambique, remains a source of concern, as is that in eSwatini and Lesotho[[20]](#footnote-20).

The start of trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement, on 1 January 2021, marked the dawn of a new era in Africa’s development journey. It is expected that over time, the AfCFTA would eliminate import tariffs on some of goods traded on the continent, as well as address non-tariff barriers[[21]](#footnote-21).

Regarding the African economic situation, economies have been struggling due to volatile oil prices. The South African economy is not growing sufficiently. Furthermore, COVID-19 has limited international trade and economic interactions with Africa.

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), in its “African Economic Outlook” supplement[[22]](#footnote-22), published on 12 March 2021, although all economies in Africa have been affected by the pandemic, tourism-dependent economies, oil-exporting economies and other-resource intensive economies were the most significantly hit by the pandemic.

According to the AfDB, African policymakers must turn the COVID–19 crises into opportunities by focussing sharply on food and nutritional security[[23]](#footnote-23). It is expected that Africa to consider re-thinking healthcare and social protection systems; nurturing the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises and women-led firms; harnessing and better managing the natural resources revenue streams; by operationalising the AfCFTA; and by paying greater attention to climate change and resilience[[24]](#footnote-24).

Africa is the world's youngest continent with around 60% of the population currently under the age of 25[[25]](#footnote-25). Within the next two generations, it is expected that this youthful population will increase more than 180%, compared to that of Europe and Asia, which will shrink by more than 21% and by almost 28% respectively[[26]](#footnote-26).

Towards the end of the century, it is estimated that Africa's youth population would reach 1.3 billion[[27]](#footnote-27), double the expected total population of Europe, and would represent almost half of the world’s youth[[28]](#footnote-28). By 2034, the region is expected to have a larger workforce than either China or India[[29]](#footnote-29). The youth bulge in Africa is seen as a huge advantage, provided they are engaged in productive economic activities.

The SADC’s integration agenda is anchored in political, security and economic integration. To facilitate the process of integration, SADC has developed economic and strategic blueprints, in particular the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap as approved by the summit in April 2015. The strategy has been aligned to the AU Agenda 2063. Critical to regional economic integration is the rapid implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA), as well as the AfCFTA, to boost industrial and infrastructure development and enhance intra-regional trade. The Department would closely monitor South Africa’s progress on the implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) projects[[30]](#footnote-30).

With regard to the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the customs union has to be transformed into a vehicle for regional integration, capable of promoting equitable development, sustainable infrastructure development and industrialisation.

**7.1.2 Building a better world: Reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**

South Africa’s engagement in the UN is based on its commitment to promote an equitable rules-based multilateral system. It is informed by the recognition that the UN does not reflect current global political and economic realities. South Africa would continue to advocate for the reform of global governance institutions, as well as promote participation in selected multilateral fora outside the UN system as a force multiplier for the overall strengthening of multilateralism[[31]](#footnote-31).

South Africa’s engagement in the UN is based on its commitment to promote an equitable rules-based multilateral system. It is informed by the recognition that the UN does not reflect current global political and economic realities. South Africa’s engagement is to advance the reform of the existing global governance architecture with a view to improve the voice and representation of Africa and the developing world[[32]](#footnote-32). It also intends to draw attention to the responsiveness of the UN system to the needs and challenges faced by Africa and developing states. In line with South Africa’s foreign policy, the Department would continue to advocate for the reform of global governance institutions[[33]](#footnote-33). With regard to the UN, UNSC reform and the granting of an African permanent seat(s) have not been achieved[[34]](#footnote-34).

**7.1.3 Promotion of cooperation between the AU and the UN**

The APP provided that South Africa’s third two-year term on the UN Security Council (SC) ended in December 2021. During its term, South Africa endeavoured to promote its views and values. These were, among others, the importance of women in peace and security; championing the cause of children in armed conflict situations; the rule of law at national and international levels; post-conflict reconstruction and development; and the peaceful resolution of conflict while fighting impunity. Although South Africa has handed over the Chairship of the AU, it still supports closer cooperation between the AU and UN. President Cyril Ramaphosa was appointed as AU Champion for COVID-19[[35]](#footnote-35).

**7.1.4 Disarmament**

According to the APP, the Department’s assessment of international developments, the risk of a major conflict involving nuclear weapons and the radical consequences thereof couldn’t be discounted[[36]](#footnote-36). The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force on 22 January 2021. Globally, there are an estimated 13 080 nuclear warheads at the start of 2021 of which 3 825 were active, deployed with operational forces[[37]](#footnote-37).

**7.1.5 Climate change**

Despite the international community's ongoing fight against climate change, which kicked off during June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, global warming is continuing to escalate. The APP provides that South Africa advocates for a global response that is equitable and that provides development space for developing countries[[38]](#footnote-38). The expectation is that the developed countries should take the lead in emission reductions, closing the ambition gap, including those carried over from the pre-2020 to the post-2020 period and providing adequate means of implementation that would enable a response to the challenge. In this context, South Africa's position on climate change has been defined. Its national objectives are premised on a science- and rules-based international system with multilateralism at its core.

It is said the changes brought about by climate change would, in the medium to long term, include periodic to continual flooding, protracted droughts and heat waves causing forest and bush fires, reduced precipitation and reduction of glaciers in source catchment areas[[39]](#footnote-39). It is expected that there would be a rise in conflicts over resources, particularly water, e.g. over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia, contested by Sudan and Egypt. There would eventually be a need for more sustainable lifestyles in order to adapt to changing conditions[[40]](#footnote-40).

**7.1.6 Gender**

According to the APP, South Africa’s commitment to gender equality is firmly established in the Constitution (1996). Chapter 2 of the Constitution, also known as the Bill of Rights, guarantees full and equal enjoyment of all rights by all genders and the protection of people against any form of discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, etc. South Africa has ratified many international instruments aligned to its constitution relating to gender equality[[41]](#footnote-41). It also ratified the Beijing Platform for Action, an agenda towards empowerment of women and girls, and made a firm commitment to mainstream gender within the Government by creating the National Gender Machinery led by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities[[42]](#footnote-42). In 2021, South Africa ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190 aimed at ending violence and harassment in the world of work.

**7.1.7 South-South cooperation**

South Africa pursues mutually beneficial cooperation among countries and groupings of the South to develop common positions on political, economic, social and human rights issues as an effective response in addressing the historic marginalisation of these countries[[43]](#footnote-43). Groupings of the South share the need to restructure the global political, economic and financial architecture to be more balanced, representative, inclusive and equitable, as well as to ensure that the international system rests on the important pillars of multilateralism and international law.

Groupings of the South include BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa); IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa); lORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association); the Group of 77 (G77) and China; and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The Committee encourages South Africa to continue to leverage strategic regional groupings such as BRICS, IBSA and IORA to improve trade flows and build consensus in multilateral groupings.

**7.1.8 Cooperation with the countries of the North**

It has been reported that Europe has traditionally been the largest source of development cooperation with South Africa. These engagements are focussed on addressing poverty; job creation and inequality. The focus of the Department would continue with the consolidation of relations with these regional partners and to promote partnerships in support of South Africa's domestic priorities. South Africa also engages with key global economic processes of the North, to promote African Agenda 2063 in particular, and the broader development interests of developing countries in general. FDI from Europe is estimated at over R1 trillion with more than 2 000 companies operating in South Africa, employing South Africans, enhancing their skills and investing in the economy[[44]](#footnote-44).

**7.1.9 Relations with regions of the world**

The inexorable change in the economic geography of the world economy, requires a more purposeful effort to diversify South Africa's trade and investment relations, to benefit from the rapid and dynamic economic growth in the Global South[[45]](#footnote-45). In line with the focus on economic growth and sustainable socio-economic development, the Department would negotiate and navigate international trends beyond its immediate region and the continent. According to the APP, the Department’s international network of missions is seen as a strategic asset that is being leveraged to realise maximum return on the investment it represents for the people of South Africa.

Constrained FDI and investment flows, protectionism and the impact of US sanctions on (secondary) Iran and Huawei, have impacted on the South African domestic economy, for example the telecommunication sector. South Africa would avoid taking sides on the growing tensions between China and the USA, to avoid compromising trade and investment with either country[[46]](#footnote-46).

The rivalry between China and the Russian Federation in Central Asia could possibly impact negatively on the cohesion in BRICS[[47]](#footnote-47).

South Africa would remain committed to a stable and peaceful Middle East and supports sustainable and just solutions to the various conflicts in the region. The region is an important component of South Africa's global trade and is a critical energy partner to South Africa. The strong focus on investment would be continued in the objectives pursued in 2020 to 2025, through South Africa's diplomatic engagement with the region. South Africa would remain committed to supporting the Two-State solution and the people of Palestine[[48]](#footnote-48). South Africa remained committed to a stable and peaceful Middle East, and supports sustainable and just solutions to the various conflicts in the region.

South Africa enjoys strong political, economic and technical relations with the countries in the East Asia and Oceania region. Bilateral relations with countries in the region are pursued in line with priorities highlighted in the NDP and 2022 SoNA. South Africa's trade and investment relations with the region are strong and growing, but there is substantial room for expansion. Tourism from the region, in particular, has huge potential to contribute to South Africa's GDP.

China is South Africa’s major trade partner, but there is a deficit in the trade balance. China does not view South Africa as its only African partner. Furthermore, China can be seen as an economic competitor for South Africa companies in Africa, especially in Eastern Africa.

**7.1.10 Multilateralism**

Multilateralism remains a focal point of South Africa's foreign policy[[49]](#footnote-49). South Africa's multilateral engagements are premised on the need to advance its national interest and safeguard its national positions. It is in these forums that South Africa would advance the development priorities of developing countries and promote an equitable rules-based multilateral system, as identified in Priority Seven of the MTSF.

The Department would continue to communicate South Africa’s role and position in international relations in both the domestic and international arenas. The Department would also continue to provide the requisite protocol and consular services.

During the financial year, the Department would continue with the closure of identified Missions, in an attempt to deal with the reduced budget at its disposal. The drafting of regulations, codes and directives to operationalise the Foreign Service Act would also be finalised and approved.

1. **Budget allocation for programmes of the Department**

**Table 1 Budget Allocation-Vote 6: International Relations and Cooperation 2023/24**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Programme**  **(R million)** |  |  |
| **2023/42** | **2024/25** |
| 1: Administration | 1 715,6.00 | 1 732 100 |
| 2: International Relations | 3 390,0.00 | 3 297 955 |
| 3: International Cooperation | 562,3.00 | 517 155 |
| 4: Public Diplomacy & Protocol | 257,0.00 | 289 943 |
| 5: International Transfers | 769,1.00 | 763 355 |
| Total | **6 517 872** | **6 600 508** |

Source: 2023/24 Annual Performance Plan of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation

Over the medium term, the Department would continue to focus on advancing the African Agenda, including curbing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the continent; participating actively in the United Nations; and enhancing the management of its infrastructure portfolio in foreign missions[[50]](#footnote-50). For 2022/23, the Department has an increased budget allocation from R6 517 872 billion in 2021/22 to R6 600 508 billion in 2022/23[[51]](#footnote-51). Total expenditure is expected to increase from R6.5 billion in 2021/22 to R6.9 billion in 2024/25, at an average rate of 2 per cent[[52]](#footnote-52). The Department’s work is mainly realised through the 116 diplomatic missions in 102 countries in which South Africa has representation[[53]](#footnote-53). As such, compensation of employees is the Department’s main cost driver, accounting for an estimated 43.2 per cent (R8.7 billion) of expenditure over the medium term[[54]](#footnote-54).

**8.1 Managing infrastructure projects and properties**

The Department’s international property portfolio comprises of 127 state-owned properties and more than 1000 rented properties. Over the MTEF period, it plans to reduce its rental portfolio and the associated operational costs by developing one property in Luanda, Angola, and one property in Gaborone, Botswana on state owned vacant land. It also plans to assess the condition of the state-owned properties within its portfolio over the medium term, beginning with those in Africa, to determine the need for maintenance, repairs and renovations to extend their lifespans. To carry out these activities, R838.3 million over the medium term is earmarked in the Foreign Fixed Asset Management subprogramme in the Administration programme, of which R51 million is allocated specifically for assessing the condition of state-owned properties abroad.

**8.2 Budget allocations per programme**

According to Vote 6 of the 2023 Estimates of National Expenditure, in the 2023/24 Financial Year, the Department received a total budget allocation of R6.6 billion. In terms of allocations per programme: Programme 1 received a budget allocation of R1.7 billion, Programme 2 received a budget allocation of R3.3 billion, Programme 3 received a budget allocation of R257.0 million, Programme 4 received a budget allocation of R257.0 million and Programme 5 received a budget allocation of R769.1 million[[55]](#footnote-55).

**8.2.1 Program 1: Administration**

The Diplomatic Academy would be a centre of excellence in foreign service training and the plan is to conduct a gap analysis on delivering training in AU/UN languages.

The current realities call for organisational renewal, innovation as well as the Department’s transition towards a digitisation system currently in progress in order to assist the organisation to achieve more and to deliver on its mandate and the five year strategic objectives. It also requires the Department to streamline its processes with a specific emphasis on improving its digital environment through its Digital Strategy.

**8.2.2 Programme 2: International Relations**

The Department would continue to pursue increased and improved access of South African products and services to foreign markets, which would contribute to the aim of increasing manufacturing and thereby contribute to an export-orientated economy. The Department intends to become a catalyst and operate as a networking agent for “South Africa Incorporated”[[56]](#footnote-56). The missions, in particular, are poised as key frontline role players in the pursuit of economic diplomacy and its component pillars such as FDI pledges, as well as the contribution towards inbound tourism promotion[[57]](#footnote-57).

**8.2.3 Programme 3: International Cooperation**

The primary objective of this programme is to participate in initiatives of international organisations and institutions in line with South Africa’s national values and foreign policy objectives. Multilateralism remains a focal point of South Africa's foreign policy[[58]](#footnote-58). South Africa's multilateral engagements are premised on the need to advance its national interest and safeguard its national positions. It is in these forums that South Africa would advance the development priorities of developing countries and promote an equitable rules-based multilateral system, as identified in Priority Seven of the MTSF.

This is achieved through South Africa’s engagements within the Global system of governance; continental cooperation; South- South cooperation; North-South cooperation to advance and support national priorities, the African Agenda and the developmental agenda of the South. In line with South Africa’s foreign policy, the Department would continue to advocate for the reform of global governance institutions[[59]](#footnote-59).

**8.2.4 Programme 4: Public Diplomacy and State Protocol**

According to the APP, the Department aims to implement and monitor the effectiveness of the Public Diplomacy strategy. Through this programme, the Department would ensure rapid and timeous support to missions on domestic and global developments. Key messages would be distributed to missions on domestic and global developments. Several platforms would be utilised to inform and promote South Africa’s foreign policy to domestic and international audiences, thus making an effort to ensure that foreign policy decision-making process reach the grass roots.

**8.2.5 Programme 5: International Transfers**

The Department would continue to transfer payments, which arise from obligations undertaken by South Africa at international, regional and subregional multilateral levels, and to its entity, the African Renaissance Fund[[60]](#footnote-60). The MTSF (2019 – 2024) requires that South Africa contributes to a better South Africa and better region and to secure the advancement of South Africa’s national interest. This could only be realised through the payment of South African contributions to international organisations in full and on time.

Therefore, under its Outcome, “Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063”, it is required that South Africa honours its obligations towards the UN, SADC and the AU, including the institutions hosted in South Africa (i.e. Pan-African Parliament, New Partnership for Africa’s Development, African Peer Review Mechanism, African Commission on Nuclear Energy and Pan-African University on Space Science (PAUSS) and trans-frontier conservation areas. This would require the settlement of all assessed contributions as required by the respective international organisations.

The budget allocation for Programme 5: International Transfers for the 2022 MTEF, consists of the Departmental Agencies’ allocation to the African Renaissance and international Cooperation Fund, as well as international membership contributions to organisations such as, among others, the AU, SADC, UN, India-Brazil-South Africa Trust Fund, and the Commonwealth of Nations.

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

The African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund provides cooperation funding for initiatives between South Africa and other countries that relate to the promotion of democracy and good governance, the prevention and resolution of conflicts, socioeconomic development and integration, humanitarian assistance and relief, and human resources and infrastructural development.

**9.1 Annual Performance Plan 2022/23 of the African Renaissance Fund**

The APP provides that the ARF operates through an Advisory Committee[[61]](#footnote-61) which is comprised of: The Director General (DG) or delegate; 3 officials of the Department appointed by the Minister; 2 officials from National Treasury appointed by Minister of Finance. The Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the two Ministers on the disbursements of funds through loans or other financial assistance. The DG is the accounting officer of the Fund in terms of the PFMA 1999. The DG has created a secretariat consisting of officials to assist with disbursement of funds. Officials assist with monitoring and administration of projects relating to the fund. The ARF has received successive unqualified audit opinion without findings for the past three financial years in succession.

ARF budget allocations over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework total R160,4 million. The budget allocation for the 2023/24 is R49,9 million. The ARF will implement the 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan in a constrained fiscal environment with significant reductions in annual allocations.[[62]](#footnote-62)

In terms of policy initiative, the current Strategic Plan and APP of the ARF, provide that the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Act 2000, should be amended to provide for a name change of the ARF to the South African Development Partnership Fund; and for the designation of a Head, as an Accounting Authority, who would be responsible, together with the Secretariat, for the administration of the fund. The fund would remain an entity listed in terms of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999).

**10**. **Findings by the Committee**

10.1The Committee welcomed the presentation of the Department and noted the reduction in budget allocations to the Department

10.2The Committee noted the impact of currency fluctuations on the expenditure ceiling of the Department given the expenditure associated with compensation of employees and operational costs.

10.3The Committee commented on the upcoming BRICS Summit and the matters pertaining to the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

10.4The Committee sought clarity on the specific reforms that the Department seeks to achieve in terms of Institutions of Global Governance

10.5The Committee enquired about the extent to which the ARF plays a role in conflict resolution and humanitarian challenges that emanate from conflicts.

10.6The Committee requested that details be provided by the Department on its Digital Strategy and also enquired about the new service provider that would replace BT-SA and assist the Department with its ICT infrastructure

10.7The Committee sought clarity on what constitutes Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and how are FDI targets formulated

10.8The Committee noted the dynamics of maintaining strategic relations with countries of the Global North while also intensifying South-South relations. In this regard, specific mention was made of beneficiation of trade in raw materials for the African continent in its relations with both the European Union and BRICS.

10.9The Committee also noted the Envoy sent by President Ramaphosa to the US particularly given the discussions around African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

10.10The Committee commended the Department for its efforts in evacuating South African citizens from Sudan and returning them safely to South Africa.

10.11The Committee highlighted the need for the Department to be vigilant on its risk mitigation measures

10.12The Committee also emphasised the importance of South Africa being clear on its priorities, maintaining its strategic bilateral relations in a balanced way while also ensuring its sovereignty is respected

10.13The Committee sought clarity on vacancies in the Department as well as the potential cost reductions associated with strategic reduction of missions

10.14The Committee also sought clarity on whether the Department would resolve challenges associated with construction of the Pan African Parliament (PAP). The Committee also expressed concerns that South Africa would eventually lose the privilege of hosting the PAP should the matter not be resolved.

10.15The Committee emphasised the need for more intensive operationalisation of the Foreign Service Act, specifically in terms of regulations.

10.16The Committee also highlighted the importance of the strategic use of the ARF in terms of soft power. However, the Committee also emphasised the importance of the migration of the ARF into the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA)

10.17The Committee noted that the Committee was working with other government departments in terms of its activities and suggested that the Department continue to strengthen its cooperation with other Departments on a continuous basis

10.18The Committee further noted that while a humanitarian crisis is not something that can be predicted, the ARF must make necessary adjustments when necessary and find innovative ways of achieving its mandate within a more financially constrained space

**11. Responses by the Department**

11.1The Department stated that AGOA was important to South Africa and continue to engage in strategic bilateral relations with the US

11.2The Department informed the Committee that the ICC matter is in the hands of the Inter-Ministerial Committee headed by the Deputy President of the Republic

11.3The Department emphasised that the ARF was an important soft power tool for South Africa and reminded the Committee that the ARF has played a role in providing humanitarian assistance to countries like Mozambique during storms and flooding that recently affected the country

11.4The Department highlighted that South Africa does not impose itself on situations and when it does act in conflict situations it does so when it is given a mandate to do so. As an example, the Department expressed that SADC mediation efforts and interventions in DRC came from a SADC Mandate

11.5The Department then briefly described the ICT upgrades undertaken by the Department to enhance its capacity

11.6The Department emphasised that its economic diplomacy efforts are premised on benefitting South Africa and its businesses through enhanced trade and Foreign Direct Investment

11.7The Department noted that reform of global institutions of governance was of significant importance. The Department used the example of the United Nations Security Council having permanent representation and veto power for the African continent in terms of a specific reform South Africa seeks

11.8The Department stated that stakeholder engagement was an important approach to address the perception of elitism regarding International Relations issues

11.9The Department noted that while it does seek to enhance aspects of its stakeholder outreach and youth development, there is currently limited budget for initiatives such as the Cadet Programme and Internships

11.10In terms of recruitment issues, the Department stated that the department has capacity challenges and in some instances has also experienced striking Locally Recruited Personnel. The Department further stated that recruitment has been finalised on certain posts but critical vacancies remain and there have been allocations from Treasury for some of the critical vacancies

11.11The Department informed the Committee that regulations have been drafted in terms of the Foreign Service Act but they are awaiting finalisation of the approval process

11.12The Department touched on the issues in Sudan and noted that they have emanated from challenges emerging as a result of integration issues in the army ranks

11.13The Department acknowledged the slow pace of migration from the ARF to SADPA and expressed that this process is ongoing

11.14The Department also responded to issues around PAP which they stated were due to delays in Public Works processes. The Department also stated that South Africa remains committed to hosting the PAP as part of its commitment to the African Agenda.

11.15The Department clarified that in terms of its ICT service provider, BT-SA is being replaced by Brilliant Telecoms and that a migration process would be undertaken in this regard

1. **Recommendations**

Having considered the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and the Budget Vote 6 of the Department 2023/24 and its entity, the Committee recommends that the Minister should consider the following and report on progress within three months of adoption by the National Assembly of this report:

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

* 1. The Department must continue to engage National Treasury in terms of its budget allocations and the continued impact of currency fluctuations
  2. The Department must provide the Committee with continuous updates on a quarterly basis regarding its performance targets and expenditure
  3. The Committee advised the Department to interrogate some of its assistance criteria in terms for the ARF to ensure it continues to achieve its stated strategic objectives
  4. The Committee noted the challenges of maintaining strategic relations in a highly contested political contexts within the international system, but the Committee feels the Department must enhance its communication of its policy perspective to ensure trading partners are clear on the South Africa position.
  5. Important events such as the upcoming BRICS and other engagements conducted by South Africa must be popularised through enhanced Public Diplomacy and stakeholder outreach activities
  6. The Committee further notes that the matter of the ICC matter has been assigned to an Inter-Ministerial Committee by the President of the Republic Mr Ramaphosa which will be lead by the Deputy President of the Republic Mr Paul Mashatile. The Department must keep the Committee appraised of these aspects and also keep the Committee informed about preparations in terms of the upcoming BRICS Summit
  7. The Department must consider enhancing its internal ICT capacity to reduce the need for external service providers to reduce costs and to reduce potential security vulnerabilities that may appear at the conclusion of contracts with service providers
  8. The Department must also provide the Committee with a briefing on its ICT issues to provide clarity on its previous dispensation, the current status-quo and the Department's aspirations in terms of improving its ICT infrastructure
  9. The quantification of FDI must be considered and communicated more effectively to the general public to raise awareness about the importance of South Africa’s economic diplomacy efforts
  10. The Committee expresses its satisfaction with the Department's efforts in returning South African citizens stranded in Sudan back home safely and is confident that the Department will continue to provide the required support to South African citizens in distress abroad.
  11. Conduct an assessment whether the cost-reduction initiatives through closure of some South African Missions abroad, bear the intended impact on the challenges brought about by the ceiling on compensation of employees. The reduction should not disadvantage South Africa and the African continent

**To the National Assembly**

* 1. The Parliamentary Oversight Model must be reviewed to allow the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation to have more regular oversight visits to South African Missions abroad, in order to have a holistic approach on the performance abroad of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation. Being mindful that cost considerations may not allow oversight visits to all the South African Missions abroad, the Portfolio Committee has adapted to the new normal, and has conducted a novel oversight visit, virtually. It is the hope of the Committee that Parliament will embrace this innovation into Oversight and Accountability Model.
  2. The Parliamentary Oversight Model should allow the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation to have more regular oversight visits to project areas of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF), in order to have a holistic approach on the performance abroad of the entity of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation.
  3. The Portfolio Committee should be allowed to conduct oversight visits to international organisations that the Republic of South Africa is a state-party. This would enable the Committee to assess the impact of the Department’s participation on the overall outcomes at such forums.

The Committee recommends that Budget Vote 6: International Relations and Cooperation 2023/24 be passed.

**14**. **Conclusions**

Having engaged the Department on its APP as well as the APP of the ARF, the Committee determined that further briefings on certain matters would be needed as the Committee conducts is oversight on the Quarterly Performance of the Department as it works to achieve the targets contained in the APP.

The Committee would continuously monitor the activities of the Department and its entity the ARF

Report to be considered.

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