

**Address by Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Luwellyn Landers MP
at the 2018 Departmental Budget Vote Speech on Tuesday, 15 May 2018**

Honourable House Chairperson;

Honourable Chair and Members of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation;

Honourable Members;

Your Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address you on this important occasion which takes place during Africa Month. On 25 May we commemorate the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which is now the African Union (AU).

This year we also celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the mile-stone document in the history of human rights. The Declaration sets out fundamental human rights to be universally protected. Sadly whilst we are celebrating this document there are numerous countries who continue to violate the human rights of its citizens.

Honourable House Chair-

In 2018 South Africa assumed the Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). We will continue to focus on building our political and economic integration of SADC states. We will continue to strengthen peace, security, democracy and development.

South Africa's membership of and role within international organizations that include **IBSA, BRICS and IORA** comprise an integral component of securing South Africa's foreign policy objectives. They serve as a force multiplier in positively influencing the global economic and governance structures. They place people at the centre of the global development agenda and focus on addressing the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

South Africa assumed Chairship of **BRICS** on 01 January 2018 and will conclude this role on 31 December 2018. As such, the 10th BRICS Summit will be chaired by President Ramaphosa from 25 to 27 July 2018 in Gauteng under the theme: *"BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution"*.

South Africa's approach to its Chairship is grounded in the intention to ensure programmatic continuity for BRICS, and is committed to executing approximately 100 sectoral meetings, reflective of the expanded BRICS architecture. It also intends to bring a specific focus to the challenges and opportunities presented by the 4th Industrial Revolution. Furthermore, cognisant of our national interests and priorities South Africa will once again seek to highlight the African Agenda during its Chairship.

In October 2017 South Africa assumed the Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and will continue to do so until October 2019. Thus we have been honoured to lead this pre-eminent regional body linking Africa, the Middle East and Australasia via the Indian Ocean.

Importantly, it is our intention to create and enhance the institutional mechanisms necessary to advance important priorities for South Africa and the Region, such as Women's Economic Empowerment; Maritime Safety and Security; the Blue Economy; and Tourism.

Honourable House Chair-

Mindful of the significance of 2018, we will renew our commitment to the struggle against subjugation and deprivation of our fellow Africans, particularly the People of Western Sahara. Our continent cannot be free whilst these fellow brothers and sisters continue to yearn for their freedom and self-determination.

It was anticipated that the re-admission of Morocco into the AU would expedite the resolution of this dispute. On the contrary, the Moroccans are utilising their membership to undermine the people of Western Sahara by denying them a referendum to determine whether they are in favour of self-determination in keeping with several UN Resolutions. To this end we will continue to lobby all AU members and the broader the international community to expedite the resolution of the Saharawi question.

Honourable Members

At the AU High Level Committee meeting on Libya held April 2018 a report was received from the UN Secretary-General's Representative to Libya. It was reported that there are at least twenty million illegal weapons and firearms in Libya that contribute to the on-going conflict.

It was also reported that a sea vessel had been detained in Greece carrying a cargo of weapons destined for Libya. This incident is evidence that outside forces that have absolutely no interest in seeing a peaceful, prosperous, democratic Libya emerge from the ashes of a devastating war. As members of the AU it is our responsibility to expose and stop these forces which undermines our approach and belief of dealing with conflict through multi-lateralism.

Honourable Members

This year also marks the 30th Anniversary of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale which was a turning point in the struggle to free the continent and our own country from the colonialism and apartheid.

What come to mind when we recall this battle are the sacrifices of the Cuban Revolutionary Army officers and commanders who fought together with African liberation movements and people for our cause.

Madiba himself confessed that:

“The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom, and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character”.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The 2012 Health Cooperation Agreement with Cuba has reached its conclusion. Engagements are underway towards the renewal of the agreement.

Given our continued revolutionary friendship with the people of Cuba, we re-affirm our solidarity with Cuba and call for an immediate end to the Economic Blockade by the US.

Ladies and gentlemen

We will continue to explore more cooperation opportunities particularly increasing our bilateral trade with MERCOSUR states under the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) of 2016.

These endeavours will be complementary to our on-going beneficial trade relations with countries of the North such as the United States and Canada. Irrespective of the recent tariff regime

announcement, we are confident that the principles of rule-based free trade multilateralism will prevail.

Equally whilst we remain committed to strengthening our trade relations with the US we will not be intimidated by the recent threats of the US to cut their aid to countries who vote against them at multi-lateral institutions. We remain committed to an independent and principled approach to foreign policy.

Ladies and gentlemen

This year marks the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 25th Anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA).

At the recently concluded High-Level Segment 37th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council we reiterated the call for the Council to take a balanced approach to human rights. We called for the observance of the Vienna spirit of indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights.

We advocated and will continue to advocate for the adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in order to guarantee the right to life and people's wellbeing in the world. As such, nuclear-weapon States must honour their undertaking to eliminate nuclear weapons rather than creating justifications for exploring further options in this regard.

Honourable Members

In conclusion, 2018 marks the centenary of the son and daughter of the African soil, Nelson Mandela and Nontsikelelo Albertina Sisulu. This budget vote policy priorities for 2018 attempts to pay tribute to their lifelong beliefs and principles. These priorities are underpinned by the principles of Pan Africanism, International Solidarity, Human Rights and multi-lateralism as a means to deal with conflict and build a safer world.

We will continue to build South-South Solidarity, whilst maintaining North South co-operation and the strengthening African political and economic integration, democracy, peace and security.

I thank you