

Budget Vote 6: International Relations and Cooperation

Speech by Mergan Chetty MP, DA Shadow Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

Hon Chairperson, members,

DIRCO continues to portray itself as a department that is a law unto itself, yet it continuously serves as a shining example of how to make a mess of a multi-billion rand budget when your internal controls are reliant on factors that you are not in control of.

This department is a clear example of the terminology 'Polificcials'.

In this department, the Officials act as if they are the politicians, making decisions, whilst the political bigwigs have to regulate, or do damage control due to the Officials' errant behaviour.

I must however hasten to add, that the Officials, did make the right call, when the department issued a statement, criticising Putin's Russia attack on Ukraine.

However this was short-lived when the Minister and President flip-flop, Ramaphosa, issued a contradicting statement.

Let's not forget the most recent flip-flop between the officials and the political leaders of Dirco, when the department called for the enforcement of the ICC ruling for Russia's Putin arrest when he comes to SA for the upcoming BRICS summit, and the Ministers flip flop stance retracting that statement.

And to add further embarrassment, we had the leadership flip-flopping again when it came to our membership in the ICC. One minute we leaving, the next we are not.

The 'on the fence - middle ground' position that we find ourselves as SA, regarding our position on Russia's invasion on Ukraine, is another international embarrassment that the lacklustre leadership has bestowed upon SA.

Even our BRICS counterparts, Brazil, India and China, have taken a stance voting in favour of the United Nations resolution regarding Putin's escapades in Ukraine, whilst, as usual, South Africa chose to abstain.

This resolution describes Russia as an aggressor in Ukraine and calls for those responsible for violations to be brought to book under international law.

The UN recognises the International Criminal Court which has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

It's this indecisive leadership that's causing South Africa embarrassment on the international stage.

One can't be faulted for assuming that the Ministers continuous accompanying of the president on his overseas junkets, has his flip-flop tendencies rubbing off into her.

This department still hasn't learnt from the infamous R118 million New York shenanigans, for which, no arrests have been made, or any monies recovered, as the department continues with the current Pan African Parliament project, which costs us currently R3, 2 million a month in rent.

The current long-delayed infamous Pan African Parliament building has already cost us R90 million and that is excluding the R40 million a year rental for Gallagher estates.

Minister, with the current situation, SA can ill-afford this project anymore. Over half a billion rand has already been spent, on rentals and with nothing more than a barren piece of land to show thus far.

Minister, we call upon your department to abandon this project and allow those other member countries who are eagerly wanting to host PAP in their countries to rescue us from further embarrassment.

And please Minister, do not waffle on about how important and what prestige this brings to our country, for if it was that important, we would have already had the buildings erected, and occupied within the first three to five years of us being granted the host country privilege.

Sadly, internationally, we are viewed in poor light as a rudderless boat being steered without a captain.

Chair, with a more stabilised government and a higher foreign investor confidence in the party leading this country, we could see more stability in the spending in these quarterly reports.

I thank you