**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTTEN REPLY**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA)**

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Between 2016 and 2019, 267 incidents of internet shutdown occurred across the globe. 46 of these occurred in Africa. Internet shutdowns or network disruptions in Africa have been linked to countries with records of human rights violations and are implicated in the practices of authoritarian regimes in the region. A dominant feature of shutdowns is that they occur during major political events such as protests and elections. Government’s justifications for shutdowns are mostly communicated as national security or public order concerns. These orders not only violate international law, inflict damage to the socio-economic prospects and are regressive for democratic development on the continent. It is estimated by that shutdown have resulted in the loss of $237 million between 2015-2017.

**3054. Mr M Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**:

In view of the fact that her department’s foreign policy principles are centered on promoting peace, human rights and dignity for all people, (a) what is her department’s official position on internet shutdown and interruptions in Africa which have been linked to the countries with records of human rights violations and implicated in the practice of authoritarian regimes (details furnished) and (b) how has her department sought to engage with other countries in the African Union to deter the authoritarian and undemocratic practises? **NW3882E**

**REPLY:**

1. As a Member of the African Union (AU), South Africa respects the sovereignty of AU Member States as enshrined in Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the AU. South Africa also encourages Member States through, *inter alia*, the AU and its Organs, to adopt a culture of human rights as a prerequisite to achieving the Africa We Want, envisaged in Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 which envisions *“An Africa with good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.”*
2. In November and December 2020, South Africa participated in the 67th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), in