**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY

Date of Publication: 28 October 2022

Ministry: 04 November 2022

Reply date: 11 November 2022

**3876. Dr C P Mulder (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

1. Whether she will confirm reports from her department and the Iranian media that the Government will be welcoming the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi Ebrahim, and other Iranian Delegates to the Republic ; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what is the date of the meeting;
2. Whether, considering that the Islamic Republic of Iran is currently under sanctions from countries in Europe and America, she has found that the engagement with the Islamic Republic of Iran puts the Republic of South Africa at odds with our key trading partners and puts agreements such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act trade agreement at risk; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details in each case;
3. Whether, considering that the Iranian regime ascribes to values that are diametrically opposed to the principles \*on which the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, is based, such as democratic, egalitarian principles and women’s rights, her department has found that the specified visit could undermine the fight against gender – based violence in the Republic and around the world; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
4. What is the position of the Republic on the repression of women’s rights by the Islamic Republic on the repression of women’s rights by the Islamic Republic of Iran;
5. Whether she will make a statement on the matter? **NW4834E**

**REPLY:**

1. An invitation was extended by President Ramaphosa to the former President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr Hassan Rouhani to undertake a State Visit to South Africa in 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the visit did not materialise. Following the elections in Iran in June 2021, an invitation was extended to the new Iranian President, Dr Raisi, to undertake a State Visit to South Africa in 2023. The exact dates for the State Visit are yet to be confirmed and mutually convenient dates are being discussed through diplomatic channels.

Dr Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, will participate in the 15th Session of the South Africa-Iran Joint Commission of Cooperation (JCC), which will be hosted in South Africa on 29 November 2022. The previous Session of the JCC was held in 2019 and could not convene in 2020 or 2021 because of COVID-19.

1. South Africa honours United Nations sanctions in keeping with the traditional Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and African Union (AU) positions of not recognising unilateral coercive measures. In this regard, South Africa does not recognise the unilateral and secondary sanctions imposed by countries outside of the United Nations sanctions mechanisms. However, South Africa is mindful of the impact thereof on its political and economic engagements and the relevant stakeholders.Furthermore, South Africa conducts its bilateral relations within the context of international law and in the context of the relevant international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation.
2. A State Visit by President Raisi to South Africa will allow for engagement at the highest political level with the objective of strengthening bilateral relations and exchanging views on a number of political, economic and social issues including issues on human rights as South Africa will serve as a member of the Human Rights Council from 2023. Sectoral visits to Iran earlier this year in May, August and October already focused on policies and programmes by the two countries to support women empowerment. In this regard, I am of the view that an engagement between the two Presidents could enrich the efforts of both countries towards the empowerment of women. A delegation from South Africa participated in the 2nd Session of the South Africa-Iran Structured Dialogue Forum on Human Rights held in Iran, Tehran from 3 - 4 October 2022.

South Africa welcomed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) when it was adopted in 2015, between Iran and the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany (the P5+1 countries) as well as the European Union (EU). South Africa noted that the JCPOA was probably the most important diplomatic achievement in the area of nuclear non-proliferation since the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231 (2015) endorsed the JCPOA and lifted all nuclear-related sanctions against Iran.

However, in May 2018, the US - under the administration of former President Donald Trump –unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA and re-imposed all US sanctions lifted under the agreement. This has tentatively remained the *status quo* under President Biden, with the US preferring to negotiate with Iran on the terms of its return to the JCPOA. This follows Iran’s approach (in response to the US withdrawal) to gradually reduce its compliance with the JCPOA in the face of the US’s enforcement of punitive sanctions against it, in a *quid pro quo* manner. The other parties to the JCPOA have also been involved in efforts to determine the terms under which both the US and Iran would return to compliance with the agreement.

South Africa has strongly supported the talks taking place between Iran and the United States and continues to encourage all Parties, especially the United States and Iran, to undertake every effort to reinstate the Plan of Action in full and without delay. South Africa reiterates that given the current outstanding issues on the agreement, only strong political will on the side of Iran and the United States to reach an agreement, can break the deadlock.

1. We are concerned about discrimination and oppression based on race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion and origin as outlined by our Constitution. In this regard, South Africa makes its views heard in different forums, depending on the context and individual incidents. We will engage with Iran on concerns we have regarding discrimination and violence against women.
2. No.