**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**FRIDAY, 4 MARCH 2022**

**DUE DATE: 18 MARCH 2022**

**701. The Leader of the Opposition (DA) to ask the President of the Republic:**

(1) What are the reasons for his reported dismay with the call by Minister Pandor, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, for Russia to withdraw from Ukraine;

(2) whether the Government’s withdrawal of its initial strong statement, calling on Russia to withdraw, signals its unwillingness to publicly condemn the trampling of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the democratic Ukraine by the Russian Federation’s illegal invasion; if not, on what date is it envisaged that his Government will publicly and unequivocally condemn the Russian Federation’s illegal invasion of Ukraine;

(3) whether he was informed that the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms T R Modise, and the Chief of the SA National Defence Force, General Rudzani Maphwanya, attended a cocktail function hosted by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic on 24 February 2022; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) on what date was he informed that the specified persons attended the cocktail while the Russian Federation was busy invading Ukraine, (b) what disciplinary action does he intend to take in this regard and (c) does it represent the Government’s position on the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine?

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**REPLY**

1. I have not expressed dismay at anything the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation has done in fulfilment of her mandate.
2. South Africa’s position on the conflict in Ukraine has been articulated on several occasions, most recently in my response to Questions for Oral Reply in the National Assembly on 17 March 2022, where I stated the following:

*“The international community needs to work together to achieve a cessation of hostilities and to prevent further loss of life and displacement of civilians in Ukraine. It needs to support meaningful dialogue towards a lasting and meaningful peace, which ensures the security and stability of all nations.*

*“As a country, we are committed to the articles of the United Nations Charter, including the principle that all members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means. We support the principle that members should refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of other states.*

*"That is why, at the UN General Assembly Emergency Special Session, South Africa strongly urged all sides to uphold international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as the principles of the UN Charter, including sovereignty as well.*

*“While there are people within our country and elsewhere that want South Africa to adopt a more adversarial position, our position seeks to contribute to the creation of conditions that make the achievement of a durable resolution of the conflict possible.*

*“Our approach is informed by an analysis of the causes of this conflict. This includes a view shared by many leading scholars, politicians and other people, that the war could have been avoided if NATO had heeded the warnings from among its own leaders and officials over the years that its eastward expansion would lead to greater, not less, instability in the region.*

*“While it is important to understand and articulate the causes of the conflict, and advocate for peace building measures, we cannot condone the use of force or violation of international law.*

*“We also need to recognise that coercive measures, such as sanctions outside of the legal prescripts of the United Nations, may serve to prolong and intensify the conflict.”*

1. Many countries have diplomatic representation in South Africa. It is the practice of our government that when a diplomatic mission is hosting a key event, a Minister is assigned to represent our government.

This applies to all countries represented in South Africa. South Africa will continue with this diplomatic practice, which all diplomatic missions expect. The assignment of Ministers to these events is coordinated by State Protocol. This practice is also extended in all our diplomatic missions abroad when they are hosting such events.