

**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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**QUESTION**

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

1. With regard to her department’s media release of 24 February 2022 wherein South Africa calls on Russia to immediately withdraw its forces from Ukraine in line with the United Nations Charter, as well as the contents of the newsletter by the President of the Republic, Mr M C Ramaphosa, on 7 March 2022, wherein he explains that South Africa abstained from voting in last week’s United Nations resolution on the escalating conflict between Russia and its neighbour Ukraine because the resolution did not foreground the call for meaningful engagement (details furnished), what exactly is South Africa’s latest policy position regarding the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine;
2. Whether the Government intends to put pressure on Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine; if not, why not; if so, what are the details of the steps that the Government is going to take in this regard ? **NW1085E**

**REPLY**

1. South Africa remains deeply concerned by the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. We welcome the commencement of talks between Ukraine and Russia. We hope that these discussions will lead to a diplomatic solution that will result in a sustainable political solution. South Africa is of the view that this armed conflict, like all others, will result in unnecessary human suffering and destruction with global ramifications. In situations of conflict, the most vulnerable tend to suffer most, during and post the conflict.

It is regrettable that at a time when the world is struggling to emerge from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seized with a conflict that will further delay the world’s recovery. UN Secretary-General, Guterres reminded us of this when he stated that the conflict will have a huge impact on the “global economy in a moment when we are emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and so many developing countries need to have space for the recovery”.

The UN was founded after the horrors of the Second World War, with the aim of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. It is for this reason that the Charter of the United Nations enjoins all member states to settle their disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace, security, and justice are not endangered.

We stress that peace is best built through diplomacy and dialogue within the framework of the institutions of global dialogue, especially the United Nations. It is important for all nations to respect and uphold the principles of international law, including international humanitarian law and the provisions of the UN Charter.

The UN is now in its 76th year of existence and the events of the last two weeks have again reminded us of the urgent need to reform the UN, especially the UN Security Council, which is long overdue. We need a Council free from the legacy of the Cold War so that it can genuinely be the space where the community of nations comes together to resolve conflict and build a more just and peaceful world.

South Africa always appreciates the value that dialogue has in averting a crisis and de-escalating conflict. This is in line with our strong commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict. In this regard, we also urge the Security Council to utilise existing tools at its disposal in support of the pacific settlement of disputes. We also believe that the Good Offices of the UN Secretary-General could make a positive contribution in finding a lasting solution to this conflict and should be utilised.

We urge all parties to approach the situation in a spirit of compromise, with all sides upholding human rights, abiding by their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. A diplomatic solution to the problem should address the security concerns of the parties.

South Africa continues to support and encourage regional initiatives such as the Minsk Agreements, and we welcome the work of the Normandy Format, the Trilateral Contact Group and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The situation in Ukraine should not be allowed to affect negatively other priorities of the international community and the rest of the work of the United Nations. We furthermore note with concern that not all situations of conflict have received the same attention, indeed whilst there is this focus on Ukraine, long-standing situations that the Security Council is seized with continue without resolution. It is necessary that we devote equal attention to other long-standing conflicts where the UN Charter and human rights are being violated.

1. South Africa continues to encourage all the parties, through quiet diplomacy, within all relevant international mechanisms, such as the United Nations (UN) including BRICS, to strengthen all diplomatic efforts to avoid an escalation of tensions, and work towards an inclusive, sustainable and peaceful solution based on cooperation and dialogue. In this regard South Africa encourages all parties to approach dialogue with the spirit of compromise in order to move the process forward without accusing any party, something that will not be helpful in the efforts to resolve the conflict. South Africa stands by its principled position of peaceful resolution of conflicts. South Africa reiterates the obligation of all the parties to fully implement all of their respective commitments under the Minsk Agreements, which provide the most promising roadmap for the peaceful settlement of the current hostilities, including in eastern Ukraine, and to advance the cause of peace and stability in the broader region. South Africa cannot be seen to be taking sides on the conflict as this goes against her principle/s. In addition, South Africa has good bilateral relations with both countries, it would therefore be unwise to take a different position that could compromise these bilateral relations.

**COMPILER DETAILS**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Minister signs Parliamentary Reply No 904.

AMBASSADOR NN LOSI

ACTING DIRECTOR–GENERAL: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

DATE:

PARLIAMENTARY REPLY 904 IS APPROVED / NOT APPROVED / AMENDED.

COMMENT/S

DR GNM PANDOR, MP

MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION