

## **DIRCO should get its priorities straight**

By **Willem Faber MP** – DA Member of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation

Honourable Chairperson and Members,

I am going to start of my speech exactly the same as last year.

The vision and mission of DIRCO in short is to champion an African continent, which is prosperous, peaceful, democratic and by this to manage South Africa's national interest. DIRCO should play a dynamic role in the improvement of lives of South Africans by utilising its bilateral relations and global footprint effectively and profitably. This is the role of DIRCO.

Now let's start with the African Renaissance Fund (ARF).

Former President Thabo Mbeki initiated the African Renaissance Fund for economic regeneration of the African continent by providing humanitarian assistance to struggling African countries. During the last decade, this fund became the open wallet for government to distribute funds anywhere, as per the Executive's decision.

Again, I have to stress that Cuba is not situated in Africa, but it is the only non-African country that has been lucratively supported for many years by the ANC government through the African Renaissance Fund.

The African continent continues to experience an increase in natural disasters through climate change, as recently seen in KwaZulu-Natal. Through the ARF, government should help restore human dignity by bringing relief to people living in distress when these humanitarian situations arise. The ARF should also be used to create sustainable food production to enhance food security, especially now with the Russian war in Ukraine hitting an already struggling Africa.

With Covid-19 and now the invasion of Ukraine, that the ANC government doesn't want to condemn, South Africans are finding it ever harder to keep up with the rising cost of living.

It is a shame that the ANC government was not willing to assist when, in 2020, pictures emerged of children searching for food at the Calvinia dumps. When we visited the same dump in 2022, we found even more children desperately searching for food between the trash.

Minister, charity begins at home. Yet the ANC government decided to rather donate R50 million to Cuba.

In a portfolio committee meeting, Deputy Minister Botes said that South Africa would be donating R50 million from the ARF to Cuba for food security purposes because of the extraterritorial sanctions that were promulgated by the United States, which is absolutely nonsense.

The US embargo does not block food or medicine to Cuba from the United States. Exports of food products and agricultural commodities from the US to Cuba increased by 44.5% in 2021 to \$29.8 million.

With South Africa already on its knees, please forget about your party's historical alliances and think of the millions of poor South Africans looking to this government to make the right calls to help them in their hour of need.

In conclusion Minister, I would also like you to note that if South Africa is implicitly choosing Russia and its political allies' side in an economic war, it will choose R16 billion over R1.131 trillion in trade with NATO Countries.

I thank you.