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MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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PROCEEDINGS OF MINI PLENARY SESSION – GOOD HOPE CHAMBER

Members of the mini plenary session met at the Good Hope Chamber at 14:01.

The Chairperson, Ms Z Majozi, took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 6 - International Relations and Co-operation:

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION:

House Chairperson, the chairperson of the portfolio committee, hon Supra Mahumapelo, and all hon members. I have the honor to present Budget Vote 6 of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation on a day that carries the weight

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and indeed the deep contradictions of our society and history. Seventy-eight years ago, on 26 May 1948, in an electoral system reserved exclusively for white voters, the National Party won most seats in the House of Assembly. That victory paved the way for the legislative machinery of apartheid, intensifying racial segregation and stripping most of the people of this land of their rights and freedoms. The scars of that machinery are still visible in our society today. Its fault lines continue to mark where people live, how they move, what opportunities they can access, and how freedom is experienced in their daily lives. Not far from us here, District Six is a living reminder of the effects of the Group Areas Act. President Nelson Mandela later characterized our country's situation with unmatched clarity when he described us as a country that was a pariah amongst nations. A detestable example of what is impermissible in the ordering of human relations and homeland of a crime against humanity.

This week also carries the triumphant weight of history. On 25 May 1994, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 919, terminating the arms embargo and ending the remaining sanctions against South Africa. This marked the end of South Africa's isolation following the 1994 democratic

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elections. It also marked our democratic nation's formal admission to the family of nations.

It is also fitting that yesterday, 25 May, we marked Africa Day. Indeed, as we table this budget of R7,227 000 000 for 2026-27, we do so with full awareness of this history. It is a history of pain whose consequences remain with us and a history of victory that gave our democracy a great responsibility to conduct foreign policy anchored in Ubuntu, justice, international law, dialogue, multilateralism, and the needs of our country and of our continent. In the 32 years of our democratic dispensation, successive democratically elected governments have been at the center of concretizing the achievements of our equality through legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. We table this budget at a time when international co-operation is under sustained pressure from unilateralism, economic cohesion, wars of aggression, deals of extraction, and a winner-takes-it-all approach to global relations. South Africa cannot afford to shed the responsibility that comes with its history. Our freedom is a product of international solidarity. South Africa must, in this moment, continue to discharge three tasks

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towards a better Africa and a better world. Africa is the centrepiece of our foreign policy. Our first task is to advance the interests and the voice of the African continent. This task begins with the pursuit of a stable, integrated, economically resilient Africa. Our diplomacy across the continent promotes bilateral relations, deepened regional co-operation, and collective alliance efforts around shared development priorities.

As chair of the AU Ministerial Committee on the follow-up and implementation of Agenda 2063, South Africa has a responsibility to support the continent's decade of acceleration with greater agency, stronger institutions, and the shared ownership of Africa's development agenda. Our nomination to the committee of Heads of State and Government on the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, AfCFTA, also reflects confidence in South Africa's commitment to continental economic integration. The AfCFTA must become a practical instrument for expanding intra-African trade, building regional value chains, advancing industrialization, and creating jobs. The AfCFTA has the potential for a common market of US\$3,4 trillion and a pathway to diversification, reduced dependency on external markets,

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and greater resilience of our economies. Yet intra-Africa trade remains too low, at just 16% for the continent and 21% for the Southern African Development Community, SADC, region. This is far below Europe at 68% and Asia at 59%. Africa's trade is also still heavily concentrated outside the continent. Over 50% of the continent's imports and exports are tied to just five economies, all outside Africa. This is the source of our vulnerability to external shocks. It is also why regional integration must move from aspiration to implementation.

I have recently hosted the SADC Ministers of Foreign Affairs Retreat in Skukuza, in the Kruger National Park, where Ministers reflected on the geopolitical developments affecting our region. The Ministers agree that SADC must be better prepared to respond to external shocks, whether they arise from conflict, climate disasters, food and fuel price volatility, public health emergencies, or the decisions of powerful actors far beyond our borders. Our region is home to 30% of the world's proven critical mineral reserves. We are also home to approximately 50% of the world's cobalt reserves, 20% of the world's graphite reserves, and 10% of the world's copper reserves. These resources, if harnessed properly, can

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propel our region's structural transformation. Countries in our region, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Tanzania, are taking bold policy steps to ensure that mineral endowment supports development. In our country, it has come through the critical mineral strategy. When South Africa assumes the full chairship of SADC in August 2026, our priorities will include deepening political cohesion, consolidating the SADC free trade area, reducing non-tariff barriers, and building regional value chains in agro-processing, critical minerals, beneficiation, pharmaceuticals, and other strategic sectors.

An integrated Africa cannot be built on conflict and instability. That is why our continental task also extends to peace and security. South Africa serves on the AU Peace Security Council at a time when parts of the continent continue to face armed conflict, unconstitutional changes of government, terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational organized crime. In the Great Lakes region, we continue to support efforts towards a political solution to the conflict in the Eastern DRC. In South Sudan, we will continue to support dialogue, institutional reform, and the full implementation of the revitalized peace agreement. South

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Africa also maintained its principled support for the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination in line with international law and United Nations resolutions. In all these areas, South Africa discharged its responsibility through diplomacy, mediation, regional solidarity, and a firm belief that Africa must shape its own future. We are antiwar and advocates for peace.

Our second task is to champion the reform of global governance and defend international co-operation. The world is changing, but many of these institutions still reflect old patterns of power. Developing countries continue to face unsustainable debt, unequal access to development finance, and growing pressures to align with powerful geopolitical blocs. South Africa's responsibility is to advance a fairer and more representative global order. This means continuing to call for reform of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, so that it can respond more effectively to contemporary global challenges. South Africa's G20 Presidency, under the theme of "Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability", gave expression to this responsibility. Amongst the important outcomes of our Presidency were two major reports, the G20 Africa Expert Panel Report on Growth, Debt, and Development: Opportunities for a

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New African Partnership and the report on the G20 Extraordinary Committee of Independent Experts on Global Inequality. We continue to work with partners, including AU, Brazil, Norway, and Spain, towards establishing the International Panel on Inequality, for which endorsement by the UN General Assembly is being sought later this year. In addition, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and government has adopted a decision profiling the key deliverables of the Johannesburg Summit, including the establishment of a G20 Continental Co-ordination Mechanism to strengthen coherence amongst the AU, UN, and G20 processes. Through BRICS, South Africa will continue to advance reform of global governance institutions and support the development of the new BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy. The expansion of BRICS to 11 members marks a significant milestone in the growing voice of the Global South in international affairs. It must also defend the rules that protect all nations, large and small. We have formed a group to defend the credibility of international law, hold states accountable for breaches, and protect the integrity of the international legal order. It was established to rally against complicity and impunity and support the collective enforcement of international law through concrete measures, including halting arms transfers, blocking weapons

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shipments, suspending procurements from Israeli firms, seizing energy exports, and pursuing accountability through national and international courts.

As a country that voluntarily dismantled its nuclear weapons programme, we continue to advocate for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and we will preside over the first review conference of the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons later this year.

Our third task is to use foreign policy as a lever to improve conditions at home. Foreign policy must ultimately speak to the lives of our people. Our foreign policy must support inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication, sustainable development, peace, and security. Our economic diplomacy is yielding results. As we speak today, 45% of our processed goods, including agricultural goods, are now traded within the continent. In 2025, South Africa's agricultural exports reached a record of US\$15,1 billion. In the first quarter of 2026, farm exports reached US\$3,7 billion, an increase of 11% year-on-year. This creates jobs at home in the processing plants and factories, including the logistic networks. These exports reach markets across Africa, the European Union, and

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Asia. They show how foreign policy can support jobs, production, and economic opportunities at home.

On migration. This means managing migration lawfully in a co-ordinated manner and based on evidence, data, and statistics. The law enforcement authorities must enforce the law regarding irregular migration, not private citizens. The police, border management, and labor inspectors must play their role. It means the protection of the fundamental rights of every person, secure borders, and an immigration system that is insulated from corruption. In line with President Ramaphosa's commitment as the pandemic preparedness champion of the African Union, South Africa will contribute US\$5 million to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, to help with the fight against Ebola, as hon members are aware of the outbreak in most parts of West Africa and some parts of East Africa, and in the DRC.

Let me conclude by returning once more to President Mandela, who reminded us that because ...

Our nation arrived late at the festival of liberty; it must value freedom like the apple of its eye.

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This budget enables South Africa to discharge its responsibilities and obligations on the continent and beyond. And let me take this opportunity to thank the director-general, DG, and all staff of the department for their continued support in our work, the portfolio committee, as led by the chairperson, hon Mahumapelo, and all members of the portfolio committee and all the alternates. I also want to take this opportunity to thank my wife, who is also here today, who supports my work across the globe. Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Thank you very much, hon Minister ... [Interjections.] ... Hon Minister, I thought you would also congratulate Mabhakaniya [Orlando Pirates], but I can see that ... I am sure you are the type that is number three on the league standings. Yeah, I can see you are the number three gang.

Mr S O R MAHUMAPELO: Chairperson of the day, hon Jozi Majozi, I also want to greet hon Minister Lamola and your collective of the two Deputy Ministers, the director-general, DG, and your collective of bureaucrats and ... [Inaudible.] ... in Department of International Relations and Co-operation, hon

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members of the portfolio committee, and those who are here today.

Hon members, a budget is an instrument of revolution. So we in the ANC understand that a budget is this instrument that we must use to make sure that ultimately, we achieve the long-term strategic goal of building a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and a prosperous society.

So this budget, Minister, at your disposal, R7,2 billion, among other things, gives you and the collective in the department an opportunity to use it as an instrument to deepen and achieve multilateralism to make sure that we build global solidarity. To ensure that we build south-to-south relations. To continue to pursue our resolve to ensure that there's deepening of transformation of global institutions of governance, which is the United Nations Security Council and all its auxiliary bodies. It gives us an opportunity to continue to engage with our comrades and progressive forces all over the world, particularly in the African continent so that we can achieve the strategic objectives of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement. It gives us an opportunity to say to the African Union that your theme of reparations for

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Africa is a correct theme and its manifestation must continue to reflect in the impact we are making by implementing the strategic objectives of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement.

It also gives us an opportunity to continue to engage our former colonizers. In our instance, it will be the United Kingdom to say to them that reparations in the context of South Africa must, amongst other things, mean that resources from Europe, particularly in the UK, must continue to flow through investments - not only in South Africa - but also in the entirety of the African continent.

It gives you and the department the opportunity to continue to improve the audit outcomes - not only for the Auditor-General to be happy on the extent to which we are meeting the requirements the Auditor-General lays down from one financial year to another - but for the outcomes of the audit to have a practical meaning for our people on the ground on how these investments that we get through economic relations we pursue through the Department of International Relations and Co-operation impact on their lives to make sure that poverty,

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inequality, and unemployment become something that future generations will not inherit from current generations.

That is why in the ANC we say a budget is an instrument of revolution. And we know that in the course of us pursuing this revolution, there will be forces of retrogression. There will be forces of digression. There will be forces that seek to take us back to where we were in the apartheid South Africa through sophisticated methods of objecting to every transformation that we seek to bring to our nation.

To that, we say to the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, remain relentless, remain focused on the strategic objective. We know that these resources at our disposal give you, on behalf of the Republic of South Africa, an opportunity to go all over the world to pursue the objective of building a better Africa and a better world. A better world in which these wars which are raging will be something of the past in the near future, as future generations will be inheriting from us the sweat of the revolution that we are involved in.

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As the portfolio committee, we've got some proposals that we want to make to the department. Proposal one: We are suggesting that the immovable assets of South Africa located in the missions all over the world, which are there to pursue our foothold in South Africa, there must be discussions between Department of International Relations and Co-operation, Finance and the Public Investment Corporation, PIC, and Public Works to look at better, more economic and commercially making sense approach in as far as the usage of those immovable assets are concerned.

Proposal two: We are suggesting that foreign direct investments coming into the country have to be contextualized in both quantitative and qualitative terms, which therefore means that as we decode the implications of these investments, we must check as to how they are helping us to reduce poverty, to deal with inequality, and to deal with unemployment, and to make sure that we reduce the migration patterns of people from the rural areas to the centre. Therefore, moving from periphery to the centre.

Proposal three: We are suggesting that we must engage BRICS Plus so that it must engage on matters that have ensued

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between Iran, Israel, and the United States of America because Iran is a member of BRICS Plus so those engagements that are taking place on this geopolitics that are occurring, our engagements as proponents of multilateralism, are in the context of BRICS Plus as South Africa.

We are also proposing that there must be ongoing discussions between ourselves and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition on how the economy can be improved by bringing more investments to South Africa. Grace Lee Boggs says: "revolution is not for the lily-livered, it's not for those who are sitting praising at all material times"

Setswana:

Ke a leboga Modulasetilo. Ke lebogile.

English:

Mr C V SHONGWE: Chair, is it parliamentary - because at first uBaba uMchunu changed the word immediately into later - and now we are misleading our people that unity means something else. Is it parliamentary that the government of national unity, GNU this side is clapping hands, but the GNU that side is not clapping hands?

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon member, that's not a point of order. Can we please proceed? Your point is not sustained. I will now recognize hon Douglas.

Mr W M DOUGLAS: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, Deputy Ministers, hon members, fellow South Africans, I greet you all in the name of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and in the language of the First Nation Aboriginal people of this land, the Khoi and San.

[Unofficial language spoken.]

English:

As we celebrate Africa Day, we need to understand the moment we are in globally. South Africa stands today at the centre of the greatest geopolitical and economic shifts of our generation. We are witnessing the collapse of one world order and the violent birth of another. The age of uncontested Western unipolar dominance is weakening, and Brics is expanding. The global South is rising. Alternative pay systems are emerging. The race for critical minerals, AI supremacy, energy security, shipping corridors, and technological control has begun, and nations that fail to adapt to this new reality

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will become economic colonies in the 21st century. Modern warfare is no longer fought only with tanks and missiles and drones.

Wars are now fought through sanctions, trade routes, cyber warfare, AI systems, food supply chains, financial systems, media narratives, and technological dependency, and South Africa is now directly caught in those global battles. We have seen growing tensions with the United States, with our ambassador kicked out, our President summoned and falsely accused in the Oval Office of white genocide. We have seen threats around AGOA based upon widely debunked white genocide and Africana refugee programme, which is belacheliking, so to say.

We have seen tariff wars escalating globally; we have seen attempts to succeed Western Cape from South Africa as a sovereign state; we have seen the weaponisation of sanctions and international financial systems. We have seen South Africa dragged into the centre of the geopolitical storms following the International Court of Justice, ICJ, genocide case against Israel, and yet despite all of this, Budget Vote 6 still behaves as it's a normal world. It is not a normal world. The

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Department of International Relations and Co-operation still operates with a diplomatic philosophy designed for 1994 while the world has moved into 2026.

The department still measures success through meetings held, forums attended, reports compiled and protocol ceremonies. But our people do not eat meetings; young people do not find jobs through diplomatic photo opportunities and township businesses do not enter export markets through conferences. South Africa's expanded unemployment rate now exceeds 41%. Youth unemployment remains above 45%. More than 18 million of Africans survive through social grants, which is not enough, and yet this Budget Vote gives the Department of International Relations and Co-operation roughly a two percent increase, an increase already swallowed by inflation and currency volatility.

At this very precise moment, global geopolitical competition is intensifying. South Africa is shrinking diplomatic capacity because of austerity budgets, and this is from the Government of National Unity, GNU. That contradiction is dangerous. The Department of International Relations and Co-operation cannot simply remain a protocol department. Every South African

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embassy abroad must become an economic command centre for national development. Besides normal embassy and consular services, every ambassador must become an economic field marshal for investment attraction, technology transfer, industrial scholarships, skills development, market access and tourism expansion.

We need to stop asking how many meetings were held and saying, how many jobs we created; how many export contracts were signed; how many towns did your businesses entered global markets; how many industrial partnerships were secured for black business and how much investment actually reached the poor communities. That is the true measure of the diplomacy and of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation's success. South Africa is not a poor country; we are poorly structured in our economy, sitting on immense strategic wealth, like the Minister said, we control over 70% of the world's platinum reserves and we sit on the most important maritime trade routes on earth to the Cape Sea Route.

We possess massive, untapped oil and gas potential, and yet, despite this wealth, millions of people still live in abject

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poverty, live in shacks for 30 years like animals, without employment and complete hopelessness, because the mandate of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation hasn't translated into a better life for all. This is because South Africa still operates inside a colonial economic structure where raw material wealth leaves our shores while poverty remains behind. For centuries Africa exported all our stuff, gold, diamonds and cobalt.

We exported everything and we imported finished products, and this meant that there are no jobs for our people; there's just poverty for our people. In this particular department, when I went to all the events at the embassies in China, Europe and everywhere, all I saw was white monopoly capital; all I saw was the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, JSE, people, standing there and they were getting the businesses, and they were getting the opportunities. But you don't see black, young people there; you don't see black women there; you don't see black disabled people there; you don't see coloured businesses there and you don't see Khoi-San businesses there.

You only see the same system that has been running this country the last 30 years, which is the same extractive model

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that was still in place from apartheid right up until now. While China built the entire future cities and the industrial corridors for R1,4 billion and the India does the same, South Africa debates austerity, and we only have 65 million people while the department's vacancies have been frozen and our municipalities fail, and there are no support from our partners who are willing to give us support in the BRICS environment.

We can get funding from China, and we get funding from the New Development Bank, but we refuse to do that; we refuse to take loans from the International Monetary Fund, IMF with conditionalities. That means we've got to cut, cut, cut instead of grow, grow, grow.

What we need to do is grow the economy, and we need to use the Department of International Relations and Co-operation to do that. We should not be managing decline; we should be building an African economic powerhouse. A 2% increase will not fix the information communication technology, ICT, problems, in the Department of International Relations and Co-operation; it will not help solve the problem of embassies which are dilapidated or consular services weakened by frozen vacancies,

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and there is no budget to take delegations of black businesses, youth entrepreneurs and women to our foreign missions and to all these great amazing exhibitions and things that can actually take the products and sell it in those places.

You don't see that happening. Why has it not happened for 30 years? The MK Party supports Pan-Africanism, African industrialisation, Brics co-operation and we are saying that enough is enough. We must make South Africa first; that must be our motto. You must put the poorest of the poor first. The Department of International Relations and Co-operation mustn't cater for the elites; it must cater for the poor. Right now, the Department of International Relations and Co-operation is not catering for the poor; it's only catering for the people who have the money and who have the wealth.

Foreign policy without economic transformation is meaningless; a flag without land means nothing; an anthem without ownership means nothing; political freedom without economic freedom is an incomplete liberation, and our liberation is yet to be done. We need to fight and we need to take South Africa and go out there to state the things of the past right and say,

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before we have foreign direct investment, FDI, and before you bring the people to invest in bold stuff, we need land justice first; we need our people to get our land back first, otherwise we just enriching the same thieves that stole the land from our people that are standing there and living in Beijing and everywhere in our name in South Africa.

They are getting all the deals and giving nothing to our people, leaving them poor. Enough is enough, and we don't want that anymore. This budget comes before this House while South Africa faces a dead burden approaching R6 trillion collapsing infrastructure. Yet we have so much opportunity in the world today. We must have a doctrine of economic diplomacy; a doctrine of industrialisation; a doctrine of beneficiation at source; a doctrine of sovereign development; a doctrine that replaces the poor and marginalised majority at the centre of foreign policy.

We will not be bullied by anybody; we will not be told who our friends will be; we will not be told who our enemies will be, and we will definitely not be told what we can do with BEE; what we can do with land reform, or anything else that

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pertains to our people. The MK is going to stop this nonsense.
Thank you.

Mr M CHETTY: Greetings and salutations on the House
Chairperson, members of the portfolio committee, fellow South
Africans. This department is led by an absentee Minister who
himself has failed to adhere to a simple commitment that he
had volunteered to the committee, and that was to honour his
commitment of attending one, just one portfolio committee per
parliamentary quarter, and he failed. The Ministers is more
interested in shining his marbles for the upcoming ANC
Congress and the prospects of a top-six position. With the
latest Phala Phala impeachment debacle, he must be hedging his
bets. Can you be any more irresponsible than that?

Then we wonder why the department is in chaos issuing content
degree positions on international conflict scenarios. There is
no wonder the Department of International Relations and Co-
operation is spending enough time during crisis management ...
[Interjections.]

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Chetty, can you please take your seat, there is a point of order. Minister, what are you rising on? Order, hon members.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon Chairperson, let me thank you very much for the opportunity. I'm rising on the point of order because the hon member keeps on referring to the issues that we are not here for. Where does the issue of the top-six leadership enter on the budget of the department? Can he focus on the speech? If he doesn't have the speech, he must just forfeit the speaking rights. Thank you, speaker.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Deputy Minister, I will determine once he proceeds to see if the speech is relevant to the Budget Vote. I have been listening as well, and I will determine in time when he continues. Continue, hon Chatty.

Mr M CHETTY: Can you be any more irresponsible than that? Then we wonder, why this department is in chaos, issuing contradictory positions on international conflict scenario? It is no wonder the Department of International Relations and Co-

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operation spends more time chasing management as opposed to being an active driver of our foreign policy. But we hear the Budget Vote 6 in the Portfolio committee in a very basic format, and we wonder why? Let's address what's conveniently not mentioned in the budget. The shenanigans surrounding the R180 million New York pilot project.

After international embarrassment implication, ambassadors, Ministers, officials and the Guptas, these shenanigans have died in natural death. Now defunct ex Minister Pando who took the moral high ground promising this very Parliament that heads will roll over the debacle, sadly, the only head that rolled was her very own. Let's discuss the vanity project of the Pan-African Parliament and the millions it caused us to keep it afloat. Monthly rentals of R3,2 million paid to Gallagher Estate. The current long delayed infamous Pan-African Parliament precinct has only cost us in excess of R100 million, and that excludes the R40 million a year rental to Gallagher Estates.

Minister, with the current situation, South Africa cannot afford this project anymore. Over R500 billion has already been spent on rentals and with nothing more than a balanced

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piece of land to show thus far. It's three years after the promised oil turning lies, a field of wild grass, wetlands and a sanctuary for butterflies. Oh, and let's not forget about the official implicated in selling the title deeds of the very land without the department's knowledge. All of these millions wasted on a vanity project in the name of the late visionary leader, Tata Mandela, who must be turning in his grave to see the squander and periphery that the ANC cronies are there in his name, but millions of our youth are unemployed and families are without homes.

Talking about jobs and homes, we have the African Renaissance Fund, which should be called the ANC Renaissance Fund because, as much as the comrades tried to hoodwink the committee into believing that Cuba is on the African continent, hence the justification of millions of rands in donations are being channelled Cuba's way. All of this aid is centred to Cuban citizens, while our very own poor South Africans are left both jobless and homeless. Furthermore, allow me to take this Parliament into confidence and expose the audacity in which both the leadership of the Pan-African Parliament and its membership countries dismissed South Africa's interests as the host nation.

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The South African delegation made an earnest appeal to the Pan-African Parliament leadership to postpone the plenary sittings to respect our Freedom Day and Worker's Day. When this was put to the plenary, South Africa failed to get a single country to second the request. This is the lack of respect that the member countries of the Pan-African Parliament have, for the millions of rands that we waste to host them on our South African soil. The age-old Chinese proverb, "never bite the hand that feeds you", definitely didn't resonate with the behaviour of the membership.

This further indicates the years of proposed submission to terminate the host nation agreement that South Africa has with the Pan-African Parliament. As I conclude to my fellow South Africans, if you're living in Johannesburg, Tshwane, Nelson Mandela Bay or eThekweni, and you want to see the change from where you are living, improve the lives of citizens in the City of Cape Town, right here, in the Western Cape to uMngeni, in KwaZulu-Natal, where I come from, then on 4 November, you go out and vote for the DA for a better city. Thank you.

Ms N M MHLONGO: House Chairperson, the EFF rejects Budget Vote No 6: International Relations and Co-operation. We do so

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because we are convinced that we have lost direction in terms of knowing what our foreign policy priorities are and how we should pursue those.

Just yesterday, the continent celebrated 63 years of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity, OAU, whose primary purpose was to free the continent from the tentacles of colonial oppression and exploitation. Today, we are reminded that Africa's strength has always been found in unity, culture, innovation, and hope for a better future, from the richness of our earth in terms of minerals and raw materials. We honour the unbreakable spirit of the continent that refused to die, from the shackles of slavery and colonialism rose, and through the fires of liberation struggles, we stood tall. The founding fathers of the OAU and its recent iteration, the African Union prioritise the economic and social unification of Africa because they correctly realised we can never develop in the silos we were condemned to by European colonialism.

To demonstrate the lack of seriousness to African unity, the government led by Mr Ramaphosa deployed well-known xenophobe Gayton McKenzie to speak on behalf of our government on such a

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historic and important day. There is no self-respecting Africanist that can stomach the bile that Gayton vomits each time he speaks about our continent. We salute the African ambassadors for rejecting the disrespect from the Government of National Unity to spit in the faces of our forefathers on the vision about the unity of Africa by rejecting to be addressed by that nonentity called Gayton.

The budget allocated to this department is simply not sufficient. The almost 2% increase will be impactful for the central role the department should be playing in forging African unity and cementing our place as a force in global affairs.

The department has a vacancy rate of 26,3%, severely crippling its capacity to lead South Africa's charge on the global stage. There is no plan to address this almost treasonous neglect of the department in this budget. A country faced with high levels of unemployment, and we have a department that has no plans in its budget to fill all vacant posts. Every year, the department acknowledges that spending is mainly affected by exchange rate fluctuations that are caused by main currencies as well as local currency, and 60% of the

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department's budget is spent abroad. Yet, to this day, they fail to convince National Treasury to ensure that the appropriation allocated to the department addresses this exchange rate volatility.

At each and every committee meeting we have had with our missions abroad, there has been a consistent outcry about the information, communications, and technology, ICT, challenges these missions have, and, yet again, no funding has been allocated for ICT modernisation for our foreign missions for this financial year. It is quite telling that the R174 million allocated for properties will only cover three major projects: in Denmark, the London residential accommodation, and the London chancery boiler system. Yet, our infrastructure here in the Southern African Development Community, SADC, and in Africa is dilapidated. Our property in Zimbabwe is like a glorified shack. In Zambia, we don't even own our residential accommodation or chancery. In Mozambique, you have failed to ensure that the properties are transferred to the South African government since the dawn of democracy, Minister.

This department cannot do the simple things like that because the Minister himself is not serious. He has completely

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neglected his duties to account to the committee and always sends his deputies to stand for him. He even goes a full quarter without appearing even once in the committee.

We have called for the African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund to be expanded to send aid to Cuba, our friends who stood firmly by our side as South Africa during apartheid, and for South Africa to continue the fight at the International Court of Justice on the case against the state of Israel for the genocide they continue to perpetuate in Palestine.

In the 2025-2026 financial year, we saw a slight increase in the budget due to us hosting G20 meetings and summits. It is six months later, Minister. What are the practical achievements and benefits that came with hosting the summit? Where are the trade agreements that were signed that have now attracted investment and job opportunities for our people? We need a return on investment, and we warned in the committee that the target you set for the department is just a tick-box exercise with no practical, measurable outcomes.

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In the face of imperialism being emboldened by the Trump administration, we need to continue to raise our voice in solidarity with the people of Venezuela and call out the barbaric behaviour of abducting President Maduro and his wife, Cilia Maduro, as a stand by the United States to force regime change and seek to put in place a puppet government that will sell the soil and oil of Venezuela.

We must once again salute the brave Iranian Revolutionary Guard for their unwavering commitment to never bow down to imperialism, even when the United States killed their supreme leader to seek regime change to impress the bloodthirsty hounds of Israel. Against all odds, the brave soldiers of Iran have secured the Strait of Hormuz despite Trump's meltdowns.

We continue to fund observer missions for election purposes in SADC, and yet we have a government that fails to call out the election shenanigans of former liberation movements that want to hold on to power by hook or by crook. We should change the way we do things. We cannot continue to have diplomacy that does not primarily focus on economic diplomacy. There is no justification as to why the Department of International Relations and Co-operation fails to ensure that ...

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, can you please take your seat?

Ms N M MHLONGO: What is it? I've got 30 seconds left.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): No, you must listen to me. What do you mean when you say, "What is it?" Take a seat. There is a hand.

Ms M L MATHOPA: House Chairperson, on a point of order: The hon member at the podium cannot refer to the Minister as a "nonentity". She must withdraw that. Even if she has passed that, she must withdraw that, Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Alright, we will ... I do not ... Hon member, did you say the Minister is a "nonentity"?

Ms N M MHLONGO: House Chairperson, I said the Minister is a xenophobe. That is what he is and a nonentity on the global stage. That one is a fact. He is a nonentity. He tried to go to Morocco to watch the final of the Confederation of African Football Champions League. No one even bothered to greet him

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because he is a nonentity. He is a nonstarter in politics. I have no respect.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, even that is unparliamentary, to call a Minister a xenophobe. Can you please withdraw that?

Ms N M MHLONGO: He is a xenophobe. He says it on every platform, that "abahambe" [they must leave].

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, I am asking you to withdraw that.

Ms N M MHLONGO: Can I finish my speech and then ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, I am directing you to withdraw that.

Ms N M MHLONGO: To withdraw what? That he is a xenophobe?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Yes.

Ms N M MHLONGO: Do you want me to lie?

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo ...

IsiXhosa:

Nksz. N M MHLONGO: Kulungile ke, ndicela uyithethe ngesiNtu mama. Sihlalo weNdlu, ndicela uyibeke ngesiNtu ukuba yintoni.

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, I am asking you to withdraw that.

Ms N M MHLONGO: House Chairperson, I withdraw, but ...

IsiXhosa:

... ucaphukela abantu balapha eAfrika.

English:

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: No, on a point of order, Chair ...

IsiXhosa:

Nksz. N M MHLONGO: Ucaphukela abantu baseAfrika.

English:

He is a xenophobe!

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Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: On a point of order, Chair ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo ...

Ms N M MHLONGO: He is not embarrassed. Why are you making me withdraw that if he is not embarrassed?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, you know the Rules of the House. You cannot cast aspersions on a Minister or a member of this House without bringing substantive proof, and you know the processes. So, we cannot go ...

Ms N M MHLONGO: The proof is that ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): No, hon Mhlongo! We cannot continue on that, and we all know the Rules of the House, and we must abide by them. Please continue.

Ms N M MHLONGO: House Chairperson, now, we should ...

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: On a point of order, Chair ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mente-Nkuna?

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Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: Chairperson, thank you. Your Table staff must please monitor our hands. I have had my hand up on the platform. House Chairperson, firstly, you must also acquaint yourself with the Rules. There is no Rule that says a person must be called to order on a point that has long passed. Rule 92 is clear. You raise a point of order when the incident is taking place. You do not wait and then raise it later, and you should not entertain that. Secondly, Gayton McKenzie, every day when he takes a platform, says: Africans, "mabahambe" [let them leave].

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mente-Nkuna ...

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: He says "mabahambe". Is that not xenophobic? He is xenophobic.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mente-Nkuna, we do not address each other by names. Either you say "Mr" or "hon member". You cannot just say "Gayton McKenzie". We do not address ...

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Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: No! Please, Chair! Mr Gayton McKenzie, every time he takes a platform, he calls for Africans to leave South Africa. Is that not xenophobic?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mente-Nkuna.

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: I am listening, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Yes, you are out of order. We have passed on that and as we are ...

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: We have not passed. We are on it.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): You are wrong.

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: You cannot ask my member to withdraw that when Gayton McKenzie himself is xenophobic.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mente-Nkuna, I have asked the member to withdraw, and she did withdraw, and we are continuing. My ruling is final, and we are done with that. The member is now at the podium and finishing the remaining seconds of her speech. So, we have passed that, and I have

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ruled on that, and we are not going to go back to that, and for you ...

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: My point exactly, Chairperson! You shouldn't have entertained that other point of order.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): No, hon Mente-Nkuna. IT, can you please switch off the hon Mente-Nkuna's microphone? We want to continue with the proceedings of the budget. Hon Mhlongo, please proceed.

Ms N M MHLONGO: House Chairperson, wait. Do not move my time. I have got a problem. When you stopped me here, my time was left at 40 seconds. As I am sitting down, I see it going down, 45, 44, and now they have put it at 45. Why? Call your Table staff to order. Put back my one second. I want it. Start there. Please ask them. There they are; ask them. I can't be disrespected in that manner.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, please take a seat. Hon member?

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Mr M SHIKWAMBANA: Chairperson, I think you are missing something here. The hon Mente-Nkuna raised a point of order, and the order was on you, to say you allowed the member there to entertain a point after the speaker at the podium had already passed on it. Now, you have allowed her and even took a decision based on that issue. The matter that the hon Mente-Nkuna is raising is to ask why you allowed that. Can you please rule on that and agree that you were wrong in the first place to allow her to speak on a point that the speaker at the podium had already passed?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon member, as much as you are saying, you can see the speaker at the podium has not moved. She is still here. Each and every member here has a right to raise a point of order according to the speech. So, the fact that it has moved two seconds after or 10 seconds after is neither here nor there to whether they have moved or not. If a member is raising that point, they have a right to do so. I gave an opportunity to the hon Mhlongo to confirm if she did, and she confirmed something else. That is when I said: Can you please withdraw that? I had not even entertained that part of the point of order raised by the hon Mathoba. So, in fact, you are out of order yourself, and you are wrong in

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saying such because I said the hon Mhlongo must withdraw what she said here at the podium. It was not because of the point raised by the hon Mathoba. [Interjections.]

So ... No, do not engage. I am not asking you to engage. I want to give the hon Mhlongo an opportunity to continue with her speech. Hon Mhlongo, you were saying your time was eaten there. How much time did you have? I saw that it was 40. I am not sure whether it was 40. It is fine. I will even give you ... Give the hon Mhlongo the 47 seconds so that she can continue.

Ms N M MHLONGO: The Table staff is out of order. You must call them to order.

Now, we should change the way we do things. We cannot continue to have diplomacy that does not primarily focus on economic diplomacy. There is no justification as to why the Department of International Relations and Co-operation fails to ensure that we have trade attachés in our missions to ensure economic diplomacy is prioritised.

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The progressive forces of the world can rely on the unwavering solidarity of the EFF, as we are the only organisation here in South Africa that does not speak with a forked tongue when it comes to our internationalist outlook.

We reject this Budget Vote with the contempt it deserves, as it will not address the needs of the department and will not be able to better position South Africa on the global stage.

Once again, we salute the African ambassadors for having rejected the invitation to the Africa Day celebration of the South African government by refusing to be addressed by that xenophobic nonentity, Gayton McKenzie. We salute you. We see you. You are brave African ambassadors. Never cower; never allow yourselves to be addressed by a nonentity, the xenophobic Gayton McKenzie. Thank you very much. [Time expired.]

Mr M A MNCWANGO: House Chairperson, the IFP supports budget Vote No 6 on International Relations and Co-operation, because foreign policy is not removed from daily life. It must help grow the economy, expand trade and investment, and create jobs. The department is pursuing an Africa-centred foreign

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policy, strengthening regional integration, and advancing economic diplomacy in support of the National Development Plan and the Medium-Term Development Plan. This aligns with the IFP's emphasis on practical governance, inclusive growth, and policies that reduce poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

We welcome the department's efforts to link foreign policy more directly to domestic priorities, strengthening bilateral and multilateral partnerships, supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area, and using South Africa's international presence to promote exports, tourism, and investment. This is important because economic growth must increasingly be supported by opening markets and creating opportunities for South African businesses abroad.

We note with concern that budget Vote No 6 strongly promotes African integration and the free movement of people through structures such as Southern African Development Community, SADC, and the African Continental Free Trade Area, while failing to adequately address the domestic merger caused by weak border management and illegal immigration.

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The government continues to dismiss legitimate concerns around unemployment, crime, and pressure on public services instead of confronting failures in immigration enforcement and state capacity.

At the same time, the IFP family rejects xenophobia, vigilantism, and violence against foreign nationals. We believe South Africa's foreign policy must balance pan-African solidarity with the protection of the national interest, social stability, and effective migration management.

We note with concern the high vacancy rate within the department, currently at 26,3%. A vacancy rate of this magnitude directly affects the department's ability to support missions abroad and fulfil its mandate. We are also concerned that no dedicated funding has been allocated for information and communication technology modernisation. In a modern diplomatic environment, where efficiency, co-ordination and responsiveness are essential, the slow pace of digital transformation risks undermining the effectiveness of South Africa's mission.

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We support the department's ongoing efforts to advance economic diplomacy and strengthen South Africa's role in Africa and the global South. We appreciate utilising instruments such as the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund to promote development, peace, and good governance across the continent. These efforts are important for positioning South Africa as a regional leader and for advancing long-term development objectives.

The IFP supports budget Vote No 6 because South Africa needs a foreign policy that is principled, Africa-centred, and economically beneficial to its people. The IFP supports this budget Vote. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr M L MATHOPA: House Chair, hon members, I would like to applaud the hon Gayton McKenzie for being patriotic and having the interest in listening to the plight of South Africans. The EFF confuses border control with xenophobia because they have abandoned the ordinary South Africans who suffer daily from illegal immigration and organised crimes. The Patriotic Alliance rises today... [Interjections.] ...

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mathopa, will you please take a seat. Hon Mhlongo, what is your point of order?

Siswati:

Nkst N H MHLONGO: Sihlalo, bengicela kubuta kutsi lelilunga lelingaphambili leli-empty engcondvweni lingawamukela yini umbuto?

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mhlongo, you cannot say that. You cannot refer to a hon member as "empty." It is wrong, as humans, and besides being a hon member or a Member of Parliament, you would not want anyone to refer to you as an empty person. You cannot do that. Please withdraw that first before I ask.

Ms N H MHLONGO: I withdraw. Can she take a question?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Mathopa, are you willing to take a question?

Mr M L MATHOPA: No, Chair. Thank you. The Patriotic Alliance rises today to debate budget Vote No 6: International

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Relations and Co-operation. This Vote is about protecting South Africans abroad, ensuring that our citizens are never abandoned and safeguarding our youth from exploitation.

The foreign policy is not merely about engagements abroad. It is fundamentally about improving the lives of our people here at home. Our foreign policy must serve the people of South Africa by advancing economic growth, reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, and strengthening stability across the continent.

International relations must always respond to the daily realities and needs of ordinary South Africans. The Department of International Relations and Co-operation, Dirco, must do more to assist South Africans stranded abroad. Whether they are stranded by financial hardship, expired visas, or unforeseen crises, citizens deserve swift and effective support from their government. Too often, families are left desperate, pleading for help that arrives too late or not at all. Budget Vote No 6 must ensure that DIRCO has both the capacity and the resolve to act decisively in these situations.

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This Vote is not merely about diplomacy and embassies. We must warn our youth about the growing danger of international mafias. Unsuspecting young South Africans are being lured with promises of jobs in Thailand, only to end up trapped in fraud centres in Cambodia and Myanmar. These criminal networks exploit unskilled youth, forcing them into illegal operations under threat and coercion.

Dirco must work With law enforcement, international partners, and community organisations to raise awareness and protect our young people from these predators. Vote No 6 must strengthen DIRCO's role in consular protection.

South Africans abroad must know that their government will stand by them whether in times of crisis, exploitation, or danger. This is not a privilege. It is a constitutional duty. International relations are not only about diplomacy between states. They are about protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens. Whether wherever they may be, Vote No 6 must deliver a Dirco that is initiative-taking, responsive, and committed to safeguarding South Africans abroad. Thank you, hon member.

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Mr P A VAN STADEN: Chairperson, strong and stable international relations are a cornerstone of effective governance worldwide. They are essential not only for economic growth and stability, but also for fostering co-operation and mutual trust between nations. It is crucial to understand the differences between countries, particularly in terms of their economic policies and relationships, in order to build and maintain these ties.

For countries facing economic challenges, sound and respectful international partnerships are vital for recovery and future growth. Reckless, rhetorical, or verbal attacks against nations that provide support can be counterproductive, isolating a country from valuable allies and undermining its own interests.

We have seen first-hand what happens when strong economic relationships deteriorate. When those partnerships turn sour, the very support a country depends on can be withdrawn overnight. The consequences are immediate and severe—a health budget suddenly facing a shortfall of R7,9 billion in the previous financial year and critical frontline aid workers losing their jobs instantly. This is the stark reality of what

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occurs when vital relationships collapse without warning. South Africa claims to follow a policy of non-alignment, but that should not just be talk. It needs to show in how we act in practice.

Right now, our approach does not reflect true non-alignment. Fixing our relationship with the United States, the world's biggest economy, should be a top priority. The Freedom Front Plus is committed to doing everything it can to make that happen.

A single individual in Chief Albert Luthuli House in Johannesburg making ill-considered statements on the international stage instead of adopting a diplomatic and constructive approach, seeking time, building goodwill, and maintaining respectful relations with key partners—there is a tendency to antagonise those whose support is vital. Such actions undermine the country's strategic priorities. They do not advance critical objectives such as the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, to boost South African exports, strengthening economic diplomacy with trading partners, leveraging South Africa's G20 Presidency to address global inequality and poverty, or promoting peace, security

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and socio-economic development within Southern African Development Community, SADC, and across the continent.

It is, however, encouraging that the report notes the department has allocated R174 million of its R210 million capital budget to three major property renovation projects: the official residence in Denmark, the boiler system at the Chancery, and residential accommodation in London.

We support the report's recommendation that airports and missions abroad must be adequately resourced to address the current 26% vacancy rate. This should include quarterly reporting on the implementation of a strategy to fill these critical posts, as well as clear plans to alleviate the burden placed on staff due to personal shortages. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Ms M P KOBE: Hon House Chairperson, to the hon members in the House, I stretch my greetings to you and everybody else at home who is joining us on the online platform. Hon House Chair, this budget reflects a continued failure of strategic focus in South Africa's international relations. Action SA believes the guiding principle of the republic must always be

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simple – put South Africans first. It is increasingly clear that the Government of National Unity, GNU, does not share in that priority.

We ask the Minister, how much does it cost to maintain South Africa's foreign missions across the world? Is it a whopping R3,5 billion to sustain 115 embassies and missions? Hon Mahumapelo, let us be concrete and bring it closer to home. The mission in Nouakchott, Mauritania, costs R16,1 million annually. In Malabo Equatorial Guinea, it costs R15,6 million. Ask any unemployed South African, struggling small business owner or pensioner to locate these places on a map and most importantly, to explain what return they are getting. The answer will be simple – absolutely nothing.

Most damning of all is the department's own admission that it has no mechanism whatsoever to evaluate the performance or values of these missions. That is expenditure without accountability. Hon House Chair, we all know what this is really about. It has become an open secret that too many of these postings exist not for national interest but as cushion deployments for political cadres. South Africans are

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increasingly expected to tighten their belts while the system continually funds inefficiency and entitlement abroad.

A serious and focused government would do what many comparable developing countries are already doing – consolidate diplomatic representation, accredit missions across multiple countries and eliminate duplication that no longer serves national interest. Instead, this administration chooses scale without scrutiny and cost without consequence.

As Action SA, we believe that this Department of International Relations and Co-operation must urgently focus on South Africa's foreign policy and diplomatic footprint around measurable national priorities. First on the list must be the growing migration crisis where hundreds of thousands continue to enter South Africa driven by governance and economic collapse and human rights abuses in their own region. Regimes such as the ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe, Frelimo in Mozambique and other liberation movements, who have turned oppressors, have presided over democratic erosion, political violence and economic implosion without consequences that spill directly into South Africa.

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We agree with the portfolio Chairperson, hon Mahumapelo that a budget must allow the Minister to move across Africa and ensure there is regional stability, yet his response to all of these issues has been silent. When elections are undermined, when opposition leaders are persecuted and when political violence erupts in neighbouring states, our diplomatic posture is muted, cautious or absolutely absent. For example, in 2024 elections in Mozambique, the elections were rigged and violence followed. Our President attended the inauguration smiling. What a great endorsement from South Africa.

It is time for South Africa to put South Africans first in its foreign policy. That begins with honest engagement in our region, not passive observation of its collapse. This budget reflects the opposite of that, a continued absence of strategic focus and a diplomatic posture that does not serve the South African people. I thank you very much, House Chair.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Thank you very much. Hon member, do you have a point of order?

IsiZulu:

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Mnu C V SHONGWE: Sihlalo, ephuzwini lokukhalima okuphambukayo: Sihlalo, angazi ukuthi usubonile yini ukuthi uHulumeni woBumbano lweSizwe, i-GNU, awushayelani izandla?

English:

Thank you, Chairperson.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, that is not a point of order.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon Chairperson, let me take this opportunity and pass my regards to the hon Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, hon Ronald Ozzy Lamola, the Deputy Minister Alvin Botes and our Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Co-operation and the esteemed members of this august House.

Chairperson, from the utmost, let me take this opportunity and clarify some of the sentiments that were said here by hon members that were not even factual. Just yesterday when we celebrated Africa Day, as a country, we had convened as the Justice and Crime Prevention Security Cluster and met with

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those that are concerned about issues of anti-foreigner sentiments. Yesterday we met with civil society movements and various political parties. Hon members, I am really dismayed that those that are grandstanding here and claiming to be representing South Africans, chose not to attend that important meeting on a very important day where we celebrate Africa Month.

I need to assure the rest of the South African people that indeed the government of South Africa is preoccupied with the issue of instilling law and order in the country and no one is allowed to take the law into their hands and discriminate against our fellow African brothers and sisters. Chairperson, I also want to emphasise the issue of African unity. I want to quote one of the African leaders and philosophers, Kwame Nkrumah, the son of the soil, who said the following about African unity:

We must unite now or perish. We must recognise that our economic independence resides with our African union and also requires the same concentration upon the political achievements.

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Hon Douglas, the issue you said here is misguided and lacks facts. The issue that the department is more about protocol issues and without addressing the socioeconomic issues that are faced by our people. You need to understand that the Department of International Relations and Co-operation has got a programme called Economic Diplomacy. It is through this programme that we champion, through our embassies abroad, and are able to register serious investment coming to our country leading to serious bankable projects that are contributing to the economic development of our country. Hon Douglas, we are also going to remind you that South Africa has recently hosted SA Investment Conference where close to R900 billion worth of foreign direct investment was brought to the South African economy.

So, when you speak here, do not grandstand and speak without facts. Focus on what we do as a department and make it a point that you are factual. Hon Minister, do not listen to these detractors who want to change your leadership style.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Deputy Minister, please take your seat. There is a point of order.

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Mr M MANYI: Hon Chairperson, on a point of order: I rise on a point of order, Rule 92. The Deputy Minister must not address our member directly. She must speak through the Chair. Thank you.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Thank you very much. Deputy Minister, will you please speak through the Chair?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Thank you very much, Chairperson. I need to indicate that South Africa remains fully committed to all the fundamental principles of African unity. We stand for peaceful and a united Africa. We stand for an African continent that is prosperous. We also stand for an African continent that occupies its rightful place amongst the world family of nations. House Chairperson, through various bilateral and multilateral platforms in which we participate in, will always continue to advocate for peace, unity amongst Africans. We will do so whilst recognising that it is through joint efforts by all states to make sure that we address the socioeconomic challenges and the economic growth of our continent of Africa.

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Hon Minister, it is only through your leadership that you managed to convince the Foreign Ministers' retreat over the past weekend and I need to assure the rest of the South African people that on the top of the agenda of that Foreign Ministers' retreat was the whole issue of how we can deal with issues of regional economic transformation and integration. Those issues were really addressed and will go a long way in helping us to address migration which we continue to be faced with as a country.

Hon Minister, as I conclude, I need to remind the hon Gayton that you are not a holy spirit. The nature of the work of foreign Ministry is that you need to travel and every time when you delegate your Deputy Ministers, you are always being guided by the principle that you were taught by our former democratic President Nelson Mandela, who said:

A leader is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realising that all along they are being directed from behind.

Thank you very much.

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Ms M MODISE-MPYA: House Chair, hon members, the Minister and the Deputy Ministers, the chairperson of the portfolio committee and fellow South Africans, this is not an ordinary budget debate. This is a debate about whether South Africa and the African continent will shape the changing global order to advance our own development and prosperity. Budget Vote 6 comes before this House at a defining moment. Domestically, our people continue to face unemployment at over 32%, deepening poverty, inequality, and rising costs of living. Millions of young South Africans are not asking about geopolitics; they are asking where the next opportunity or job will come from.

At the same time, the global order is undergoing profound transformation. Trade wars are intensifying. Proxy conflicts continue to destabilise regions. Competition over strategic minerals, energy, technology and markets is accelerating rapidly. In this environment, countries that fail to position themselves strategically will become dependent on decisions made elsewhere. Those who control the economy of the future will shape the politics of the day.

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That is why this R7,2 billion allocation to Dirco is not a luxury expenditure. It is an investment in South Africa's economic recovery. It is an investment in sovereignty. It is an investment in jobs, industrialisation, regional stability and Africa's future.

Foreign policy is no longer confined to diplomatic ceremonies and protocols. Foreign policy determines whether South African products access new markets. It determines whether investors build factories here or elsewhere. It influences trade, tourism, infrastructure, financing and economic growth. Foreign policy is economic policy.

That is why economic diplomacy must sit at the center of Dirco's work. Our embassies must become active centers for investment attraction, trade promotion, export support, and economic partnerships. Every diplomatic mission must help create opportunities for South African businesses, workers and young entrepreneurs.

The success of this budget cannot be measured but only by meetings attended. It must be measured by jobs created, exports expanded, investments secured, and industry

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strengthened. Diplomacy must deliver development. A nation that cannot convert diplomacy into development will struggle to convert freedom into prosperity. This budget allocates over R4,2 billion towards strengthening our missions abroad and economic diplomacy programmes, while R1,1 billion is directed to the African Renaissance funds for peace missions and post-conflict reconstruction. The world is entering a new industrial era driven by demand for strategic minerals, essential for renewable energy and advanced technologies.

Africa sits at the center of this transition. South Africa holds the world's largest reserves of platinum group metals of over 80% globally, along with vast manganese, chrome, and other critical resources valued at more than \$2,5 trillion, but for generations, Africa exported wealth while importing underdevelopment.

That cycle must end. South Africa must champion a unified African strategy on critical minerals and beneficiation. We cannot continue exporting raw materials while importing finished products and unemployment. Africa's minerals wealth must become the foundation for African industrial growth, innovation and decent job creation. The future belongs not to

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countries that extract resources, but to those that manufacture, benefit and industrialise.

Regional integration remains essential to South Africa's long-term economic recovery. Currently, the intra-African trade stands at only around 15% of the continent's total trade, far below potential. The African Continental Free Trade Area presents Africa with a historic opportunity to deepen intra-African trade, strengthen regional value chains, and reduce dependence on external markets. But integration must move beyond summit declarations.

It must be visible in rail corridors, ports, energy partnerships, transport infrastructure, and co-ordinated industrial development across the continent. As the Chair of SADC in 2026, South Africa has the responsibility to accelerate this agenda. Projects such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Projects Phase 2 with a projected cost of over R53 billion, and regional energy co-operation with Mozambique, Namibia, and the DRC are not simply infrastructure projects, they are instruments of economic transformation, water security for 26 million South Africans in Gauteng and surrounding provinces ... [Time expired.] Thank you.

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Rev K R J MESHOE: House Chairperson, hon members, the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Co-operation is concerned that most of their cost in the 2026-27 budget allocation of R27,3 billion will be swallowed by inflation and exchange rate pressures, enabling neither new programmes nor substantive work to be done. The National Treasury continues to impose rigid ceilings on employee compensation, severely restricting Dirco's ability to fully resource its missions and diplomatic outposts abroad. This impacts the department's capacity to protect South African citizens and businesses in active conflict zones.

The ACDP calls for ring-fenced funding for consular protection, targeted exemptions for critical posts and prioritisation of staff to high-risk regions where South Africans face the greatest danger. We also call for investment in secure digital platforms for consular services that would reduce reliance on costly in-person staffing, while still ensuring accessibility. The ACDP also calls for a review mechanism so that ceilings do not undermine constitutional obligations to protect citizens abroad.

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At the same time, we see significant underspending on missions and infrastructure - more than R1 billion in 2024-25 and irregular spending of R44,5 million. Around 60% of this budget is spent outside South Africa where fluctuating exchange rates make it vulnerable. The ACDP urges Parliament to demand data on measurable impact with ethical consistency and transparency in global engagements.

It must attract economic partners like the USA, not chase them away, while we waste tens of millions on litigation that has been caused by a senior official publicly endorsing calls for South Africa to revive nuclear weapons. This budget still does not show a clear measurable impact, strong anticorruption action or respect for taxpayers. According to Auditor-General reports, ongoing noncompliance severely delayed property maintenance, with some state-owned properties abroad not serviced for over a decade, and procurement violations that have stalled capital projects.

Delays in identifying service providers for required renovations and IT modernisations have repeatedly stalled capital asset spending. Dirko is severely ... [Time expired.]

Thank you.

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Mr N L S KWANKWA: House Chair, the Department of International Relations and Co-operation has been allocated about R7 billion for this current financial year, yet the reality facing South Africa's embassies is nothing short of a national embarrassment. Some embassies have not been maintained for over 16 years; officials are operating with collapsing infrastructure and outdated systems, and in some missions, visas are issued by hand because the systems have failed.

Handwritten visas in 2026, and yet we are told that South Africa is a diplomatic giant. What kind of giant cannot even modernise its own systems? The Department of International Relations and Co-operation must urgently engage the National Treasury to renovate these missions and modernise ICT infrastructure, because South Africa cannot claim leadership abroad while our own diplomatic houses are falling apart.

The deeper crisis is not only financial, but also ideological. South Africa is no longer respected on the African continent in the way it once was. We are currently treated as a refuge for illegal immigration and a cash cow through the African Renaissance Fund, while our people are struggling with unemployment, poverty and collapsing services. Programmes like

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the African Renaissance Fund should not operate as endless charity. The African Renaissance Fund should be turned into an instrument of soft power, as the foreign policy says in this respect. Every cent spent outside our borders must advance South Africa's economic and strategic interests.

Those who are not willing to respect South Africa must go to hell, literally, because an African Renaissance Fund that places the burden of Africa on South Africa's shoulders while other governments destroy their own countries through corruption, instability and poor governance is a scam. We are funding election observation missions while South Africans sit unemployed. Why are we not using those resources to drive trade, infrastructure and economic projects through the African Free Trade Area Agreement so that South Africa benefits economically from its leadership role on the continent?

Last year, 14 South African soldiers died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC, in the name of peacekeeping.

Fourteen lives lost, families shattered, and coffins draped in the South African flag. And what happened afterwards? The DRC and the United States signed agreements giving American

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companies priority access to the DRC's vast mineral wealth. America secured the deal. South Africa buried the soldiers. That cannot continue. The world has changed. Global politics is no longer about charity. It is about interests. It is about influence. It is about economic power.

South Africa must stop using state taxpayers' money to be the messiah of the African continent while our communities collapse under unemployment, crime and illegal immigration. The Government of National Unity, GNU, speaks about renewal, but its statement of intent is dangerously vague on foreign policy. That conversation was ignored during coalition negotiations, and now is the time for the country to have that, and we are paying the price for that silence. I thank you. Thank you.

Dr M A MAIMANE: House Chairperson, we gather on this day, post the celebration of Africa Day, and I wanted to reflect just on a few matters that speak to our foreign policy. On the first instance, if it is indeed true that our foreign policy must be based on human rights and trade, the first objective that we've all got to be focused on is the fact that Africa still only represents 3,5% of global GDP. That is pitiful relative

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to the fact that we are the fastest-growing continent as far as population growth is concerned. By mid-century, we will have over 1,4 billion people.

So, if we do not begin to strengthen intra-trade and figure out quite intentionally how we make Agenda 2063 the practical realities with leaders that can deliver on it, we will see profound deaths that take place on this continent. If we think we have an immigration crisis now, we must appreciate that if we fail to grow Africa's economy as brothers and sisters, we will be doomed to face the challenges of a future that is coming. Secondly, Minister Lamola, I want to state to you quite categorically that I was in India recently and I met our high commission there. Part of the dilemma is the capacitation and vacancies there; includes South Africa exports many of its agricultural products to India, and yet there was no staffing that was focused on the Agricultural Council. That is a limitation that limits our ability to trade with nations such as India. If we learn anything from the Indian economy is that they've successfully managed to move at least over R250 million people from poverty, which is a lesson that we ought to be learning.

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Thirdly, hon members, many people have come to blame our Constitution when it provides, in section 27, that the government fails to do the basics in health care. They point to the Constitution as they point to the immigrant to blame. We must remind ourselves that the Constitution assumes, when it says everyone in it, that it is everyone who is here legally. So we have to, in dealing with the question of immigration, ensure that we fund better border management authority and ensure that we do not scapegoat our African brothers and sisters, but rather focus on delivery of basic services. If you come and you consume health care in South Africa, the country from which you come needs to also be levied likewise. Lastly, I want to highlight the fact, more crucially, that South Africa's moral authority on the continent is beginning to weaken. We simply ignore election observer missions when they state categorically that elections have been rigged in particular countries. We cosy up to the dictators. We make it palatable that people can celebrate those who don't win elections but take over as a result of coups.

This is something that we can ill afford as democrats and South Africa's democrats. We need to be fast in condemning

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those who are rigging elections. And I ask you, Minister Lamola, we need to oppose what President Mnangagwa is busy doing in extending his term of office ... [Inaudible.]. We continue this practice where we ask people to vote. People are going to suffer. Thank you very much, Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Mr A Botes): Hon House Chair, Minister Lamola, Deputy Minister Tandi Moraka, chairperson, hon Supra Mahumapelo, the director-general and his team, hon members, hon Chetty, I suppose that the DA is duty-bound to use AI-generated speeches. But be it as it may, let me take you into confidence on what the role of a Minister of International Relations and Co-operation is.

Firstly, of course, he is the chief diplomat on behalf of the President, who is the custodian of South Africa's foreign policy. So, if you look at the UN member states, you have 193 UN member states. South Africa is obligated, through the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, to service all 193 member states of the UN. We do it, of course, via your 114 diplomatic missions, underpinned, hon Chetty, by what we call a structured bilateral mechanism. That is both at

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the level of your Bi-National Commissions, BNC, and your Joint Consultative Mechanism, JCM. That is bilaterally.

Multilaterally, of course, the Minister, our chief advocate, when you look at the Indian Ocean Rim Association, IORA, you look at the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, Zopacas, you look at G77, China, and you look at Brics, across all three pillars, both political security co-operation, financial and economic cooperation, your people-to-people mechanism. That is the key mandate of the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation. So, I thought I must maybe take you into confidence because those are the political details which AI may have omitted from your speech, of course.

Having said that, hon Douglas, South Africa derives maximum value from Brics. The fact is that Brics, if you look at Brics as a bloc, are now exceeding 21% of our total trade. Here we speak about in excess of R830 billion, just with Brics. With your New Development Bank, we have been a chief recipient and a beneficiary of your New Development Bank. We speak about more than 11 projects across environmental, the infrastructure agreement in terms of the SA National Road Agency, Sanral, etc. So, we are a significant beneficiary. We speak about almost R90 billion that we derive value from our partnership

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in Brics. But I also thought we have resolved on our intervention in the last administration under Dr Pandor and our solidarity with Dr Pandor for the attacks she has experienced recently, where we have executed a forensic investigation under the tutelage of our director-general. There was the processing of responsible officials, and there was a legal process. That is what we have done. So, under the Seventh Administration, Minister Lamola has been able to run, of course, a very tight ship.

Ladies and gentlemen, our absolute, unequivocal solidarity, of course, with Cuba for the unilateral economic coercive embargo that has been levelled against the people of Fidel Castro. And I think South Africa; history will absolve us in relation to our continued solidarity. This is also the week where we speak about and pay homage to the struggle of people for self-determination.

So, hon Douglas, we continue to champion solidarity with the Palestinian people through our ICJ case and a number of supports to non-state actors, and our counsel to the flotilla members that are on route back to South Africa. But we continue to appeal to the MK Party to be more principled and

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not to subscribe to chequebook diplomacy in relation, for example, to auctioning to the highest bidder the lives, the souls of the people of the Western Sahara. So, I thought it's a key and critical issue that I must raise. As I proceed ... [Interjections.] ... can you just rewind my time, hon Chair?

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Deputy Minister, will you take your seat? Order, please. [Interjections.] Order, please. I just want to remind the Deputy Minister as well as all the members that when there's a point of order, and you take your seat, you don't lose your time. The clock has been stopped. Hon Member, your point of order?

Mr W M DOUGLAS: Chairperson, on a point of order: My point of order is that the speaker is misleading the House on the MK Party and on what the MK Party is doing. So, as far as I'm concerned, it's the GNU and the ANC that put us in this situation, hon Chair. They are the reason why our people are in poverty and are suffering and why our people have to do things like that. Thank you. [Interjections.]

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The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, this is not a point of order. It is a point of debate, and you are not on the Speakers' List. Hon Deputy Minister, you can continue.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Mr A Botes): Hon Chairperson, ... [Interjections.]
...

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Deputy Minister, please take your seat. There is another point of order.

IsiZulu:

Mnu C V SHONGWE: Sihlalo, ephuzwini lokukhalima okuphambukayo: Sihlalo, njengoba i-GNU le engapha ayiyithandi i-Brics, le yona iyayithanda i-Brics, bazwana kuphi laba bantu? Uma behlukaniselana ama-blue lights noma kuphi nakuphi? Ngiyabonga, Sihlalo.

English:

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, that also is not a point of order. It is a point of debate, and you're not on the Speakers' List. Hon Deputy Minister, please continue.

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The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Mr A Botes): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Our mandate is unequivocal. We will continue to be the proponents of international law. We will continue to be the advocates of the transformation of the multilateral system. We will continue to resist unilateral conduct, advance the African agenda, invest in our young people, and practically execute our active non-alignment. Thank you very much, hon Chair.

Mr I ISMAIL-MOOSA: Hon Chairperson, that is why I always come in the name of peace, so that we can have peace. Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Ministers, hon chairperson of the portfolio committee, hon Supra and to the beloved people of our beautiful nation, in the name of the Almighty, the most gracious and the most merciful, let me begin by extending the beautiful greeting and prayer of peace to all present. We need it so much, especially in this House.

Al Jama-Ah supports Vote 6 and acknowledges the critical role that international relations play in advancing South Africa's interests, strengthening economic co-operation and promoting peace and justice throughout the world.

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In the midst of growing geopolitical tensions, arm conflicts and global uncertainty, we commend our hon Ministers, Deputy Ministers and the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, Dirco, officials for navigating these complex challenges with dedication and resolve.

Al Jama-Ah encourages our government to continue the commendable efforts of advocating for a more active and effective role by the United Nations in maintaining peace, preventing conflicts and protecting vulnerable populations across the globe.

South Africa's foreign policy must continue to be guided by the principles of human rights, justice, peaceful resolution of disputes – I repeat, peaceful resolution of disputes locally and internationally, mutual respect amongst nations and a promotion of a fair and equitable global order.

As a nation that emerged from the oppression of apartheid, South Africa carries a moral responsibility to stand with those who continue to face injustice occupation, discrimination and violation of human rights. We therefore

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commend our country's commitment to peace, dialogue and international solidarity.

At a time of growing global instability and economic uncertainty, we must strengthen strategic partnerships that attract investment, expand trade opportunities, promote tourism and create jobs for our people. Our diplomatic missions abroad must continue to open new markets for South African businesses and contribute meaningfully to economic growth. We also call for greater co-operation amongst African nations to address poverty, unemployment, conflict, climate change, and food security. The future of Africa depends on unity, collaboration, and shared prosperity.

As members of the portfolio committee, we believe effective oversight can only be achieved through regular co-operation, transparency, and meaningful participation. As a committee, would highly appreciate the consistent presence and attendance of Dirco officials and leadership at committee meetings. This will enhance accountability, improve communication, and enable the committee to effectively fulfil its constitutional oversight responsibilities. A strong partnership between ...

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[Time expired.] ... Thank you. Peace in the world, prosperity at home. Malibongwe!

Mr R SMITH: Hon Chairperson, the debate on Vote 6 for International Relations and Co-operation is one of critical importance because this ministry lies at the heart of South Africa's reform agenda, overseeing a department which is the outward face of the Government of National Unity's, GNU, growth plan. This means that Dirco is both the provision of services to citizens living and traveling abroad, but more crucially, it serves as the brand ambassador for our administration as it engages and interfaces with other nations and states on the international stage.

This budget is more than just funding a mandate; it is about crafting a marketable image, altering perceptions, and positioning our country strategically to achieve our national interest. Everything that this budget seeks to accomplish should align with positioning South Africa as a principled, reliable, credible, and consistent international partner while transforming our country into an attractive destination for foreign direct investment.

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Budget Vote 6 is less about the line items and allocations enclosed in this year's Appropriation Bill, and more about the critical mandates of this department which remain unfunded. One such mandate is the upkeep and maintenance of South Africa's foreign assets, namely, our embassy buildings and properties which house our foreign missions and diplomatic staff.

Last year the Auditor-General's Budgetary Review and Recommendations Report, BRRR, revealed that Dirco had financially regressed over the 2024-25 financial year. This regression is partly due to damning findings pertaining to Dirco's asset management process, particularly the management of state-owned properties abroad for diplomatic use.

The decline of South Africa's embassy buildings and international properties is rampant, dire, and highly underreported. Multiple reports have stated that South Africa House in the United Kingdom has no water or heating, with staff often having to work from home. There are further reports of priceless artworks and artifacts having gone missing. Just recently I was told by a London resident that a

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local vagrant has taken up residence outside the High Commission's front door.

In Mozambique, five to six staff members have to share one laptop. There are no reliable phone lines, let alone any internet access, and consular services are crippled by a lack of basic embassy support and equipment. How is South Africa supposed to craft an investible image when our embassies resemble the very same broken local municipalities under the ANC?

I wasn't aware that a revolutionary budget meant undermining our embassies and embarrassing our nation on the international stage, but not much can be expected from a Minister who, over the last five oral cluster question sessions, has only attended one – virtually. You may be the chief diplomat, Minister Lemola, but Parliament is not optional.

While the mandate to maintain South Africa's foreign assets was previously transferred to Dirco from the Department of Public Works, there was no transfer of a budget, nor of any skills to carry it out. Essentially, South Africa's embassy buildings and foreign assets are not only in a state of

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disrepair, but in a state of financial limbo. We cannot keep debating the fluctuations of Vote 6 until a dedicated budget allocation is made to maintain our embassy buildings. This is not a luxury expense; it is the bread and butter of a functioning foreign service, and one which this department continues to ignore while its ANC Ministers dish out money to their friends in Cuba and Venezuela.

Budget Vote 6 goes deeper than just unfunded mandates. This Vote is existential to the entirety of the Appropriation Bill itself, because it is Dirco that is responsible for attracting and facilitating foreign direct investment, creating jobs, and growing the national fiscus through a sound economic diplomacy agenda. Quite simply, the size of every department's budget is partly decided by the political decisions taken in this ministry, but the Minister's economic diplomacy agenda will continue to fail if it is choked by a domestic policy suite, which repels the investment necessary to grow our economy.

For as long as the ANC insists on promoting Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, BBBEE, the South African economy will never meaningfully grow, and government budgets will continue

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to shrink. This ministry cannot tell the world that South Africa is open for business ... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Members! Hon Smith, can you please take your seat. I just want to remind all members in the Chamber that you cannot drown the speaker, and that is what you are doing at the moment. If you want to raise a point of order, put up your hand. Don't yell at me! Hon members, I didn't ... [Interjections.] ... I didn't ask you to yell out; I asked for each and everyone not to drown the speaker. Hon Smith, you can continue.

IsiZulu:

Mnu R SMITH: Bazoba-strong!

English:

This ministry cannot tell the world that South Africa is open for business, only to erect every possible legislative hurdle for potential investors to leap over. In the 22 years since BEE was enacted, our country is more unequal, our growth rate has stagnated, unemployment has risen, and government budgets have shrunk. Only an ANC Minister too interested in ideology

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than common sense can continue to defend a policy that does not work.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Smith, will you please take your seat. There is a point of order. Hon member, may you raise your point of order, please.

IsiNdebele:

Num D M SKOSANA: Sihlalo, njengombana sikhona lapha ngaphakathi, akekho uNgqongqotjhe we-ANC kodwana kunoNgqongqotjhe wombuso. Ngiyathokoza.

English:

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, that is not a point of order. As I previously ruled, it is not a point of order. Hon Smith, you can continue.

Are the members now done with their mini debate on the floor?
Hon Smith, can you continue, please?

Mr R SMITH: The ANC may be tired of the DA criticising BEE, but the South African people are tired of the ANC defending a policy meant to empower them but has only left them poorer and

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more destitute than ever before. Every single Budget Vote debate ...

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Smith, can you please take your seat? There is a point of order.

IsiZulu:

Mnu C V SHONGWE: Sihlalo, ephuzwini lokukhalima okuphambukayo: Ngicela ukubuza ukuthi, umfowethu angawuthatha umbuzo na othi, i-DA yona ayikhathele i-ANC na?

English:

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon Smith, the member is asking if you would take a question?

Mr C V SHONGWE: I think the interpretation was wrong. I said, can the member take a question on whether the DA is not tired of the ANC?

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Sorry, hon member, the correct way of raising a point of order is by asking, will the member take a question. You can't put the question with the

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raised question. The hon member has to answer first before you can raise the question.

Hon Smith, are you prepared to take a question?

Hon Smith says he is not prepared to take the question. Hon Smith, you may continue.

Mr R SMITH: Every single Budget Vote debate in this Appropriation Bill has mentioned financial constraints due to dwindling budgets. It is this ministry which holds the key to addressing this problem, but it requires sanity to trump blind ideology.

The Minister mentioned African countries taking bold policy steps for growth. When will South Africa do the same? If this ministry takes its mandate seriously, as per the GNU statement of intent, it will push for greater alignment between economic diplomacy and domestic economic policy. Until then, we will keep coming back year after year with less money for government services defended by ANC politicians with more money in their pockets.

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Ms A N KUMBACA: Hon Chairperson, hon Minister, hon Deputy Ministers, the hon chairperson of the portfolio committee, fellow South Africans, let me also join the nation in congratulating Amabhakaniya Amahle, Orlando Pirates Football Club. Yes, thank you. I rise today in unwavering, unapologetic and resolute support of Budget Vote 6. This budget is a declaration of South Africa's place in the world. It is a statement of our values, our sovereignty and our enduring commitment to justice, peace, solidarity and human dignity in an increasingly unstable global order.

We meet at a moment of profound global uncertainty, hon members. The international system is under immense strain. The ongoing devastation in Palestine, the prolonged conflict in Eastern Europe, the instability across parts of Africa, and the escalating tensions amongst major global powers have exposed the fragility of the current world order.

Across the globe, militarisation is intensifying and multilateral institutions are being weakened. Precisely, at this moment, humanity needs co-operation. I think that is the most important thing we need right now. Yet, as history has

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shown time and time again, it is the developing world that bears the heaviest burden for crises it did not create.

We are seeing rising food insecurity, energy instability and disrupted supply chains, which are widening in quality and continue to deepen the divide between the Global North and Global South. However, it is precisely in moments such as these that South Africa must stand firm, principled and courageous. We remain committed to a progressive and independent foreign policy that advances peace, development, justice and dignity for all humanity.

Hon members and fellow South Africans, this Budget Vote of R7 227 billion is a strategic investment in South Africa's sovereignty and also the continental leadership in our economic future. Diplomacy in the modern era must be developmental. It must create conditions for investment and industrialisation.

Our diplomatic missions abroad must become instruments for this to ensue. They must advance beneficiation, and they must strengthen partnerships that provide tangible outcomes for ordinary South Africans. Economic diplomacy is a central

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pillar of our foreign policy. The Department of International Relations and Co-operation must be properly capacitated to position South Africa and Africa aggressively within a changing global economy.

As a portfolio committee, we have emphasised that our missions abroad must do more than flying the flag in our oversight efforts. They must build partnerships that deliver tangible results for our people, and we have observed that the department is making efforts to ensure that this happens. We need these missions for South Africa's growth. These missions are not there to merely exist, but they are here to ensure that South Africa grows to greater heights.

Hon members, let me continue by saying that in the 21st century, diplomacy needs to be transformative, and South Africa will continue to advocate for a truly multipolar world. Our solidarity with the people of Palestine and Western Sahara is not selective. It is deeply principled and informed by a painful history of oppression, dispossession and struggle. The ARF is the African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund. I repeat, it is the African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund.

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At a time where the world is witnessing renewed attempts to isolate and punish nations that refuse to surrender their sovereignty, South Africa remains unwavering in its solidarity with the people of Cuba - a nation that shed blood for Africa's liberation and continues to endure unjust economic pressure for asserting its sovereignty and pursuing an independent developmental growth.

Cuba supported us before 1994, and of course, some of you will have a measure because what we had before 1994 did not affect you. Cuba continues to support South Africans. It supported South African students and continues to support students currently, and even before 1994. [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon member, will you please take your seat? There is a point of order. Hon member, will you please raise your point of order? [Interjections.]

Mr M SHIKWAMBANA: Chair, I don't know why they are making noise. They didn't even hear me or what I want to say. Chair, I want to put it on you that it is parliamentary incorrect for the chairperson of the portfolio committee to be taking

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pictures while the speaker is on podium. Can he delete those pictures that he took?

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Thank you, hon member. I want to ... Order, please! Order, please! Order! I want to remind all members that it is against the rules to take any videos or pictures during the proceedings of a plenary. Will you please do not do that? Hon member, you can continue.

Ms A N KUMBACA: Cuba played a significant role in regional liberation struggles, and the ARF will continue being a supportive structure. As a democratic nation born from international solidarity, South Africa understands that silence in the face of injustice is itself a betrayal of humanity.

The African Continental Free Trade Area, AfCFTA, presents one of the greatest economic opportunities in the history of our continent. It carries the potential to transform Africa from a fragmented consumer market into a powerful industrial and trading bloc of over 1 billion people. However, this vision cannot remain trapped in speeches and declarations. The

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department must confront the structural barriers that continue to undermine African economic integration through this budget.

We welcome the establishment of the co-ordination mechanism for economic diplomacy, which brings together government, businesses and labour social partners. This will also ensure that there is economic growth and poverty reduction through various ways in this ... My time is running out.

South Africa's leadership of SADC in 2026 comes at a critical and defining moment for our region. As chair, South Africa carries both the responsibility and the opportunity to deepen regional co-operation, strengthen African unity, and advance African solutions to African challenges.

The department must continue to champion the urgent reform of global governance institutions. Lastly, hon members and fellow South Africans, approving this budget is an affirmation of South Africa's commitment to peace, development, Africa's unity and progressive internationalism. It is a declaration that South Africa will continue to engage the world with dignity, independence, moral clarity, and strategic purpose.

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Let us therefore pass this budget with confidence and conviction. Let us equip Dirco to defend our sovereignty, strengthen Africa's voice, advance economic diplomacy and contribute towards building a more just, peaceful and equitable world order. I thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon House Chair and hon members, my days for accounting to Parliament must be agreed in synchrony with my diary and understanding of the nature of my responsibilities. If you see me here regularly and every day, you must call for me to be fired because my work is in global platforms of engagements and bilateral relations, and also at multilateral platforms.

As we speak, hon members have raised a number of issues that are constructive, while some are not really helpful to take South Africa forward. However, nonetheless, we have to engage with all the matters raised. In relation to the assets, we have noted the point made by hon Mahumapelo to engage with the PIC, and in the month of June, the department will do so.

We will continue to ensure that we use these properties to the maximum and we continue to infuse technology in our work to

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enable our embassies to be able to function. We also note the same concerns raised by hon members in relation to all our properties across the globe, including technological innovation that must enable us to be efficient. This is a challenge we share with all of you.

We also agree that indeed our budget is not enough, but we can live with the little that we have and continue to advocate for the department to be allocated enough to be able to function optimally. We welcome the R2 trillion that the Sars has now been able to receive. It shows that there is efficiency, and in future the challenges of budget constraints can be resolved for the Department of International Relations and other relevant departments.

It is not true that the Brics Bank or the Development Bank of Brics has not been able to fund projects in our country. We have used amounts from the Brics Bank to resolve challenges in infrastructure, particularly in the network industries, rail, water and other critical infrastructure projects to the tune of about \$7 billion. So, we, as a development partner within the Brics family, are one of the beneficiaries of this bank.

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Furthermore, as a country, we are being criticised by some of the GNU partners who are working with us that we are non-aligned. We have continuously been consistent, hon Ryan Smith, that our active nonalignment has been very consistent. We have been clear that it has been anchored on the UN Charter, on the human rights outlook, and we have done so across all the platforms in terms of our consistency in this regard. We will not be deterred from doing so.

Hon Ryan Smith has raised most arguments that come from the Make America Great Again movement, Maga movement, in the US. He has elevated these concerns of transformation in our country, and everyone in South Africa agrees and understands that BEE is a critical pillar of our transformation. It is in the Constitution of the Republic, and all our transformation efforts are fully anchored on our constitutional democracy.

We know that in the US, the Maga movement is very clear: It exists to attack black people. We know what they stand for. They stand against the human rights of women and the LGBTQI communities. The Maga is driven by a particular ideology. Is hon Ryan Smith aligning the DA with this position? Is he part of this movement that is against human rights and against

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progressive outlook in the globe? If this is the position, the DA must clearly declare it for the people of South Africa to know their alliance with this movement.

With regards to the FF-Plus, there is no one else mandated to deal with the realignment of relations with the US other than the South African Government. No sectoral group, FF-Plus, Solidarity or anyone can do that. [Time expired.] Thank you very much.

Debate concluded.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Order, please! Order, please! Hon members, please! Members are reminded that two debates are scheduled simultaneously for 16:45 today. The debate on Basic Education Budget Vote 16 will be held in the God Hope Chamber, while the Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Budget Vote 32 will take place in Committee Room M46.

The mini plenary session rose at 16:10