

ABBREVIATED CURRICULUM VITAE

Robina P. Marks

South African Ambassador: Republic of Benin and Togo

Robina P. Marks is South Africa's Ambassador to Benin and Togo. Ms Marks was a student, community and trade union activist, a gender activist and a regional organizer of the United Democratic Front, a national grassroots movement that campaigned for the unbanning of the African National Congress and all other banned organisations, and the release of political prisoners. She was detained and held in solitary confinement under the Internal Security Act 29 during the anti-apartheid struggle. She is a founder member of various grassroots organizations, including community and women's organisations. She is also a member of the African National Congress. She holds a Master's degree in Development Studies from the University of Sussex, and hold degrees and diplomas from the Universities of Manchester (UK) and the University of the Western Cape (SA).

She joined the Department of International Relations and Cooperation in 2008 as Chief Director: Gender in the Office of the Director General, where she was responsible for developing a comprehensive Gender Policy to guide mainstreaming efforts in the department and in Foreign Missions, as well as facilitating and writing the National Action Plan on Gender, Peace and Security which was subsequently adopted. She also facilitated and co-ordinated the first African Declaration on Women and Climate Change, which was adopted unanimously by world leaders at the UN Climate Change Conference COP 17. As well, she represented South Africa as lead delegate in diplomacy engagements outside the country, where she lobbied successfully for South Africa's positions on various resolutions on gender at SADC, and the UNCSW as part of a team. Prior to that, she worked as a lecturer and development consultant in South Africa and various countries across Africa, with Research Fellowships at the University of Cape Town and Simmons College, Boston, M.A. As a Diversity Consultant, and after the advent of South Africa's democratic transition, she was charged with carrying out transformation projects aimed at reversing historical gender and race imbalances at government departments such as Water Affairs and Forestry; Environment; and Justice and Constitutional Development. She was also responsible, with a team, to develop guidelines for the establishment of South Africa's Office on the Status of Women, which subsequently became a Women's Ministry. As a Diversity Consultant and Research Fellow, she published various peer reviewed articles on aspects of South Africa's transition.

In October 2011 she accepted an invitation to join South Africa's diplomatic corps, and on the advice of the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, she was appointed Ambassador to Thailand with accreditation to Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. In Myanmar, she coordinated South Africa's support to the Myanmar Peace Process with local role-players after a ceasefire agreement was concluded, and arranged workshops and seminars to train peacemakers on aspects of South Africa's transition process.

She received the Red Cross Medal of Appreciation in recognition of her charitable efforts from the Thai Red Cross Society, and conferred upon her by HRH Princess Sirindhorn, as well as an award for “Outstanding Contribution to build Thai-South Africa Relations” for the promotion of South Africa and Thailand’s textile industry.

Upon completion of her assignment, she was appointed as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, with accreditation to Bangladesh, Nepal and The Maldives. In Sri Lanka, she was a regular speaker and facilitator on areas such as transitional justice, peace and respect for diversity, and coordinated South Africa’s peace and reconciliation efforts towards a sustainable peace in support of President Ramaphosa, who served as envoy on peace and reconciliation to Sri Lanka. She was the recipient of numerous honours from academic and civil society organizations for her work on environmental justice and for promoting peace and reconciliation. As well, she worked closely with the local Afro-Lankan community in Sri Lanka, victims of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and wrote a children’s book about this community that was endorsed by the Sri Lankan government and distributed to all schools and libraries so as to encourage tolerance and social cohesion.

She currently serves as South Africa’s Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, with simultaneous accreditation to Togo.