EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Colleagues,

September is Heritage Month in South Africa. It is a time for us to celebrate our culture and all that constitutes it. And while we observe this important month, we further have the opportunity to embrace our cultural diversity as a country. It is at this time that we celebrate what was inherited or bequeathed to us by our forebears.

Commemorated under the theme: “The Year of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke: Celebrating South Africa’s Intangible Cultural Heritage”, this year’s Heritage Month celebrates our intangible cultural heritage or living heritage. As per the draft policy on South African living heritage, developed by the Department of Arts and Culture, living heritage means: “cultural expressions and practices that form a body of knowledge and provide for continuity, dynamism and meaning of social life to generations of people as individuals, social groups and communities”. It is a reminder to safeguard our nation’s intangible cultural heritage, namely, places such as museums, sports centres and even South Africans who continue to represent the country with excellence, in various spheres.

A number of our colleagues have shared their heritage with us, offering a brief view into their beautiful cultural backgrounds. What is abundantly clear, is that we are indeed united in our diversity. We are South African and proud.

September is also United Nations (UN) Month Ordinarily, heads of state/government or member states, accompanied by relevant ministers, converge at the UN headquarters in New York for several weeks for the UN General Assembly and associated high-level meetings. Like so many other events, the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly was conducted in a hybrid format, with various heads of state/government addressing the assembly virtually. In his address to the General Assembly, President Cyril Ramaphosa, among many other important matters, raised the issue of reparations for victims of the slave trade to be placed on the UN’s agenda. The President reiterated South Africa’s support for the adoption of special measures, including affirmative action programmes and targeted financial assistance, as restitution to communities whose ancestors were sold into slavery. President Ramaphosa further highlighted the 20th anniversary of the World Conference against Racism.

Anchored by the colleagues at our Permanent Mission at the UN, based in New York, Minister Naledi Pandor, on the sidelines of UNGA, attended and chaired a number of High-Level engagements. Colleagues in the Branch: Global Governance and Continental Agenda report on the UNGA activities and Minister’s participation in various meetings in this edition.

Public Service Month (PSM) is an integrated strategic national event on the calendar of the Department of Public Service and Administration. It serves as a reminder to public service officials, of what it means to serve communities and to also look at the impact government has, especially around issues of service delivery. The Office of the COO, as custodian of service within DIRCO, gives an overview of this important month.

September has indeed been a month of ample celebration, with multiple opportunities to show why we are South African and proud. Happy Heritage Month!
South Africa’s participation in General Debate and high-level meetings of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

The role South Africa has played at the United Nations

Voices from DIRCO – My Heritage, Your Heritage

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In his pre-recorded video statement delivered at the opening session of the High-Level Meeting on the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the DDPA, President Ramaphosa affirmed that the declaration and resulting action, embodied the commitments of the international community to address both the legacy of the past and contemporary forms of racism, and acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are crimes against humanity. He called on the UN to put the issue of reparations for victims of the slave trade on its agenda. The President stressed that the international community must redouble its efforts to build a world free of racism and all forms of discrimination.

Minister Pandor chaired a roundtable of this High-Level Meeting, themed: “Reparations, Racial Justice and Equality for People of African descent – Where do we Stand 20 Years after the Adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action”. The Minister stated that it was regrettable that some countries decided not to take part in this commemorative event at a time when incidents of racism and racial injustice continued to occur globally. Nonetheless, member states adopted a political declaration aimed at mobilising political will at national, regional, and international levels for the full and effective implementation of the DDPA and its follow-up processes.

In his pre-recorded address during the General Debate of UNGA76, President Ramaphosa stated that vaccines were the greatest defence that humanity had against the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic and raised concern that the global community had not sustained the principles of solidarity and cooperation in securing equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. The President described it as an indictment on humanity that more than 82% of the world’s vaccine doses had been acquired by wealthy countries, while less than 1% had gone to low-income countries. President Ramaphosa also took the opportunity to reaffirm South Africa’s call for fair and equitable distribution of vaccines and urged all member states to support the proposal for a temporary waiver of certain Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreements to allow more countries, particularly poorer nations, to produce COVID-19 vaccines. “In this interconnected world, no country is safe until every country is safe,” said the President.

On the issue of climate change, President Ramaphosa said that although poor countries bore the least responsibility for causing climate change, African countries were among those that carried the greatest cost. In this regard, the President stressed that the upcoming 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP) should adequately respond to the crisis.

On the issue of peacebuilding, President Ramaphosa reiterated South Africa’s efforts to contribute to international peace and security through its membership of the Peacebuilding Commission and involvement in UN peacekeeping. The President also put the spotlight on the Palestinian people, who he said had the right to self-determination. Furthermore, the President repeated the country’s position that the people of Western Sahara also had the right to self-determination in line with the relevant African Union decisions and UN Security Council resolutions. The President affirmed solidarity with the Cuban people and called for a lifting of the sanctions against Zimbabwe.

The General Debate and high-level meetings of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA76) took place from 21 to 27 September 2021 at the UN Headquarters in New York under the theme: “Building Resilience through Hope – To Recover from COVID-19, Rebuild Sustainably, Respond to the Needs of the Planet, Respect the Rights of People, and Revitalise the United Nations”.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, UNGA76 was held in a hybrid, in-person and virtual format. At the conclusion of UNGA76, it was reported that 194 speakers addressed the UN General Assembly, including 100 heads of state, 52 heads of government, three vice presidents and 34 ministers.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, participated in-person at UNGA76, while President Cyril Ramaphosa participated virtually, by delivering a pre-recorded statement at the High-Level Meeting on the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) against Racism on 22 September 2021, and at the General Debate of UNGA76 on 23 September 2021.
In addition, Minister Pandor attended several ministerial side events on the margins of UNGA76. The Minister, together with the Italian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marina Sereni, presided over the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Article XIV Conference. In her remarks, Minister Pandor stated that this conference was an opportunity for the international community to highlight the dangers and threats posed to international peace and security by nuclear weapons and tests. A declaration and measures to promote the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was adopted as an outcome of the meeting.

Minister Pandor also delivered a recorded statement at the World Food Systems Summit and at the High-Level Meeting on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and held bilateral meetings with António Guterres, UN Secretary-General; Abdulla Shahid, President of the UNGA76; and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and Co-Chair of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response; and with 16 foreign ministers and other representatives from Africa; Asia and the Middle East; Europe and Latin America; and the Caribbean.

Reflecting on her Working Visit to New York, Minister Pandor stated that this year’s UNGA highlighted a number of global challenges such as the inequity in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, growing inequalities between states and within states, rising human rights violations and conflicts in several countries. “World leaders must step up to the plate and address these challenges through multilateral cooperation, with the UN at the centre,” said Minister Pandor.
The role South Africa has played at the United Nations

- By Surprise Malehase

Public Participation Programmes

On 17 September 2021, Minister Naledi Pandor led a panel of experts on international relations that focussed on the role that South Africa has played at the United Nations (UN). This event was part of Minister’s outreach programmes with non-traditional audience. The webinar took place ahead of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

South Africa is one of the founding members of the UN in 1945. However, in 1974, South Africa was suspended by the UNGA from participating in all programmes associated with the body due to international opposition to the policy of apartheid. It was later re-admitted in 1994 following the transition into a democracy. Since then, the fundamentals of the South African foreign policy remain unchanged. In his weekly newsletter, President Cyril Ramaphosa highlighted our foreign policy priorities of regional political and economic integration, pursuing African development, multilateral engagement and the promotion of democracy, peace and human rights. These aspects remain the fundamentals of our foreign policy.

As world leaders prepared to meet at the 76th UNGA, the key goal being to find common ground because of the countless overlapping global challenges we face, among others, global pandemics, climate change and rampant inequality within and across states. COVID-19 has shown how connected the world’s nations are in our vulnerability.

The fact is, what this pandemic has proven is that the various nations cannot afford to have multilateralism disintegrate. In order to save it, we have to change it. Multilateralism will have to be different, not only because the power dynamics have changed, but also because in the globalised and interconnected world, power doesn’t only reside with states. But states have a responsibility at this juncture to make sure that multilateralism does not fracture further. For any country that is an active global citizen and committed multilateralist such as South Africa, this is a critical imperative. Furthermore, for middle powers, the difficult geopolitical environment provides opportunities to work together regionally and with like-minded states to lead in certain areas – trying to break deadlocks and make multilateralism more effective. Setting a tone for the meeting, in her remarks, Minister Pandor emphasised the reform of multilateral institutions including the United Nations. Minister said that for the world to be at peace with itself, organisations like the UN must reform.

Having listened to practitioners of our foreign policy and academics (opinion makers), it is clear that we need a new universal social contract (that would include Agenda 2030), which is essential for multilateralism to become fit for purpose for the 21st century. This is because at the heart of any multilateralism initiative lies firstly, the maintenance of international peace and security and the improvement of the human condition. We need this contract to re-establish the trust that has been lost.

The values that I noted during the discussions lie at the heart of what was the driving force for the great thinkers of Pan-Africanism from the 19th century to the present.

This is an ambitious undertaking, but it is essential if we are to recalibrate the way in which the world works. Given that the multilateral system is challenged by the current geopolitical rivalries, countries like South Africa have a significant role to play in closing leadership vacuums. Leadership does not always have to come from the top of the pyramid, it can come from many places and the current global environment is one such example. South Africa has previously led several global initiatives, however, we must also continue to invest in our regional initiatives because the global may experience paralysis. The regional bodies may become substitutes (not just complements) of the global formations. Regions will become more important in responding to some of the transnational challenges through their collective membership impetus and influence at the global level.

For South Africa and the rest of the African continent to be able to play that role of change agents, it is necessary to invest in our institutions. We need to have a strategy that includes the building of coalitions with like-minded states, committed to multilateralism and other stakeholders. Lastly, bold leadership is key to make multilateralism more inclusive, fair and equitable.
HERITAGE MONTH 2021

CELEBRATING SOUTH AFRICA’S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

#MyHeritageYourHeritage
#HeritageMonth2021
I am a South African of Indian origin. I know nothing else but Africa in the way that I think and feel.

Like many South Africans, I grew up with my grandparents in the small town of Estcourt, Mtshezi, in KwaZulu-Natal. My family were devout Hindus but a great deal of African influence permeated our lives, especially with respect to food. Delicacies such as tripe, sheep head, trotters and madombi were frequent regular meals; my biggest love growing up was putu with sugar.

Our culture was family-orientated around important religious holidays like Deepavali (or Diwali) but also Easter and Christmas. My great-grandparents, my grandparents and my parents were born in South Africa, so it was a melange of cultural practices.

The muti-shop owned by my grandmother’s niece became a hotspot for my curiosity, as she claimed over the many years to have cures for all ailments. She was Indian but her understanding of indigenous medicine was truly fascinating. It was my exposure to traditional medicine and the sounds of the Soul Brothers that are still vivid in my memory about growing up in Estcourt.

Typical things about South Africans of Indian origin, is that we don’t cook like other Indians around the world, we play a self-invented game of cards called Thunee and we don’t animate with our heads when we talk (Trevor Noah can elaborate on that one). Durban slang in itself has found its way into the urban dictionary and the cultural peculiarities are just so unique in many ways.

My home language was English, even though my grandparents would admonish me or talk about my transgressions in the heritage mother tongue of Tamil. I am a very proud South African Indian of Tamil descent. As a long-standing member of DTRD, I must hesitantly confess that the only languages I speak are English, Afrikaans and pidgin Russian (I can order food and read metro and street names). I have done a beginner’s course in Spanish but that’s where it ends.

My grandfather was a court interpreter and he spoke fluent Zulu, so I grew up as a young child with a great deal of Zulu in my life. My only regret is that apartheid did not allow us to learn the mother tongue of the places of our birth. It amazes me when you meet East Africans of Indian-origin and immediately understand their link to their land of birth through their mother tongue Kiswahili.

I don’t speak any heritage language because I opted to play cricket after school rather than attend vernacular classes. This is my other regret.

In DIRCO, adaptability to certain cultural environments and understanding the nuances of behaviour become a life lesson for all diplomats. Hand gestures may seem trivial but they have a big impact.

I am first and foremost a South African and a patriot. The motto “Diverse People Unite” is simply our unity in diversity and something we should live this every day. Our “oneness as South Africans” should be the primary passion that unites us in this National Identity.

After 27 years we need to unite everyday as South Africans, to rebuild our country ravaged by the pandemic, to tell the great stories about why people should visit South Africa and invest, and finally to preserve our own cultures while understanding that we are all South African.

I don’t tell people I am an Indian, I am a South African of Indian origin and more especially, I am African. I love both the land and continent of my birth.

I love to enjoy a “Mutton, Chicken or Beans Bunny”. It’s just so South African, it’s not just Indian South African. As the BBC put it: “the Bunny chow is an authentic South African street food”. But altogether, as a good South African son, I love anything my mom cooks.
I have been very fortunate to have visited every continent, apart from Antarctica, and 75 countries (some many times, such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, the United Kingdom and the United States), and the main observation that I have taken from this exposure, is that all human beings are essentially the same when it comes to what they want out of life, the importance of children and family, of loving and being loved.

Secondly, our concept of Ubuntu is one that can be seen in many different variations around the world. It can and should be the glue that holds all humanity together in a common bond to tackle global challenges, but somehow people and nations allow themselves to be sucked into the toxic elements of “us versus them”, whether it is expressed in hatred, racism, populism, unilateralism, negative expressions of nationalism (such as superiority and exceptionalism), and protectionism. As Madiba said though, human beings are not born hating, it is learned along the way. The sooner everyone realises that we are all in it together on this small planet of ours the better! It is just a pity that pandemics and climate change may be the harsh lessons that make everyone realises this.

Ultimately though, while travel exposes you to the wonders of the world, it makes you realise that there is no place like home!

Heritage Day is that day in the year for all South Africans to celebrate what is beautiful and unique in all aspects of their own culture. I have always found it beautiful in the sense of how this rich diversity weaves itself into the collective tapestry that is South Africa and gives true expression to the national motto of “ke eke: /xarra/ke (diverse people unite or unity through diversity).”

My all-time favourite dish is seswaa (from Botswana) and umngqusho, as it reminds me of the food I was given growing up (apart from the taste, which is delicious of course).
I was born of a Tswana father and a Sotho mother. So, I am Tswana, since I have taken the paternal lineage. I was born and bred in Soweto, but I am told that my family hails from one part of Rustenburg called Boons. Boons is located in the district of Bojanala Platinum in the province of North West, South Africa. My spirit animal is an elephant. This animal represents intelligence, wisdom, majesty, good luck, loyalty, strength and other noble qualities. Native to Africa and Asia, the elephant is an important figure in the cultural mythology of the two regions and other parts of the world. It is said that elephants with their trunks down are thought to be accumulating positive energy and pushing through obstacles, and are particularly potent totems for those seeking fertility, wisdom or strength.

My surname is Moroe, and it bears a particular meaning associated with my spirit animal or totem. During traditional family functions, family members, especially females, will ululate and praise sing with what we call “SERETO” (meaning/symbol of the surname) making reference to the spirit animal – the elephant. Historically, surnames evolved as a way to classify people into groups - by occupation, place of origin, clan affiliation, patronage, parentage, adoption and even physical characteristics. Many of the Moroe family can be traced back to the North West and Free State province, among others.

According to culture and heritage, language is not only limited to “spoken words”, but also extends to “cultural and traditional symbols”, among others. This is part of embracing and understanding indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). The concept of IKS refers to bodies of knowledge, technologies, skills and value systems, including home-grown philosophies, produced locally among the diverse cultural communities. They are traditionally transmitted orally or through art, from one generation to the next. IKS, therefore, are outcomes of generations of diverse cultural communities’ long observation, experimentation and lived experiences in the symbiotic relationship between different cultures and the natural environments. These knowledge systems and home-grown philosophies are stored and articulated in a diversity of indigenous languages, art forms, food cultures, textile designs, healthcare and wellness practices.

Besides speaking Setswana, I speak Sesotho, however, I have a fair understanding of (other than English) Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, and Shangaan. I often use these languages to connect with others, especially from those communities. It also helps a lot to speak a variety of languages in South Africa so that one can navigate different environments with ease.

The dawn of South Africa’s democracy in 1994 brought about what many South Africans yearned for – tolerance, understanding and respect, among others. Heritage symbolises and showcases the diversity of the people of South Africa, despite their different languages, colour, gender and all else which could define us a different. Heritage is a bridge through humanity who is brought together to learn and appreciate each other. Heritage teaches us to embrace and take pride in who we are, and also do the same for those who are different from us – black, white, Indian, coloured – all South Africans, despite their colour. It is also through embracing our heritage that the world can accord us the respect we deserve. Identity is a great source of pride as it gives us a strong sense of who we are and what we stand for.

I love these meals because they represent where I come from and who I am. I was partially brought up by my paternal grandparents. They were hard-core BaTswana who never compromised on what they ate. As a result, bogobe ba lerotse and mogodu became a regular staple in the family. I still have great memories of efforts made by my grandmother in preparing these sumptuous meals. During my primary school days, I would come home during lunch break to be greeted by a mouth-watering smell of dikgobe and traditional chicken (hard body). I will continue to cherish these memories for many years and pass the baton over to posterity.

My favourite traditional meal is a combination of the following: mogodu (tripe), chicken feet, cow and pork trotters, bogobe ba lerotse (sorghum porridge cooked in melon, seswa (ground meat), ting (fermented porridge), dikgobe (beans and samp cooked in melon) and morogo wa setswana cooked in peanuts.

Having travelled to many countries around the world, and posted to only two (India and Nigeria), I have learned to understand, appreciate and tolerate people from cultures other than mine. The immense cultural diversity I have learned, through travelling and interaction with other cultures, has opened my eyes to the tapestry, beauty and diversity of cultures of the world. It is only through learning and appreciating other cultures that the world can be a better place for humanity. The strength of cultural diversity lies in its ability to bring together people from different backgrounds to share a meal, dance together and busk under the African skies, or elsewhere in the world.

Celebrating Heritage Month with High Commission officials: Patricia Sebidi (left) and Busi Matona (right).
I was born in Mowbray Maternity Hospital in Cape Town, to a single mother who followed her own mother into domestic service to Sea Point at the age of 16. I grew up in backyard dwellings in mukhuts across the Cape Flats. I self-identify as African, but was classified as “coloured” by the apartheid regime, a term that I regard as offensive and derogatory, and one I hope very much that we will do away with soon! My mother and father were of Khoi and Xhosa descent, and I am the beautiful result of that union! My mother was proud of her Khoi roots, and if you were to ask her where she was born, she would tell you, as is the Khoi custom, that her “umbilical cord was buried at the foot of the Outeniqua mountains”, and only then would she go on and tell you that she was born in the South Cape, at a place from where her family was forcibly removed to make way for white people. She held onto the Khoi and Xhosa traditions, and we followed many rituals in our home to honour our heritage.

I respect my heritage, and I am proud to be a South African. We are busy with the important project of nation-building, and it’s important that we don’t use our cultural heritage as a way of slipping into a ethno-nationalism that prioritises one heritage or culture over another. After all, geneticists now know that there is not sufficient genetic variation between the so-called “races” to justify biologically essentialist understanding. Cultural racism wants us to believe different, and this drags us back to the pain of the past.

I speak Afrikaans, which is a language that is synonymous with the Western Cape, and that dates back to the 1500s. According to Professors Adam Haupt and Quentin Williams, both of whom have carried out extensive research on this topic, “Afrikaans took shape during colonial encounters between indigenous African (Khoi and San), South-East Asian, Dutch, Portuguese and English people. And although it is synonymous with the Western Cape, it is also spoken across South Africa and its borders. Unfortunately, Afrikaner nationalists relegated Afrikaans as a slang language, in order to create a more dominant version of the language in the form of Afrikaans to create a white Afrikaner identity.” And so it’s no surprise that the compulsory Afrikaans as a school subject invited the ire of so many of us in 1976! It remains unfortunate that so many negative stereotypes abound for speakers of Afrikaans who tend to be ridiculed, or made to feel that this is the language of tsotsis.

Hurtful stereotypes and derogatory jokes abound about so-called coloured people who extracted their front teeth, is really an expression of cultural racism and goes against the vision inscribed in our Constitution. Research demonstrates that this was not a common cultural practice, but that it dates back to the forced removal of front teeth to make it very difficult to pronounce the click sounds in Khoekhoe. The issue of surnames is also a case in point that many people make fun of. The fact that there are people with surnames such as January, etc. but few take the time to find out how this practice started. Our slave records show that many slaves were given their surname by their slave owners according to the month in which they were born, or the name of the slave owner who bought them. Dulcie September, who was the ANC’s representative to France when she was assassinated by still unknown gunmen, carries a surname that dates back to this practice. As diplomats, we must guard against an inadequate reading of heritage and cultural practices lest they become part of a false truth. I was therefore pleased to see that President Ramaphosa, in his recent speech on Heritage Day, said the following about the launch of an Afrikaans dictionary: “This year we also celebrate a major milestone with the publication of the first dictionary of Afrikaans. This is a language synonymous with Cape Town and draws on the languages of the Khoi and San, Dutch, Portuguese, English, Arabic and South-East Asian languages. We congratulate the team who were involved in this project. This important resource will not only contribute to our heritage and to the historical record. It is also a beacon of pride for the many residents of Cape Town who speak Afrikaans.” But I also speak English, and limited isiXhosa.

Ruby Marks
- Ambassador, Cotonou, Benin

#MYHERITAGEYOURHERITAGE

#HeritageMonth
I have been exposed to many cultures, and served in missions in South-East Asia for close to 10 years before I recently moved to Benin. While I respect different cultures, I regard it as important to also observe cultural customs, even when I have my own difficulties with it! But, we always keep our broader project in mind, and I practise the art of soft diplomacy while keeping our short- and long-term objectives in mind! For example, now that I am finally based back on the continent in Benin, I have occasion to meet with traditional kings, where it is the custom to bow in front of them, and remain kneeling as you state your business. So, I do the same thing I did when I was meeting with village chiefs in South Africa before joining DIRCO – when I am led in to speak to them, I always refuse to take a chair (this would dismiss me as the “other” and my message would be treated with polite disdain), and instead I politely refuse, and remain kneeling, like the other women who are part of the King or the Chief’s entourage. Of course, as a feminist, this does not sit well with me, but you learn to be strategic and choose your battle tactics so that your message can be heard. I still recall a moment when a certain ambassador decided to honour me in a ritual that involved eating horse meat, which I gamely went along with, because that very afternoon I was speaking to him about support for a particular country position that I wanted him to convey to his capital! So, observe the local culture, respect it, and follow it when you can! This is what the late Uncle Billy Modise taught us when he was giving us lectures in protocol from his vast experiences, and I will never forget them.

The commemoration of Heritage Month is an important personal reminder to me that I have been given a platform by our former presidents and President Cyril Ramaphosa to serve as head of mission in various countries, so my responsibility is to help others to build their own platforms! That is part of my legacy and heritage that I have to pass on. Of course additionally, to make sure that we celebrate our entire heritage equally, and fight against the creeping cultural chauvinism that will derail our responsibility to build a South African nation, fully accepting of its diversity.

Koe’sisters! It’s a traditional treat that has been made and consumed for decades and decades. Of course, it became another victim of cultural appropriation, when Afrikaners renamed it koeksisters as so-called “pure” Afrikaans. There’s even an annual (unofficial) Koe’sister Day on the first Sunday in September! Its origins reflect the slave ancestry of many people in the Western Cape in the spices used – cinnamon, aniseed, cardamom, coconut … all from former Dutch and British colonies such as Malaysia, Indonesia, India and others.

I am pleased that a group of us started the Lockdown Recipe Group because we were all cooking up a storm, and that Facebook group culminated in a magazine that was launched last year and is now available online as well as in supermarkets in South Africa. The proceeds go towards local food groups and towards the next publication. I also have to admit that my favourite comfort food is Lucky Star pilchards – something that was a staple in the Marks’ household when I was growing up. My mother made the best umngqusho, and now that she is passed, it’s the one dish that brings back instant memories of love and security … like all food from our childhood does. After all, food is memory.
September is both Tourism and Heritage Month in South Africa and in our country’s unique context, both are very closely linked. This month was therefore an opportunity for the Mission in Brasilia to promote South Africa’s diverse culture and heritage, cultivate closer ties with the Afro-Brazilian community and also to foster a greater awareness of tourism’s social, cultural, political and economic value. In-person activities remain restricted by the ongoing COVID-9 restrictions.

The first African Film Festival in Brasilia, which took place in a hybrid format from 1-19 September 2021, allowed the Embassy to showcase the multi-award winning South African production, “The Sound of Masks”. The Embassy, with the support of Distell and the Branch: Public Diplomacy, sponsored South African wine and Amarula for the event in addition to promoting South Africa’s tourism, culture and heritage at the opening ceremony and on the day dedicated to the showing of the South African movie.

Throughout the month, the Embassy also undertook a number of social media campaigns to promote the diversity of South Africa’s food, culture and heritage, arts and crafts (promoting small businesses owned by women) and continued with its monthly promotion of the unique selling points of South Africa’s nine provinces. The month-long promotional activities culminated in a Heritage Day video that highlighted the best of South Africa’s cultural tourism industry for Brazilian tourists. Watch it here: https://fb.watch/8gHpZTdgLA/

To read the article with Ambassador Vusi Mavimbela in Embassy Magazine, click here: www.embassynews.info/africa-do-sul-com-a-atencao-voltada-para-o-brasil/
The opening of the South African Cultural Centre in New York

On Thursday, 23 September 2021, Minister Naledi Pandor officially opened the South African Cultural Centre, hosted by the South African Consulate in New York, USA.

Minister Naledi Pandor attended the launch held at the new South African Consulate and together with the Consul General, Dr Motumisi Tawana, opened the centre officially.

The legendary Prof. Zakes Mda was in attendance to unveil his inaugural exhibition, "Washboard and Mirrors", which was open for viewing until Monday, 27 September 2021.

The opening was featured on SABC. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfGUne_QXsi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfGUne_QXsi)
Heritage Day Celebrations at the South African Embassy in Greece
- By Kgopotso John
First Secretary Political, Athens, Greece

The South African Embassy in Athens, Greece, hosted an event to celebrate Heritage Day. Ambassador Beryl Sisulu welcomed her guests with a short speech honouring Charlotte Maxeke’s legacy, “The Year of Charlotte Maxeke: Celebrating South Africa’s Intangible Cultural Heritage”.

In her speech, Ambassador Sisulu emphasised that “our intangible cultural heritage permeates our way of life as a rainbow nation. As a society, we may have different religions, different languages, different skin colour, but we all belong to one rainbow nation, and we should fervently strive for unity in our diversity.”

The Ambassador furthermore mentioned that “as an Embassy we strive to educate and promote the image of South Africa through cultural diplomacy through various events. Within these parameters as African embassies accredited to the Hellenic Republic, we have held about 20 African festivals over the last two decades”.

The Heritage Day event was held with a small group of people due to COVID-19 restrictions. Within this small group, were diplomatic staff, business representation and friends of South Africa. South African traditional food and wine were served in the colourful decorated gardens of the South African Official Residence. The Ubundu Drum and Dance Group danced to South African rhythm.
South Africa moves to ADJUSTED ALERT LEVEL 1

VACCINE ROLLOUT

- Over 17 million doses have been administered
- Over 8.3 million people are fully vaccinated
- 30% of the adult population has received at least one vaccine dose
#ABOUTME

**Tarryn Warries**  
- Third Secretary: Political, Oslo, Norway

1. **What does a day in the life of Tarryn Warries look like?**

   As Third Secretary: Political, my responsibilities are varied, from analysing political developments to investment promotion to social media engagement. So, no day is ever the same. Despite this, there are a few things that are constant. As social media content manager, the start of my day, unfortunately, starts with scrolling through various platforms. I know life coaches encourage you not to start the day off like that but due to the pandemic, social media engagement has become a core component of my responsibilities. It is the way we increase the Mission’s visibility. So, I start the day scrolling and reposting anything that might promote the country or shed light on South Africa’s position.

   Once I get to work and after I’ve had my first cup of coffee, we have our political section meeting. Here we go over the engagements for the day and any points we would like to highlight during the engagements. The engagements can include meeting the Foreign Ministry, business leads, education and research stakeholders or research organisations. With the transformation of diplomacy, there continues to be an increased reliance on economic diplomacy. Therefore, each engagement, even with education and research institutions are focussed on promoting South Africa as an attractive investment destination. The part of my day, which I have come to enjoy, is prepping for a social media campaign. We often use South Africans in Norway to promote the country through video interviews. Therefore, some days are filled with filming or editing content. As you can see, my activities during the day are diverse and can at times be overwhelming but deep down, I love that my job will never be monotonous.

2. **You have been in Norway for some years now. Tell us about your experience as a South African living in Norway.**

   Wow, moving to Norway was an adjustment. I enjoy travelling and experiencing different cultures and cuisines. I have never experienced culture shock but for the first time, everything in my body was fighting Norway. I read about this beautiful country with the mountain ranges, beautiful fjords and a population with one of the highest levels of happiness according to the World Happiness Report. However, Norway was very different to South Africa. A key difference was the openness of South Africans versus the clique dominant society of Norway. For Norwegians, most of their social groups still consist of their friends they met in kindergarten. Due to the difficulty in making connections, expats often struggle to feel settled in Norway. My time in Norway has truly solidified my love for my country. However, after numerous trips home to recharge, slowly but surely, I started seeing the beauty of the country. I had to leave to see what I had. I had a friendship circle that I consider friends for life. I had access to nature and fun adventure activities through an accessible transport system. Once I started focussing on what I had and not on how different it was to South Africa, I felt more settled. However, I will say, that this is an ideal posting for a family and not so much for a single person.

3. **What is your favourite destination to visit in Norway and why?**

   The one place that stands out for me thus far is a small winter town, Geilo, tucked in between snow-capped majestic mountains, about four hours drive outside Oslo. In 2019, before the pandemic, I had the opportunity to spend New Year’s week in the town with fellow South Africans. We were all learning how to ski for the first time. It was so much fun, even though my body hurt for a week afterwards. Norwegians love skiing; kids learn from a young age how to ski and I saw quite a few pass me on the slopes. Geilo is considered one of the top winter destinations, with a number of slopes, trails and after-ski bars – a key Norwegian tradition. Although Norwegians generally keep to themselves, on the slopes and in the mountains and especially after-ski bars, they come alive. Therefore, you could imagine as a South African, the cultural vibe was a welcome distraction from the cold city. I still have a few tourist attractions to cross off my list, such as a trip to Lofoten to see the Northern Lights, spending a day with the Sami people and a train trip through the fjords from Oslo to Bergen.
4. What do you do in your spare time?

I spend most of my spare time with friends. They are primarily involved in the arts and research organisations. Therefore, during a night out, we normally attend art exhibitions or museum openings or performances at the Opera House. As Oslo becomes more multicultural, there is an increase of festivals geared towards promoting art from different cultures. In August, the Mission took part in the Oslo Afro Arts festival, which brought African artists from different countries to showcase their art and performance pieces. Although, Norway is known for its beautiful hiking trails and outdoor activities, I have spent most of my spare time sampling what Norway has to offer within the festival and modern art space.

5. Have you sampled any Norwegian literature yet? Tell us about your latest read.

Norway prides itself on the number of books that it has translated into Norwegian. The extensive collection can be seen at the newly erected Deichman Library. As a result, most Norwegian authors write in their native tongue. Because I have not had the opportunity to master the Norwegian language, I have been unable to sample true Norwegian literature. However, as an expat, the first book that I was introduced to was the Social Handbook to Norway, an illustrated introduction compiled by a French expat who lived in Norway. It can be very difficult navigating the Norwegian society and this book really provided the comedic relief I needed. As a foreigner in Oslo, one notices differences that don’t make any sense and this book highlighted that it was a special Norwegian quirk rather than an illogical behaviour. An example of this is getting onto a bus and seeing people stand although there are plenty of seats open. I didn’t quite understand it, because as a South African we sit tight against each other on public transport. In an illustration, the book highlighted that the Norwegians needed to not inconvenience each other and allowed each other the space to breath. I don’t know how effective this would be in South Africa, but these are the interesting quirks that make your experience in Norway one of a kind.

South Africa and Norway share a rich history dating back to the liberation struggle. It is a relationship that continues to thrive as Norway often collaborates with South Africa on the promotion of the gender agenda. Tell us more about the bilateral relations. Norway has been an important ally in our turbulent past and democratic present. Their actions and support during the liberation struggle continue today through multilateral cooperation on numerous issues, ranging from women, peace and security to the equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. Over the last 25 years, we have seen the bilateral relationship grow from a donor-recipient relationship to a mutually beneficial one. Therefore, Norway continues to consider South Africa as a key partner on the continent and a base of operations for their investment efforts. We recently completed a High-Level Consultation where Norway and South Africa recommitted to strengthening relations. An interesting aspect of South African-Norwegian bilateral relations is lack of trade between the two countries. Although, South Africa enjoys a positive trade balance, exports amount to less than 0.03% of total trade. The pandemic has urged us to re-evaluate relations with many countries, specifically identifying the key areas of cooperation. Therefore, on closer inspection of the bilateral relations between South Africa and Norway, a strong cooperative relationship is revealed within the energy sector, emerging businesses, environmental issues, knowledge sharing and innovation. A key pillar of the bilateral relations has been the strong history of collaboration between South African academics and researchers and their Norwegian counterparts. As these relations grow, it continues to have ripple effects in transforming our sectors, which in turn positively affects our economic growth. Therefore, even though the trade statistics between the two countries remain low, cooperation between academics, business to business, NGOs, research institutions and government departments continue to highlight the importance of this long friendship.
FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS IN NORWAY

1. Henningsvær, Lofoten
2. Hardangerfjord
3. Munch museum
4. Geilo
5. Deichman library

Geilo
Geilo by night

ABOUT ME

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Norwegian Humour

Illustrations and words by Julien Bourrelle - French-Canadian expat in Norway
South Africa’s Public Service During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Serialong Chauke

Directorate: Change Management & Service Delivery Improvement

Public Service Month (PSM) is a service-delivery improvement mechanism that annually reflects on the work of public servants by promoting the constitutional values and principles for public administration as espoused in the Constitution of the Republic, and further celebrates the hard work and commitment of public servants throughout the country. The annual celebration is also an integral part of government’s Batho Pele Revitalisation Strategy. It also seeks to reaffirm the significance of Batho Pele in transforming public service delivery while benefitting citizens and serving them with dignity and courtesy and to ensure they receive quality public services.

As DIRCO, we support government’s efforts to improve service delivery to citizens by professionalising the Public Service and to promote a culture of continuously building a public service that upholds the constitutional values. 2021 PSM marks the 25th anniversary of the Constitution. The 2021 PSM further seeks to bring awareness to all public servants about the link between their actions, attitudes and behaviour and the values expressed in the Constitution.

This year’s theme focusses on Charlotte Maxeke to celebrate her life by emulating the ethos and values that she espoused as a public servant as it is reflected in the Public Service Charter. Government has put in place different programmes in her memory to preserve and promote her legacy. In support of these efforts, 2021 PMS, will promote the teachings of Charlotte Maxeke with special emphasis on gender equality and equal access to education and other public services through our services within the Office of the Acting COO.

Honouring the life of Ma Maxeke is particularly befitting during this time of socio-economic distress and uncertainty since her life’s journey shows us the true meaning of resilience and what it means to selflessly commit to a life of service to the people.

Apart from her known activism for women’s rights and succeeding to become the first African woman to graduate in South Africa despite the discriminatory policies of the time that fashioned a docile and inferior role for African women in society, Ma Maxeke contributed significantly to this democratic government’s understanding of public administration as a system of governance that must at all times be caring, responsive and focussed on putting people first. Batho Pele!! Public service is about complete dedication to the people and the nation.

The observance of Public Service Month in 2021 comes at a time when operations are disrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic, thus forcing the Public Service to examine its environments and find new ways of conducting business in line with the COVID regulations without hampering service delivery. DIRCO has worked tirelessly in identifying innovative ways of conducting business and building capacity to cater for the citizenry while putting change management initiatives in place for better workforce adaptability. In this period, as the Office of the COO, we acknowledge the frontline staff that have held the fort, sometimes even without any tools of trade. Their resilience has been remarkable under the challenges. The Coronavirus has forced the Public Service to be inventive and modernise service delivery. The global COVID-19 pandemic has challenged organisations in South Africa and the global community to manage the work environment in the newfound ways of what is now dubbed “THE NEW NORMAL”. In the short term, the department is facing enormous changes of scope to the business operational plans; while officials must adapt and continue to make progress on the set goals. The department has continued to deliver services as committed prior to the pandemic, however, different methods and approaches such as virtual and remote management was established.

In this PSM, special recognition goes to all the frontline/essential workers who worked tirelessly during the hard lockdown and provided essential services in ensuring receipt and sending of diplomatic bags to missions abroad, access control and lockdown regulations are adhered to by ensuring that only visitors with appointments can access the building. They continued to screen officials accessing the building, the secure legalisation of documents, monitoring movements, and the ICT and financial systems and accounts of the department are up to date despite challenging times.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETSWANA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumela Mme/Rre</td>
<td>Age Mme/Rre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le kae?</td>
<td>Re teng. Lona le kae?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re teng</td>
<td>Re a leboga.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le tla tsamaye sentle. Le nneng le letsatsi le le monate.</td>
<td>Re a leboga. Salang sentle,</td>
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<tr>
<th>SEPEDI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person 2 (Response)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumêla Mma/Rra</td>
<td>Ahê. Mma/Rra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le kae?</td>
<td>Re gona. Liena le kae?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le rea re gona. Re a leboga</td>
<td>Go leboga rena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepelang gabotse. Ebang le letšatši le lebotse</td>
<td>Re a leboga kudu. Šalang gabotse</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>TSHIVENDA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person 2 (Response)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aa (M)/Nd.aa (F)</td>
<td>Aa (M)/Nd.aa (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vho vuwa hani?</td>
<td>Nne ndo takala vhukuma, ndi vhudzisa vhone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ne ndo takale vhukuma</td>
<td>Ndo livhuwa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kha vha sale zwavhudi</td>
<td>Ndí a livhuwa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person 2 (Response)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello Ma’am/Sir</td>
<td>Hello Ma’am/Sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>I am fine, thank you. How are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am fine, thanks.</td>
<td>That’s good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good bye. Have a good day.</td>
<td>Thank you. You have a good day too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good bye.</td>
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<tr>
<th>ISIZULU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person 2 (Response)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanibonani Nkosikazi/Mnnumzane</td>
<td>Sanibonani Nkosikazi/Mnnumzane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unjani?</td>
<td>Ngiyaphila, unjani wena?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngiyaphila, enkosi.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulungile ke. Usale kakuhle!</td>
<td>Uhambe kakuhle!</td>
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<tr>
<th>ISIXHOSA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person 2 (Response)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molweni Nkosikazi/Mnumzana</td>
<td>Molweni Nkosikazi/Mnumzane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unjani?</td>
<td>Ndiphilile, unjani wena?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndiphilile, enkosi.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulungile ke. Usale kakuhle!</td>
<td>Uhambe kakuhle!</td>
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<tr>
<th>SESOTHO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person 2 (Response)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumela Mme/Rre.</td>
<td>Ahe Mme/Rre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le phetse joang.</td>
<td>Re phetse hantle, lona le phetse joang?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re phetse hantle.</td>
<td>Re a leboha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ke hantle he. Salang hantle.</td>
<td>Re lebohile. Tsamayang hantle.</td>
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**XITSONGA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person 1</th>
<th>Person 2 (Response)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avuxeni</td>
<td>Ahee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunjhani?</td>
<td>Ndzi kona ndza khensa. Kunjhani?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndzi kona ndza khensa.</td>
<td>Kahle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salani kahle.</td>
<td>Fambani kahle. Vona u nga ri khale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AFRIKAANS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person 1</th>
<th>Person 2 (Response)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goeie dag Mevrou/Meneer</td>
<td>Goeie dag Mev/Mnr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoe gaan dit?</td>
<td>Reg. Dankie, en met u?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baie reg, dankie.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ISINDEBELE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person 1</th>
<th>Person 2 (Response)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lotjhani.</td>
<td>Yebo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unjani?</td>
<td>Ngikhona, unjani wena?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngikhona. Ngiyathokoza</td>
<td>Kulungile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisale kuhle.</td>
<td>Ukhambe kuhle. Ube nelanga elihle.</td>
</tr>
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**SISWATI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person 1</th>
<th>Person 2 (Response)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanibonani</td>
<td>Yebo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninjani?</td>
<td>Sikhona, nine ke?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhona, nine ke? Ngiyabonga kakhulu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulungile ke. Salani Kahle!</td>
<td>Nihambeni Kahle. Ube nelusuku loluhle!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DIRCO OUTREACH PROGRAMME

On 11 September 2021, Minister Naledi Pandor handed over a newly refurbished science laboratory and library to Siqongweni High School at Imbali Township in Pietermaritzburg.

On 10 September 2021, Deputy Minister Alvin Botes and the Ambassador of Viet Nam in South Africa, Huang Van Loi handed over masks to the Northern Cape Department of Education for schools in that province. On 24 September 2021, DIRCO’s Chief Director: Central, South and South East Asia, Sindiswa Mququ, participated in the mask handover ceremony hosted by the Viet Nam Embassy in Pretoria.
Suicide is considered a complex phenomenon associated with psychological, biological and social factors. It may result from the desire to escape from a difficult situation or to hurt a person or an institution. Most commonly, suicide seems to arise from a depressed person's feeling that life is so unbearable that death is the only escape from great pain, terminal illness, financial losses and other such circumstances. Suicide may mistakenly be thought of as a solution. There also may be a genetic link to suicide.

On average, almost 3,000 people commit suicide daily. For every person who completes a suicide, 20 or more may attempt to end their lives. About one million people commit suicide each year. Every 40 seconds, the loss of a person who killed themselves shatters the lives of family and friends. For family and friends affected by suicide or attempted suicide, the emotional impact can last for many years.

The suicide mortality rate in South Africa, which is the number of suicide deaths in a year per 100,000 population, is as follows:

- the suicide rate for 2019 was 23.50, a 2.49% decline from 2018
- the suicide rate for 2018 was 24.10, a 4.37% decline from 2017
- The suicide rate for 2017 was 25.20, a 3.28% increase from 2016
- The suicide rate for 2016 was 24.40, a 0.41% decline from 2015.

**Risk factors**

Although attempted suicide is more frequent for women, men are more likely than women to complete suicide because they typically use more lethal methods, such as a firearm. You may be at risk of suicide if you:

- Have attempted suicide before.
- Feel hopeless, worthless, agitated, socially isolated or lonely.
- Experience a stressful life event, such as the loss of a loved one, relationship ending, or financial or legal problems.
- Have a substance abuse problem – alcohol and drug abuse can worsen thoughts of suicide and make you feel reckless or impulsive enough to act on your thoughts.
- Have suicidal thoughts and have access to firearms in your home, or availability of any other methods (e.g. poison, pills, etc.).
- Have an underlying psychiatric disorder, e.g. mood disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorder, etc.
- Have a family history of mental disorders, substance abuse, suicide, or violence, including physical or sexual abuse.
- Have a medical condition that can be linked to depression and suicidal thinking, such as chronic disease, chronic pain or a terminal illness.
- Are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender with an unsupportive family or in a hostile environment.
- In rare cases, people who are suicidal are at risk of killing others and then themselves. Known as a homicide-suicide or murder-suicide, some risk factors include:

- History of conflict with a spouse or romantic partner.
- Current family, legal or financial problems.
- History of mental health problems, particularly depression.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Having access to a firearm.

**Children and teenagers**

Suicide in children and teenagers can follow stressful life events. What a young person sees as serious and insurmountable may seem minor to an adult, such as problems in school or the loss of a friendship. In some cases, a child or teen may feel suicidal due to certain life circumstances that they may not want to talk about, such as:

- having a psychiatric disorder, including depression
- loss or conflict with close friends or family members
- history of physical or sexual abuse
- problems with alcohol or drugs
- physical or medical issues, e.g. teen pregnancy or having a sexually transmitted infection
- being the victim of bullying
- being uncertain of sexual orientation
- reading or hearing an account of suicide or knowing a peer who died by suicide.

If you have concerns about a friend or family member, asking about suicidal thoughts and intentions is the best way to identify risk.
Complications

Suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide take an emotional toll. For instance, you may be so consumed by suicidal thoughts that you cannot function in your daily life. And while many attempted suicides are impulsive acts during a moment of crisis, they can leave you with permanent serious or severe injuries, such as organ failure or brain damage. For those left behind after a suicide (people known as survivors of suicide) grief, anger, depression and guilt are common.

Prevention

Suicidal thinking does not get better on its own so get help. To help keep yourself from feeling suicidal:

• **Get the treatment you need.** If you do not treat the underlying cause, your suicidal thoughts are likely to return. You may feel embarrassed to seek treatment for mental health problems, but getting the right treatment for depression, substance misuse or another underlying problem will make you feel better about life — and help keep you safe.

• **Establish your support network.** It may be hard to talk about suicidal feelings, and your friends and family may not fully understand why you feel the way you do. Reach out anyway, and make sure the people who care about you know what is going on and are there when you need them. You may also want to get help from your workplace, place of worship, support groups or other community resources. Feeling connected and supported can help reduce suicide risk.

• **Remember, suicidal feelings are temporary.** If you feel hopeless or that life is not worth living anymore, **remember that treatment can help you regain your perspective** — and life will get better. Take one step at a time and do not act impulsively.

‘Creating Hope Through Action’ is a reminder that there is an alternative to suicide and aims to inspire confidence and light in all of us; that our actions, no matter how big or small, may provide hope to those who are struggling. Preventing suicide is often possible and you are a key player in its prevention. Through action, you can make a difference to someone in their darkest moments - as a member of society, as a child, as a parent, as a friend, as a colleague or as a neighbour. We can all play a role in supporting those experiencing a suicidal crisis or those bereaved by suicide.

Suicidal thoughts are complex. The factors and causes that lead to suicide are complex and many. No single approach works for everyone. What we do know is that there are certain factors and life events that may make someone more vulnerable to suicide and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression can also be a contributing factor. People who are suicidal may feel trapped or like a burden to their friends, family and those around them and thus feel like they are alone and have no other options. The COVID-19 Pandemic has contributed to increased feelings of isolation and vulnerability. By creating hope through action, we can signal to people experiencing suicidal thoughts that there is hope and that we care and want to support them.

You can help give someone hope by showing that you care. All of us can play a role, no matter how small. We may never know what we do that makes a difference. We all can reach in and ask somebody. You do not need to tell them what to do or have solutions, but simply making the time and space to listen to someone about their experiences of distress or suicidal thoughts can help. Small talk can save lives and create a sense of connection and hope in somebody who may be struggling.

Stigma is a major barrier to help-seeking. Changing the narrative around suicide through the promotion of hope can create a more compassionate society where those in need feel more comfortable in coming forward to seek help. We can all do something to live in a world where suicide is recognised and we can all do something to help prevent it.

The insights and stories of people with a lived experience of suicide can be extremely powerful in helping others understand suicide better and encourage people to reach in to support someone, and for individuals to reach out for help themselves. It is really important that the person sharing their story knows how to do so in a way that is safe for them and for those who hear their story. Personal stories of an individual’s experiences of significant emotional distress, suicidal thoughts or attempt, and their experiences of recovery can inspire hope in others that they too can move through the period of distress or crisis, and their insights can help others understand what it means to feel suicidal and how they can support others. Individuals sharing experiences of being bereaved through suicide and how they came to live their ‘new normal’, can help others experiencing suicidal loss make sense of the devastation of suicide and believe they will be able to live through and with the loss.

**By encouraging understanding, reaching out and sharing experiences, people can be given the confidence to take action. To prevent suicide it requires us to become a beacon of light to those in pain.**

Find out more about how to prevent a suicide and where to get help at:

1. **LifeLine**
   - Helpline: 0861-322-322

2. **The South African Depression and Anxiety Support Group (SADAG)**
   - Helpline: 0800 21 22 23 (8am to 8pm)
   - Helpline: 0800 12 13 14 (8pm to 8am)
   - SMS 31393 [www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org)
   - Suicide.org
   - [International Association for Suicide Prevention](http://www.iasp.info)

Remember to contact Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) if you or someone you know may be contemplating suicide.

Ms Given Mashigo: 012 351 1691
073 612 9623

Ms Rokaya Adonis: 012 351 0879
060 560 3380

Ms Ncedisa Mayeko: 012 301 8762
066 473 8810

Ms Edwina Fradie: 012 351 1469
083 468 5630

Ms Mpheni Mulaudzi: 012 351 1284
071 680 6697
Farewell by Ambassador Tokozile Xasa to the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Vinny Pillay, Brussels, Belgium, 29 September 2021

Minister Naledi Pandor co-chaired the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, pledging its support, as Co-President of the Article XIV Conference, 27 September 2021

Ambassador Vusi Madonsela attends the award ceremony for South African academic, Dr Alfred Schaffer, who received the PC Hooft Prize 2021 in The Netherlands. His work has been awarded several times, including the Awater Poetry Prize, the Jan Campert Prize and the Herman de Coninck Prize. He is a lecturer in Dutch at Stellenbosch University

Minister Naledi Pandor in conversation with the Council on Foreign Relations, based in New York, USA

Farewell by Ambassador Tokozile Xasa to the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Vinny Pillay, Brussels, Belgium, 29 September 2021
To submit content, please send it to internalcomms@dirco.gov.za on or before 26 October 2021

CELEBRATING SOUTH AFRICA’S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

#MyHeritageYourHeritage
#HeritageDay2021