



January 2007

dfa **Now**

Your voice to be heard



Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma during the first time meeting and briefing with the new United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the United Nations headquarters, New York

DEAR COLLEAGUES

Compliments of the New Year to you all.

Welcome to the January issue of DFA Now. May 2007 bring more adventure and success to your lives and in our efforts to build and sustain a better Africa in a better world.

The beginning of the month (January) South Africa took up its seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This means that during the coming twenty-four months, as the country undertakes its mandate at the UNSC, there will be challenges and opportunities that will require all of us to work harder and smarter together. South Africa and the Department needs all of you to rise to the occasion and make this a memorable historic achievement for the country, the continent and the world in pursuit of world peace and stability.

As it has always been the norm with DFA Now, you can expect a fulfilling read in this issue.

Please note that DFA Now needs and value your views/opinions. Please forward your letters and articles to the Editor before the deadline.

Hoping that you will enjoy it!

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Creative Corner

I am who I am

(Dedicated to Nelson Rholihlahla Dalibhunga Mandela)

I am the burning power

That makes the sun light

I am the energy

That keeps the moon bright

I am the dynamo

That keeps the stars shiny

I am the motor

That drives the wind speed

I am the force

That arms the fighting hailstorms

I am the velocity

That propels the sea waves

I am the spark

That generates the splinter of fire

I am the seed

That gives birth to life

I am the impetus

That swings the pendulum of time

I am the power of change

You are who you are

Because I am who I am

I am you, you are me

- Kaya Somgqeza

Our Model Workaholic:



Once in a while a snaparazzi comes to the right place at the right time to snap a real hardworker in action. Mr Ebrahim Edries with no shoes on while preparing for January 2007 Cabinet Lekgotla.

Some of the Highlights of South Africa's Highly Successful Tenure as Chair of the Group of 77 (G77) and China during 2006

"Let me start by thanking the Republic of South Africa for its sound stewardship of the Group of 77 and China during a demanding year..." UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in remarks at the G77 and China Chairmanship handover ceremony, New York, 10 January 2006.



Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma during the ceremonial handover of the Chairmanship of the G77 and China to Minister Bakhtyar of State for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

South Africa chaired the Group of 77 (G77) and China during 2006. As Chair, South Africa played a major role in helping to promote the collective interests and well-being of developing countries. On 10 January 2007, Minister Dlamini Zuma participated in a ceremony at the United Nations in New York, to transfer the Chair of the Group, which rotates every year, to Pakistan. This article looks back on some of the highlights of South Africa's remarkable accomplishments as the Chair of the G77 during 2006.

Some essential background

Established in 1964, the G77 is the largest coalition of developing countries in the context of the United Nations. The Group has a membership of 131, despite the symbolic name of the coalition being retained. The G77 and China concerns itself primarily with economic development issues, as well as some environmental and social issues. As such, the Group provides a platform for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective interests in these areas and enhance their joint negotiating capacity in the UN system. The Group also

promotes South-South co-operation and helps to strengthen economic and technical co-operation among developing countries themselves.

The Chair of the G77 and China receives its mandate from the Group, helping to facilitate consensus positions on common positions whenever possible. The Chair then represents the Group and promotes this position in negotiations with other development partners. As Chair during 2006, in order to defend the mandate of the G77 and China, South Africa devoted its exclusive allegiance to the Group.

Continue on pg 4 ...

... Continue from pg 3

The main objective for South Africa as Chair of the Group was to promote the development agenda of the South. The primary means of doing so was through enhancing the standing of the Group as a constructive, coherent and responsible partner in promoting North-South relations, in support of the interests of the South. In this regard, South Africa has been fully committed to the promotion and protection of the interests of the G77 and to strengthening the unity within the Group.

South Africa as Chair of the G77 and China during 2006

As Chair, South Africa successfully led the Group's participation in countless international meetings during the year. Assuming the Chair of the G77 and China brought with it tremendous responsibilities and obligations for South Africa.

South Africa was a very successful Chair of the G77 and China. Throughout the course of the year, South Africa developed a notable legacy as Chair by the manner in which effective and skilful leadership was provided to the Group in what turned out to be a particularly demanding and challenging year. Indeed, 2006 was a rather unique year within the UN as South Africa had to lead the G77 in dealing with a number of new issues emanating from the 2005 World Summit. In this regard, the issue of the reform of the UN, in the context of the ongoing debate about the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, effectively polarised the UN to a degree not seen in several decades. Several complex issues flowing from the 2005 Summit Outcome dominated the UN agenda during 2006. Of these, the establishment of the Peace Building Commission, the Common Emergency Response Fund, the Human Rights Council, the lifting of the expenditure cap on the UN and the resolutions on the follow-up on the development elements in the Summit Outcome and on the reform of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), have already been achieved. 2006 was also the year in which the scale of assessments had to be reconsidered.

2006 has been described by some

as having been a "battle for the soul of the UN" in which developed countries tried to use the different elements of the reform debate to shape the UN into an organ which would better serve their own interests and agendas. The G77 and China, under the leadership of South Africa, was determined to ensure that these reforms should lead to a stronger and more effective UN and successfully withstood the efforts by other partners to hijack the process. In the process, South Africa succeeded in keeping the G77 unified on a wide range of complex and potentially divisive issues and ensured effective G77 participation in the negotiations on these issues. Success in achieving consensus within the Group on several potentially divisive issues. As Chair of the G77 and China, South Africa succeeded in being alert and responsive to the dynamics on the ground in New York and other international fora, helping to build consensus within the Group and ensure that the Group participated in a cohesive and constructive manner in the negotiations on UN reform issues. South Africa engaged with the broad membership, and often with factions within the Group, in order to generate consensus on potentially divisive issues in addition to engaging with the development partners on a daily basis in order to promote and protect the mandate received from the Group. The general consensus among G77 Member States and observers is that South Africa has succeeded in providing strong, pro-active and effective leadership of the Group. South Africa proved its ability to generate consensus within the G77 and China where this has previously eluded the Group.

In this regard, South Africa also successfully generated consensus within the Group where this has previously seemed impossible and had eluded previous Chairs. Noteworthy examples in this regard include:

- The generation of a common G77 and China position on ECOSOC reform;
- United G77 and China support for a resolution in the Statistical Commission on indicators for achievement of the MDGs;
- In the Fifth Committee, the G77 managed for the first time to have a firm position on each and

every element of the 29 special political missions (SPMs) for 2006;

- During the 3rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol (COP-MOP 3), new ground was broken when the Group succeeded in finding common positions on ten substantive issues;
- In the ECOSOC resolution on follow-up to the World Summit on Information Societies (WSIS) the G77 for the first time was able to generate consensus G77 positions and negotiate as a united Group, while G77 members participated in the WSIS in separate regional groupings; and
- For the first time, the G77 and China developed common positions and delivered statements on all items before the substantive session of the Fifth Committee, including on the scale of assessments for the UN budget. A significant accomplishment in this regard included the fact that South Africa served as the sole negotiator on behalf of the Group during the negotiations on the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations for the period 2007-2009. For the first time in such negotiations, the Group managed to form a common position from the outset, which was maintained to the very end, despite considerable pressure from other partners who sought to divide the Group – resulting in the G77 and China achieving almost all the goals set out right at the beginning of the negotiation process.

The negotiations on the scale of assessments were a significant success for the G77 as the final outcome reflects the interests of developing countries, including mitigation for those G77 countries facing increases of more than 20% in their rates of assessment. Developing countries received a combined reduction in regular budget assessments amounting to almost \$9 million annually. In addition, developing countries over the

next three years will pay less towards the peacekeeping budget, which has increased in 2006 to more than USD 5 billion annually, and the cost of the USD 1.88 billion project to refurbish the UN Headquarters, which Member States will be assessed for in early-2007. In this regard South Africa was able to generate this relief through the redistributing of points received from the Russian Federation and some Members of the G77 and China.

As a result of South Africa's tenacious and tireless efforts during our tenure as Chair of the G77 and China for 2006, the Group managed to generate extraordinary new levels of preparedness, cohesion and solidarity within its ranks. As a result, the G77 and China has re-emerged as a grouping within the United Nations system with a clear vision and well-articulated goals. With the carefully-considered consensus positions that South Africa facilitated within the Group and promoted and defended in various multilateral fora, the G77 and China has reaffirmed its standing in the United Nations system as a reasonable but formidable negotiating partner.

Special G77 Ministerial Meeting in Putrajaya, Malaysia

As indicated above, the context in which South Africa chaired the G77 in 2006 was an unprecedented one in terms of the number of new and important issues that the Group has had to deal with. The importance of the new issues, especially those relating to UN reform, that the Group had to deal with was demonstrated by the decision for South Africa to convene a first ever Special G77 Ministerial Meeting, which took place on the margins of the NAM Ministerial Meeting in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on 29 May 2006. This Ministerial meeting was successful and dealt exclusively with issues that flowed from the 2005 World Summit. The Ministerial provided policy guidance to the G77 Chair for the ongoing negotiations in New York on these issues.

G77 Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology

South Africa also convened a successful G77 Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology on 3 Sep-

tember 2006, which took place on the margins of the 10th General Conference and 17th General Meeting of the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) and the 9th General Assembly of the Third World Network of Scientific Organizations (TWNSO), in Angra dos Reis, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. On that occasion the Ministers successfully launched the G77 Consortium on Science, Technology and Innovation for the South (COSTIS), to fulfill the mandate given by the Havana Programme of Action and the Doha plan of Action, which decided the establishment of "a consortium on knowledge and technology."

30th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs

The 30th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the G 77 and China met in New York, at the UN Headquarters, on 22 September 2006. The declaration adopted by the Ministerial expressed deep appreciation to South Africa for the "excellent work and tireless efforts as Chair" of the G77. The Ministerial also elected Pakistan to the Chairmanship of the Group for 2007.

A legacy we should all be proud of

The world today is beset by acute economic and social problems. International economic relations continue to be marked by uncertainty, imbalances and recessions with marginalisation of developing countries, especially the least developed among them. Under South Africa's leadership, the G77 and China has expressed deep concern about the tendency on the part of developed countries to take decisions that affect the world economy outside the multilateral framework of the UN system and without giving full consideration to the interests of developing countries. In the face of growing unilateralism, the G77 is playing an important role in reviving and strengthening the multilateral system and reforming the UN into the type of international organization that it should be.

Pakistan was elected to Chair the G77 during 2007. On 10 January 2007, Minister Dlamini Zuma participated in a ceremony in New York to hand over the Chair of the Group to

Pakistan, which was represented by Mr. Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, the acting President of the UN General Assembly, Ambassador Frank Major and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Supachia Panitchpakdi, also participated in the ceremony.

In her statement, Minister Dlamini Zuma noted that during 2006, there were intense, hard and lengthy negotiations with the developed countries which resulted in positive outcomes for the G77 and China. This was due to the solidarity and collective spirit of the Member States of the Group, on occasion under extreme pressure, to articulate and promote its collective interests and enhance the Group's joint negotiating capacity on all major issues. Under South Africa's leadership, the G77 and China worked for the creation of an enabling international economic environment in order to support developing countries' efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The Group's solidarity and collective positions throughout 2006 resulted in a greater understanding and respect for developing countries' positions, interests, needs and aspirations on the part of the developed countries. This has placed international economic, financial and social development obligations and commitments firmly on the United Nations agenda and has once again reinforced the vital role of multilateralism and, in particular, the role of the UN system in economic and social development. In the words of Minister Dlamini Zuma during the handover ceremony:

"In January 2006 when South Africa assumed the Chair of the Group of 77 and China we stated that South Africa looked forward to reaffirming the principles of the Group and to strengthen our unity, cohesion and vision of a fair and equitable multilateral system. We also assured you that South Africa would spare no effort in ensuring that we collectively enhance the development agenda of the South. We hope that we have fulfilled this pledge during our tenure as Chair of the Group of 77 and China."

Of that, there can be no question.

the DFA's 16 Days of Activism



Ambassador Nozipho Janaury-Bardill with Amasssador Jessie Duarte and other DFA colleagues during the 16 days of activism commemoration at the Union Buildings.

event attracted and appealed to the general employees of the department because the violence against women and children is a societal issue and therefore demands a unified approach from the general public. This will assist in eradicating the binary oppositions such as victim and perpetrator binaries which present violence against women as a terrain of only one section of our community. The civil society was also invited to make a contribution to the dialogue which the department hopes to sustain throughout 2007. Mr Kaizer Thibedi from the civil society presented and spoke about paradigm shift in gender politic and started to involve men who were not participating actively in public programmes dealing with gender issues. The programme was highly interactive as employees of the department were given an opportunity to interact with the issue and share their opinions and experiences with fellow workers and senior officials in the department. Poetry recital was rendered by Flo in collaboration with Motswako String Quartet and the event ended on a high note.

The Directorate: Marketing and Employee Wellness Centre (EWC) hosted the annual 16 Days of Activism to no violence against women and children on the 7th December 2006. This was to reinforce the department's commitment to deal with and eradicate any form of victimization and violence experienced by our women and children and the general so-

ciety. The Acting Director General Ambassador Duarte reiterated and spoke about how the departmental policies protects and speak against any form of violence and prejudice especially women abuse. The same sentiments were echoed by the Chief Director: Gender and Transformation, Ms Ruby Marks, a known gender activist who has just recently joined the department. The

The 9th International Fair

On 11 November 2006 the Department of Foreign Affairs co-hosted the International Fair with the City of Tshwane. Deputy Minister Ms Sue van Der Merwe invited all foreign missions in South Africa to come and showcase their cultural experiences with the citizens of South Africa at the Southern Lawns of the Union Buildings. Deputy Minister also gave a speech at the event. Also in attendance were the City of Tshwane Executive Mayor Dr. Gwen Ramokgopa, Heads of Missions accredited to South Africa, Business People and other prominent people in Gauteng. In her speech the Deputy Minister said that "Today we meet here to share our different cultures with one another in our efforts to build human bridges that will not only help us to work together but also help us with

economic opportunities provided by your countries".

The International Fair was in its ninth year and is a cultural and culinary event hosted with the aim of raising funds for charity organisations and promoting interaction and cultural understanding between the citizens of Tshwane and foreign Mission accredited to South Africa. Held under the banner "Building human Bridges and Extending the Age of Hope" the event saw different foreign Missions exhibiting what their countries can offer to both tourists and business people in terms of economic opportunities and cultural diversity. The Tshwane Executive Mayor Dr Ramokgopa added to the Deputy Minister's sentiments by saying that "we are honoured to be the host to this glorious event whereby we as a city

and a country share amongst others, cultural experience with each other and build human bridges that indeed will increase the age of hope".

Countries that exhibited at the event were Botswana, Pakistan, Trinidad and Tobago, and Algeria to mention a few. However what seemed to be the most interesting to the viewers was the Cuban and Mexican stalls that exhibited their Mohitos and Tequilas respectively. The Chinese stand had its own share of viewers who flocked in to admire the country's traditional umbrellas and several other things. Not wanting to be left out, South Africa exhibited several items including mala mogodu, dombolo, morogo, mqoboti, gemere, maotwana, and poitjie kos.



Ambassador Nozipho January-Bardill (right) with Ambassador Thandi Lujabe-Rankoe during the book launch.

MEMOIRS OF A DIPLOMAT – WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN POLITICS

In September 2006 the Foreign Service Institute teamed up with Xarra books to celebrate the heritage month and launched an outstanding book entitled “Memoirs of a Diplomat – A dream fulfilled” written by our own High Commissioner, in Mozambique, Thandi Lujabe-Rankoe.

The High Commissioner’s book is a valuable contribution to the history and education of South African society about what happened abroad when some of the ANC members and cadres were in exile. The author adds another critical dimension to what similar books such as “Oliver Tambo – Beyond Ingeli Mountains – by L. Callinicos” and “Still Grazing by Hugh Masekela & Cheers” have presented as a rich offering to our new democracy and the High Commissioner Lujabe-Rankoe captured the objective when she said:

“it is my opinion that the younger generation, those ones that were born free after 1994, should not take this freedom for granted. They should

know that many people paid with their lives for this precious freedom that we now enjoy. The youth should therefore be reminded of the ultimate price that the freedom fighters paid.” (122/3)

Her story is about universal love, courage, hope, determination and commitment of a people united with one goal in mind, to free others from political and racial oppression. It is an inspiring story of development and resilience which takes the reader on a journey of the author’s participation in the struggle against apartheid from a young age as a nurse in the relative comforts of rural Eastern Cape to the dangerous Gauteng province as a novice activist, across the seas to the challenging yet supportive African Continent where she grew into an experienced and respected cadre until she graduated into a Diplomat and a Chief ANC Representative in the Anti-Apartheid Movement activities in Europe.

Throughout the reading of the book the reader can feel, visualize

and smell the fear, pain, danger and the trauma the author experiences with her comrades. The death of her son while being circumcised in a Nigerian hospital and the continuous assassinations of her family members, comrades and friends while in exile are just some of the gripping experiences which effectively depict the insecurity and the tragic life during this time of those who were struggling against oppression. When the author gently lands you comfortably in a democratic South Africa where we celebrate, commemorate our history and heritage by institutionalizing our democratic values as we create positive traditions, the reader cannot but be amazed at the commitment, vision and sacrifices which those who were involved in the struggle made for the democracy which is enjoyed today. With that, comes a lot of respect and a strong sense of gratitude for making such an experience accessible

Continue on pg 8 ...

... Continue from pg 7

through this writing.

The book also gives an insight to what HOMs do in missions. She honestly highlights some of the issues which DFA Diplomats have to deal with such as being posted to a mission which you wouldn't ordinarily prefer. She however highlights what such an opportunity provides, for instance, the development of annual events to officially acknowledge the contribution made by various countries such as Tanzania, Botswana and Mozambique towards SA's liberation and she also introduced activities to commemorate all the ANC members who had been killed in those countries. It is therefore a very important book to be read by those in DFA, firstly, to appreciate the contribution which the "Political Appointees" made to our liberation and secondly, in order to understand and respect some of the rituals and the legacy which they leave in each mission in order to carry it forward as part of our history and gesture of appreciation of what placed SA where she is.

The book therefore presents a collective history made by visionaries who are committed to global democracy and human dignity. What happened during the making of that history therefore has influenced the world order particularly as far as the role of women are concerned.

For instance, it has been argued that only three women have ever won presidential elections in the Americas, and all rose to power as the wives of well-known figures: Violeta Barrios in Nacaragua, (1990-1997), widow of journalist Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, Janet Jagan in Guyana (1997-1999), widow of former leader Cheddi Jagan, and Mireya Mosco in Panama (1999-2004), widow of strongman Arnulfo Arias. Argentina's Maria Estela Martinez, better known to the world as Isabel Peron, took over the presidency upon the death of her husband, Juan Domingo Peron, in 1974, and was overthrown by a military coup two years later. In Bolivia, then Chamber of Deputies Speaker Lidia Gueiler was appointed interim president in November 1979, then was removed from office by a military junta in July 1980. There are many similar examples in the rest of the world but there is a defi-



Premier Thabang Makweta of the Mpumalanga Province at the book launch.

nite paradigm shift towards popular support of women leaders in politics.

- In 2006, in Liberia in our Continent Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, was elected as Africa's first female president.
- Similarly in South America, Michelle Bachelet, a candidate for the centre-left coalition that governed Chile since the end of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in 1990, was elected as the first woman ever to win a presidential election in 2006 with a majority vote over her right-wing opponent, a billionaire businessman Sebastian Pinera.
- South Africa has its first woman Deputy President who is supported by highly respected and competent female Ministers and Ambassadors in key sectors such as foreign affairs and others who have led and directed key global discussions. The women speakers in Parliament have also provided leadership in the quality of procedures, debates and decisions taken by the South

African parliament.

- In 2003, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was appointed as the first female finance minister in Nigeria and in Africa while recently the former Tanzanian Foreign Minister, Dr Asha-Rose Migiro has been appointed as the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations.
- In US Condoleezza Rice is the first US's woman Secretary of State who replaced the highly skilled Collin Powell and Nancy Pinosa has recently been appointed as the first woman House Speaker.

Women are therefore making history, not only because they are women, but because they represent a new form of leadership which was formed, in most cases, politically during or under oppression and represent the new democratic values of good governance, putting people first in order to achieve peace and sustainable development. The question therefore is no longer about whether any country should have a woman president but it is about who and when. There is still a long way to go however in other areas. Leaders need practitioners and foot soldiers.

There seems to be a gap in the field of conflict resolution, which needs strategic thinking, facilitation, mediation, arbitration and negotiation skills in addition to specific characteristics which are necessary. Based on the experiences which are captured in the mentioned books and even those which are not documented, there is definitely no lack of these skills in all sections of the South African government but there is a need, I argue, to consolidate all these skills in a strategic training intervention in order to build a strong and formidable team (particularly including women) of Peacemakers in Africa as a form of "taking the baton from those before us" to the next level. Hence we salute the author of "The Memoirs of a Diplomat" It is indeed a dream fulfilled for all of us and the future is open to those who can envision an economically sustainable, democratic and peaceful South and the rest of the Continent as the ultimate objective.



Members of Branch: Asia and Middle East with residents of the Itumeleng Shelter for Boys.

Branch: Asia & Middle-East community outreach

Over the Festive Season, the Branch: Asia & Middle-East embarked on a community outreach program and spread some Christmas goodwill to the needy residents of the Itumeleng Shelter for Boys in Sunnyside. The Shelter takes in abandoned boys between the ages of 7 and 18, trying to reunite the boys with their families and providing a permanent home at the Shelter for those boys who remain neglected by their relatives.

The Branch decided on such a project instead of a Christmas party/year-end function for the Branch officials, the idea being to put a smile on the faces of the needy and to let them experience their own Christmas. This project also served as a challenge to other Branches and to interest them in coming up with their own initiatives, to illustrate the mandate of government and better the lives of all South Africans.

Over Christmas, eleven of the boys had no where to go for the holidays and remained at the Shelter. The Shelter indicated to the Branch's Planning Team the needs of the boys, being such basics as school backpacks and stationery, and possibly some clothes. Thanks to the generous donations received

from officials in the Branch, the boys did not only receive all the stationery they had asked for, but also shoes, jeans, shorts, t-shirts and even a McDonald's Happy Meal. Added to this was a DVD player, DVDs and a Monopoly board game for the Shelter!

Ms Kgaugelo Mogashoa, a member of the Planning Team, shared some of her thoughts on the project with DFA Now: "If each public servant contributes something meaningful to different community centres, a gap will be filled. It does not have to be luxurious, but it can be something that will make a positive impact on a person's life.

"The most fulfilling part of the project was seeing the smiles on the boys' faces, it was indeed a Christmas for them. They thanked us for choosing them and are aware that government cares for them, they were truly grateful."

The Planning Team further thanked the entire Branch: Asia & Middle East for making the project a success. Mogashoa added the final word: "We would like to challenge all other Branches to join us in this successful initiative and search for other needy centres and make a meaningful contribution. Together, we can make a difference!"

"Envoy of excellence"



Ambassador Nozipho January-Bardill.

The beginning of December 2006 saw Branch: Human Capital Management venture into the Christmas holidays with much pomp and glory. The reason being that the DDG of Human Capital Management, Ambassador P N January-Bardill was nominated by the Africa Link Organisation to receive an award as an 'African Envoy of Excellence'.

Ambassador January-Bardill received this award in Geneva, at a glittering awards function. The award recognised Ambassador January-Bardill for her contribution and the role she played in the creation and promotion of a positive image of Africa. Ambassador January-Bardill was honoured for her noble initiatives in bringing together the African Ambassadors in Berne and the African Diaspora during her tenure as the Ambassador to Berne, Switzerland.

The Africa Link Organisation is a non-profit organisation committed to the creation and sustenance of a credible African voice in the media landscape of Switzerland and the promotion of Africa's positive image and interests in the multilateral environment. It has created the Solidarity Awards as an annual event to recognise Africans and friends of Africa who make significant contributions to the continent's social, economic and political development.

Congratulations Ambassador and thank you for inspiring all of us further to fly the South African flag higher and to become the new era diplomats who will always aspire to be at the "Heart of African Diplomacy".

MYANMAR VOTE EXPLAINED

By Chris Landsberg (CITY PRESS, 28 JANUARY 2007)

South Africa's vote in the UN Security Council earlier this month on the political situation in Myanmar caused much controversy and debate.

This vote also reopened a 13-year debate about South Africa's foreign policy. Is our diplomacy driven by ethical considerations and principles, or are other more pragmatic considerations and agendas at play?

Many commentators, including Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu have, alas, reduced the Myanmar vote, and the republic's foreign policy more generally, to a simplistic, one-dimensional, commitment to ethics.

A strict, godly interpretation of foreign policy would naturally come to such uncomplicated reasoning as pure ethics, but in the tough world of diplomacy, foreign policy is often driven by a multifaceted set of considerations.

To be sure, with the handling of the consternation over the vote, SA has missed a golden opportunity to clarify where exactly principles fitted into the position vis-à-vis Myanmar.

SA could have expressed itself more forthrightly on the poor governance and terrible human rights situation in that country, while still voting against the Washington DC-inspired resolution.

But, what remains valid here, is to go beyond rudimentary explanations and try to understand what was really at work in SA's Myanmar vote.

So if not ethical motivations, what really drove SA to vote as it did?

Several factors ranging from power considerations, to desires to protect the UN system, to challenging the perceived abuse of power by some Security Council members, and indeed quiet diplomacy ... yes, quiet diplomacy.

The Security Council mandate is clear: to address threats to international peace and security. It was SA's belief that the recently formed UN Human Rights Council should have dealt with Myanmar's governance and human rights abuses.

Taking it to the Security Council was tantamount to caving in to the US using the council as a tool of US foreign policy.

With its vote, SA sent the message that it will safeguard the integrity of the UN.

Over the next two years, SA will act as spokesperson for other UN agencies, and thereby make the case for the democratisation of the UN, including the Security Council.

On quiet diplomacy, UN under-secretary-general Ibrahim Gambari recently visited Myanmar and briefed the Security Council in November on his interaction with the Myanmar government and the opposition, including political detainees.

During his visit, he emphasised the importance for Myanmar to take concrete steps to implement democratic change and release political prisoners.

SA believed the US-inspired Security Council resolution, and threats of punitive action, would have undermined the "confidence-building" efforts initiative of the under-secretary-general

So SA's vote was a vote in defence of quiet diplomacy, and private and confidential engagement between New York and Myanmar.

Geopolitical calculations also loomed large. Determined to imprint its South-South identity in global affairs, South Africa's Myanmar stance took cognisance of the positions of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

SA stuck its neck out in defence of the UN and multilateralism, challenging great power dominance in the UN and opting for engagement instead of confrontation.

But in the public eye, there will continue to be consternation over votes like Myanmar unless SA properly communicates the reasons behind such votes. And there will be even greater disquiet unless it also clearly highlights the importance of principled considerations like democratisation and human rights.

But in the tough world of diplomacy, ethical considerations should count for just that – one consideration among several others, albeit an important one.

Chris Landsberg is a director at the Centre for Policy Studies and a research professor at the University of Johannesburg

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. WHAT IS SOUTH AFRICA'S STANDPOINT ON THE SITUATION IN MYANMAR?

South Africa's constitution guarantees the human rights of all South Africans. In this context, South Africa is concerned at the abuse of human rights anywhere where they may occur in the world.

Secondly, South Africa supports the call by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Professor Gambari for the military rulers in Myanmar to move the country towards democratisation.

Thirdly, we concur with the call by the Under Secretary-General for the release of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi

2. WHY THEN DID SA VOTE AGAINST THE PROPOSED UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON MYANMAR?

South Africa's vote against the proposed UN Security Council resolution was not a vote against the people of Myanmar or a vote for the military rulers of Myanmar. On the contrary, our own history and struggle against apartheid enjoins us to act in solidarity with the struggling masses of the world including the peoples of Myanmar.

It is our view that the proposed UN Security Council resolution on Myanmar would have undermined current efforts by the UN Secretary-General to help find a resolution of the situation in Myanmar.

In addition, it was our view that the issue of Myanmar at this stage should have been better handled by other United Nations bodies such as the Human Rights Council.

3. DID SOUTH AFRICA CONSIDER THE VIEWS OF THE PEOPLE OF MYANMAR AS WELL AS THE REGION IN WHICH MYANMAR IS LOCATED?

Most certainly, in the statement made at the UN Security Council during the debate on Myanmar, South Africa's Permanent Representative to the UN expressed in no uncertain terms South Africa's concern about the situation in Myanmar thus expressing South Africa's solidarity with the people of Myanmar.

Secondly, South Africa should also

take into account the views of the region. In this regard South Africa took into account the views of the regional organisation ASEAN. Countries of the region, members of ASEAN, consider that Myanmar is not a threat to international peace and security.

4. AREN'T THESE ARGUMENTS THE SAME USED BY APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA TO BLOCK UN SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION TO END APARTHEID

The situation of Myanmar and apartheid South Africa are completely different in many respects. We reiterate our concerns about the situation in Myanmar.

On the one hand, with regard to the situation in South Africa, apartheid was declared a crime against humanity by the UN General Assembly and a heresy by the World Council of Churches. The continent of Africa as a whole including our own region of SADC, then known as the Frontline States were under constant military incursions from the then South African Defence Force in pursuit of members of the broad liberation movement. These incursions saw a number of citizens killed and infrastructure destroyed in Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana.

We were witnesses to assassinations of opponents of apartheid across our borders including Europe. In this regard there are suggestions that the deaths of the late Prime Minister of Sweden Olof Palme and the late President of Mozambique Samora Machel was the work of apartheid agents.

Simultaneously, we witnessed a full scale war being waged in the territory of an independent sovereign state of Angola with devastating consequences for the Angolans for over 20 years. On the other hand, Namibia peoples suffered under the repressive regime of apartheid for many years.

The UN accordingly declared South Africa a threat to international peace and security! South Africa indeed feels greatly indebted to the sacrifices of millions of people around the world who contributed to the downfall of that threat to international peace and security, apartheid South Africa.



DG's visit to Vienna

Ambassador Leslie Mbangambi Gumbi, head of our embassy in Vienna.

The Director-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Dr Ayanda Ntshaluba, paid an official visit to the South African Embassy and Permanent Mission to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Vienna from 15 to 17 November 2006. The purpose of the visit, the first by the Director-General to Vienna, was to meet with the Embassy staff. Secondly for the first time in the recent history of the Department, the Director General participated in disarmament consultations of Foreign Affairs officials responsible for disarmament issues at Head Office, as well as at the South African Missions in New York, The Hague, Geneva and Vienna.

At the meeting with the Embassy staff in Vienna, which was also attended by Ambassador Minty, Ambassador Gumbi gave an overview of the Mission's activities, its areas of responsibility, including the Mission's challenges and priorities. The Director-General was also given the opportunity to meet separately with the Mission's Locally Recruited Personnel. He also paid courtesy calls on the Secretary-General of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Directors-General of UN bodies in Vienna. Counterparts met included Dr Johannes Kyrle, Secretary-General of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Antonio Maria Costa, Director-General of the UN Office in Vienna, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and Ambassador Tibor Toth, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

The main purpose of the disarmament consultations was to exchange

views on pertinent disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control matters. Participants also reviewed South Africa's preparations in respect of the disarmament events that it will be directly responsible for in 2007 such as hosting the NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP PLENARY meeting and its Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. These consultations presented an ideal opportunity to forge common understanding of South Africa's positions on a variety of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control matters in general, including those that could be subject of focus by the UN Security Council where South Africa occupies a non-permanent seat in this important organ of the UN for the period from 2007 to 2009.

The disarmament consultations, chaired by the Director-General, were attended by Ambassador AS Minty (DDG), Mr X Mabhongo (Director: United Nations), Ms TDG Molaba (Director: Disarmament and Non-Proliferation), Mr VP Makwarela (Deputy Director: Disarmament, Office of Ambassador Minty), Mr MJ Combrink (Deputy Director: Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation) and Ms U Mgandela (Personal Assistant to Dr. Ntshaluba), from Head Office. Ambassador HB Mkhize and Mr J van Schalkwyk (Counsellor), represented The Hague, Ambassador G Mtshali and Mr J Kellerman (Counsellor), represented Geneva and Mr J Paschalidis (Counsellor), represented New York. The Mission in Vienna was represented by Ambassador LM Gumbi, Mr BJ Lombard, (Counsellor: Multilateral), and Mr AB Wright (First Secretary).

Where were you (DFA 2006 year-end party) ...

