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ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLINGS

National Assembly and National Council of Provinces

1. Minister of Transport..... 2

COMMITTEE REPORTS

National Assembly

1. International Relations and Cooperation..... 3

TABLINGS

National Assembly and National Council of Provinces

1. The Minister of Transport

(a) Revised Annual Performance Plan of the Road Traffic Management Corporation for 2025-26.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

National Assembly

1. Report of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation on Parliamentary Diplomacy Meeting with the EU Committee on Foreign Affairs and Oversight visit on SA Missions in Europe, gathered at the South African Embassy in Brussels, Belgium dated 10 December 2025

The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee), having embarked on a Parliamentary Diplomacy Meeting with the European Union(EU) Committee on Foreign Affairs and Oversight visit on South Africa's Missions in Europe from 1 to 8 November 2025, reports as follows:

1. Introduction

The mandate of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation is to oversee the implementation of South Africa's Foreign Policy. The international activities related to international relations and cooperation are carried out by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation together with its 115 South African Missions abroad. The Department is responsible for developing and maintaining bilateral political and economic partnerships in the various regions of the world. This is usually pursued through structured bilateral mechanisms such as bi-national commissions (BNCs), joint national commissions (JNCs) or joint commissions (JTs).

In line with the Statement of Intent (SoI) of the Government of National Unity (GNU) as guided by the National Development Plan (NDP), the Department has undertaken to contribute towards inclusive economic growth through attracting Foreign Direct Investment, promoting tourism and creating employment. The South African diplomatic and consular missions abroad are charged with implementing South Africa's foreign policy to enhance its international profile and serve as strategic mechanisms for the achievement of national interest. Economic Diplomacy is a focus area and a vehicle for the Department and South Africa's Missions abroad to tap into partnerships that would contribute towards graduating the country from the circle of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

The Portfolio Committee prioritises oversight over the implementation of Economic Diplomacy by focussing on the work of Missions abroad relating to their efforts towards assisting the country to address the triple challenges and combat the injustices of the past. The Portfolio Committee's oversight interest is to establish how each Missions is qualitatively and quantitatively advancing economic diplomacy and partnerships to benefit the people of South Africa. The implementation of structured bilateral mechanisms, being international agreements between South Africa and other countries, are the responsibility of these Missions abroad. The Portfolio Committee would want Missions abroad to substantiate their contribution where they are situated, in support of South Africa's national interest. Thus, the Committee monitors the work of South Africa's Missions abroad on Economic Diplomacy, achievements and challenges thereto.

The priorities of the 7th Parliament include ensuring service delivery relating to infrastructure. For the Department, this translates to the Digital Strategy focusing on ICT modernisation project. It is in the oversight interest of the Portfolio Committee to monitor its implementation and find out how the reported roll-out of this project to all South African Missions abroad has progressed so far. Another concern has been raised by the Auditor General that some South African Missions abroad rent accommodation space, even though South Africa has state-owned vacant properties or land parcels where office accommodation could be built. The Committee is taking steps to ensure that the challenges do not recur.

The engagements with its counterpart, the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the EU Parliament further strengthened the historical ties that the two countries have had in the fight against apartheid. The two committees share viewpoints and extensive deliberations on issues of mutual interest thereby adding further momentum to the bilateral cooperation and understanding. South Africa and the EU have since developed close strategic, cultural and economic ties through several bilateral agreements concluded between the two countries.

TheEU and South Africa share a strong and multifaceted relationship, characterized by robust economic ties, strategic partnerships, and cooperation in various sectors. The EU is South Africa's largest trading partner and a major source of foreign investment.
South Africa and the EU are committed to a partnership that supports economic growth, sustainable development, industrialisation, beneficiation of critical mineral at source,

partnerships with local industries and decarbonisation in a manner consistent with their respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development.

South Africa is the EU's largest trading partner in Sub-Saharan Africa, with €49 billion worth of trade in goods in 2023. The EU is South Africa's top source of foreign direct investment, accounting for approximately 47%.

The EU announced a global gateway investment package of €4.7 billion, based on three building blocks which the two-counterpart committees would monitor and ensure compliance with, namely:

- expanding South African vaccine production and boosting local pharmaceutical value chains
- support for the just energy transition through the development of critical raw materials, safe and sustainable low carbon hydrogen value chains and energy infrastructure
- the connectivity infrastructure, including transport and digital.

It is under this background that the Portfolio Committee took the opportunity to visit its counterpart, the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the EU Parliament in Brussels, to equally strengthen oversight ties and share ideas to ensure the implementation of the outcomes of the SA-EU Partnership Agreement and all related matters; and ensure implementation of bilateral mechanisms between the two entities for stronger partnership between the two committees. The oversight focus is to see the people of both countries benefitting from the existing historical relationship.

2. Objectives

Stakeholders in the EU Parliament

a. To strengthen ties between the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation with its counterpart the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the EU Parliament in Brussels. This will assist to enhance oversight over the historically strong partnership between the SA and the EU Parliament, to hold the executives accountable.

b. To share ideas on processes regarding oversight on foreign policy and assess the extent of the implementation of bilateral mechanisms/agreements between South Africa and the EU.

c. To share ideas on the outcomes of the recent SA-EU 8th Summit held in Cape Town, in March 2025, where President Ramaphosa and the President of the European Council Mr Antonio Costa led their respective delegations, with a view to ensure that the executives have a plan of action to ensure the programmes address the past injustices in EU Member countries and South Africa.

d. To engage with the counterpart Committee because the European Union and South Africa are not just partners, they are strategic allies, bound by shared values of democracy, human rights, rule of law, and multilateralism. The partnership delivers real benefits to the citizens, the economies, and the world.

e. To engage the Committee on Foreign Affairs against the backdrop of rising geopolitical instability and heightened uncertainty, where the EU and South African leaders expressed their support for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the major wars and conflicts around the globe, including in Ukraine and the occupied Palestinian Territories.

f. To engage further on how the two committees can enhance oversight responses to what SA and EU leaders voiced as a concern about the growing challenges to multilateralism due to rising nationalism and unilateralism, which undermine efforts to tackle shared challenges.

Meeting with South Africa's Missions in Europe, venue in Brussels, Belgium.

- To conduct oversight at both the South African Embassy in Brussels and its work in the EU, and the Missions in Europe to ensure their pursuit of bilateral relations address the triple challenges facing South Africa.
- To assess how the Missions pursue their work related to geopolitical relations that South Africa shares with the EU and Europe.
- To assess how the work of the Missions has opened opportunities for South African companies, and specifically the previously marginalised groups in our society.
- To assess the trade volumes generated by the Missions between South Africa and the EU, including other countries where other Embassies are situated under their accreditation.
- To assess how the Missions are implementing cultural diplomacy, people to people relations between the people of South Africa and the people of Belgium.
- To assess the status of state-owned properties abroad and vacant land parcels in Europe, if any, establish their level of neglect, to determine the state of readiness by the

Department to assume custodianship of state-owned land parcels and properties abroad, as provided by the Foreign Service Act 2019.

- To assess the work of the Corporate Services Managers and whether the Missions have in any way contributed to the negative audit outcomes in the past financial year, and what steps are taken to ensure no re-occurrence.
- To assess whether the budget is commensurate with the work the Missions must accomplish.
- To assess whether the number of warm bodies in the SA Embassies is adequate for the volume of work that the Missions need to do.
- To assess What are the volumes of South African citizens being served in the Missions, and what type of Consular Services are extended when the need arises?
- To assess the completeness of the Asset register of movable assets. Throughout the process, the Committee would ensure that it is up to date, with codes, and the movable assets can indeed be verified in a Net-trace system.
- Assess the workability of the ICT systems and progress on the implementation of the ICT Modernisation project at these Missions.
- To assess the processes relating to visa issuances and whether the ICT system is optimal for this purpose.

1.1. Delegation

1.1.1. Members of Parliament

- Hon SOR Mahumapelo MP (ANC) – Leader of the delegation
- Hon AN Kumbaca, MP (ANC)
- Hon MS Moela, MP (ANC)
- Hon M Chetty (DA)
- Hon M Makhubele, MP (MKP)

Parliamentary Officials

- Ms L Mosala (Content Advisor)
- Mr L Sigwela (Committee Secretary)

2. Opening Remarks and purpose of the Meeting: Hon SOR Mahumapelo, Chairperson of the PC on International Relations and Cooperation

In outlining the objectives of the oversight the chairperson highlighted that due to the limitations imposed on the work of the Portfolio Committee by the Oversight Model of Parliament, a decision was made to forthwith take a regional approach to oversight. This methodology would be cost-effective while allowing the Portfolio Committee to reach as many of the 115 South African Missions abroad. emphasized that the session was not a "witch hunt" but an opportunity for oversight and constructive engagement. The committee sought to understand not only political and economic developments in host countries but also the lived experiences of South Africans abroad, including students and workers. The chairperson highlighted the committee's people-centered approach to international relations and invited the ambassadors to present on key issues, particularly economic diplomacy and challenges faced by missions.

3. HE Ms T Xasa, Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the European Union

The Portfolio Committee was received by South African Ambassador to Belgium H.E Tokozile Xasa.

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Xasa noted that the political landscape in the EU is primarily governed by a three-group majority of the centre-right: European People's Party (EPP), centre-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and liberals or Renew Europe.They have played a crucial role in the European Union's oversight and legislation in policies such as the Green Deal and the EU responses to the Russia/Ukraine war.

South Africa and the European Union hold close diplomatic relations, particularly through the SA-EU Strategic Partnership which functions within the framework of the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) as well as through South Africa's support of strategies such as the Global Gateway Forum.

Measuring from the cooperation between SA-EU partnership, the two countries launched a comprehensive Investment Package worth €4.7 billion with the EU announcing an additional

€6.79 billion in bilateral contributions from its Member States, bringing the total EU Investment Package to €11.4 billion. Additionally, these relations have promoted increased trade from approximately R512 billion in 2016 to R797.7 billion in 2024.

In efforts to promote and safeguard the regional strategies to economic cooperation, the framework of the SADC-EU Economic Partnership Agreement has been key to the trade relations as they have seen more than 90% of South Africa's exports to the EU catered for under this arrangement.

4. HE Mr RS Molekane, Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to the UN and International Organizations, also accredited to Slovenia and Slovakia

Ambassador Molekanespoke about people-to people relations: considering the expansion in cultural relations between South Africa and Austria based on the signing of a MoU in the Field of Arts and Cultural Cooperation in December 2023. Emphasis has been placed in cultivating on bilateral cultural work between the two countries for young South African experts working in the field of arts and culture, across a broad spectrum of genres and areas of specialisation.

Diplomatic visits:

- President Cyril Ramaphosa is to undertake a State Visit to Austria in 2026 on invitation of President Alexander Van der Bellen.

- South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Ronald Lamola will undertake a regional working visit, to include Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia in 1st Quarter of 2026.

- A working visit to Austria by the heads of leading South African cultural institutions is set to take place in 2026 facilitated by the Austrian Embassy and Ministry of Arts and Culture.

South Africa is positioned as Austria's main trade and investment partner in Africa with almost a quarter of Austria's exports to Africa coming from the South African market and 30% of all imports from Africa to Austria originating from South Africa.

In efforts to mitigating the risks of over-reliance on traditional EU markets, Austria has stated its need to diversify its exports and investments with Africa.

Considering South Africa's Just Energy Programmes, collaboration and partnerships with Austria in areas of climate change transition and mitigation, as well as the adoption of clean and renewable energy technologies become a pivotal factor South Africa to explore and strengthen. These relations are set to create quality green jobs, increase renewable energy generation and drive sustainable economic growth.
Issues for future focus were mentioned around the following:

- South Africa is to host 5th meeting of South Africa-Austria Bilateral Consultations in Pretoria in 1st Quarter of 2026.
- One of the key priority areas to be the operationalization of the MoU in Field of Work-Based Vocational Training, signed in Pretoria on 4 July 2025.

5. Ms Tumi Makoko, Consul General to Germany, also accredited to Romania

It was noted with concern that Ambassador Stone Sizani was absent for the oversight, and there was no official written apology from him to the Portfolio Committee. It was recalled that it was not the first time the Ambassador conducted himself in that manner, as he was absent without an apology in 2023 when the Portfolio Committee conducted oversight at the South African Mission in Berlin where he is resident. The Portfolio Committee resolved to immediately bring the concern and displeasure to the attention of the DG and the Minister, that he be requested to explain himself and appropriate action be followed, while keeping the Portfolio Committee informed.

The South African Embassy in Berlin, supported by the Consulate in Munich, plays a pivotal role in managing South Africa's relations with Germany, one of its most important strategic partners. Germany is a major investor and development partner, ranking as the third largest destination for South African exports and the third largest source of overseas tourists. Politically, Germany is currently governed by a coalition led by Chancellor Merz of the CDU/CSU alongside the SPD, formed after a snap federal election in February 2025. The country faces significant economic challenges that have influenced its political climate and

contributed to the rise of far-right parties. Germany remains a key player in the G20, G7, EU, and broader European affairs, making its partnership with South Africa strategically vital.

Bilateral relations are structured through the Bi-National Commission, which comprises nine working groups covering foreign and security policy, migration, economy and energy, development cooperation, environment, science and technology, arts and culture, labour, and vocational education. The 11th session was held in Pretoria in 2023, with the 12th scheduled for Berlin in 2026. High-level visits have reinforced ties, including German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's state visit in 2018 and working visit in 2024, as well as visits by former Chancellors Angela Merkel and Olaf Scholz. President Ramaphosa's planned visit in November 2025 has been rescheduled to 2026. These engagements have focused on strategic investment areas such as renewable energy, agri-business, infrastructure, transport, and water. South Africa and Germany have concluded 72 bilateral agreements, providing a strong legal framework for cooperation. Germany views South Africa as both a bilateral and multilateral development partner, with cooperation extending to energy and climate change, governance, HIV & AIDS prevention, and vocational training. Since 1992, Germany has provided over €1.07 billion in bilateral development assistance to South Africa.

Economic relations are robust, with Germany serving as a leading investor in South Africa. Approximately 600 German companies operate in the country, including BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Siemens, Volkswagen, Bosch, Allianz, and Adidas, collectively sustaining around 200,000 jobs. In 2024, Germany was South Africa's third largest trade partner globally, with total trade rising from R284 billion in 2024 to R290 billion by August 2025. South Africa enjoys a trade surplus with Germany, which grew from €0.3 billion in 2019 to €1.4 billion in 2024. Exports to Germany are dominated by manufactured products such as machinery, vehicles, chemicals, and household equipment, reflecting the industrial complementarity between the two economies.

Tourism is another cornerstone of the relationship. Germany is South Africa's third largest source of overseas tourists, after the United States and the United Kingdom. South African Tourism and hospitality stakeholders participate annually in the Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB) in Berlin to attract visitors. Tourism numbers, which fell sharply during the pandemic, have recovered significantly, rising from 44,388 in 2021 to 258,886 by

August 2025, compared to 322,720 in 2019. This recovery underscores the resilience of tourism ties and the importance of continued promotion.
The Berlin Mission is also accredited to Romania on a non-resident basis. However, budgetary constraints have limited the mission's ability to fully service Romania. Efforts are underway to appoint an Honorary Consul of South Africa to Romania to strengthen ties. Trade between South Africa and Romania remains modest, amounting to R8.09 million in 2023, and Romanian tourist arrivals in South Africa are still low.

Corporate services form a critical part of the mission's operations. The Embassy in Berlin manages four state-owned properties, including the chancery and official residence in Berlin and former properties in Bonn, which are being disposed of. The Consulate in Munich also has a state-owned official residence earmarked for renovations, though funding is not yet available. Immigration and consular services are fully operational in both Berlin and Munich, with VFS Global recently opening an office in Berlin to support visa processing. ICT infrastructure remains a challenge, with new computers and Wi-Fi installed in Berlin in 2023 but performance still slow. In Munich, modernization projects have begun, with desktops and laptops delivered, but systems continue to underperform.
Staffing is split between Berlin and Munich. Berlin has twelve transferred staff posts, including the Head of Mission, Minister Plenipotentiary, Counsellors, Secretaries, and representatives from State Security, Defence, and Home Affairs, supported by 19 locally recruited personnel. Munich has five transferred staff posts and eight locally recruited personnel, though the Vice Consul: Political post has been vacant since December 2024. Despite these challenges, both missions remain committed to fulfilling their mandates.

In conclusion, Germany represents one of South Africa's most strategic partners, with deep political, economic, and cultural ties. The relationship is anchored in structured dialogue, high-level visits, and extensive bilateral agreements. Economic cooperation is strong, with German investment sustaining thousands of jobs and trade relations yielding a surplus for South Africa. Tourism continues to recover, reinforcing people-to-people connections. While operational challenges persist in property management, ICT systems, and staffing, the Berlin Mission remains central to advancing South Africa's interests in Germany and, by extension, Europe. Strengthening this partnership offers opportunities for South Africa to expand exports, attract investment, and deepen collaboration in renewable energy, vocational training, and governance, thereby contributing to inclusive growth and development.

6. HE Mr PCS Moloto, Ambassador to Switzerland, also accredited to Liechtenstein

Switzerland, a highly developed nation of just over eight million people, is governed through a federal system of 26 cantons and has maintained a coalition government for more than six decades, mastering compromise as a political principle. Its government consists of seven ministers with a rotating presidency, and its foreign policy is anchored in neutrality, engaging with all nations regardless of ideology. This stance has kept Switzerland out of war and allowed it to build a strong economy and reputation as a mediator in global conflicts. The country's values are deeply Calvinistic, emphasizing humility and hard work, with wealth often understated even though a significant portion of the population are millionaires. Switzerland's neutrality and commitment to peace have made it a trusted partner in mediation and democracy promotion, and during a state visit, it signed a cooperation agreement with South Africa on peace mediation. Historically, Switzerland maintained relations with the apartheid government while simultaneously supporting liberation movements, particularly political prisoners and their families through the Red Cross.

Economically, Switzerland is a powerhouse with a strong financial sector that serves as a global haven, alongside world-renowned precision manufacturing industries such as watchmaking, army knives, pharmaceuticals, and material science engineering. The economy is dominated by small and medium-sized family enterprises, though multinational giants such as ABB, Nestlé, Glencore, Roche, and Novartis also play a major role. More than 100 Swiss companies operate in South Africa, underscoring the depth of economic ties. Switzerland's dual vocational training model is a hallmark of its education system, with nine years of compulsory schooling followed by a choice between academic and vocational routes. Over 70% of students opt for vocational training, which combines practical work in companies with theoretical instruction, a system comparable to South Africa's former nursing training approach. This model has been credited with producing a highly skilled workforce and could serve as a valuable reference for South Africa's own skills development initiatives.

Despite strong relations, Swiss companies operating in South Africa have raised concerns about unreliable energy supply due to load-shedding, logistical bottlenecks in transport, regulatory complexity and bureaucracy, corruption and governance failures, and limited domestic demand stemming from low economic growth. These challenges hinder investment and highlight areas

where South Africa must improve to attract and retain foreign business. The mission itself faces constraints, with a diminishing budget that prioritizes statutory expenditures such as rentals, school fees, and salaries, reducing its capacity to operate beyond a liaison role. Chronic ICT challenges further undermine efficiency, with systems frequently down and limiting the mission's ability to deliver services effectively. These operational difficulties reflect broader resource pressures across South Africa's diplomatic network.

The mission's accreditation also extends to the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Vatican. Liechtenstein, though small and without its own army or airports, is wealthy and culturally embedded in Swiss traditions, using Swiss currency and relying heavily on Switzerland for infrastructure. It maintains strong ties with South Africa, with members of the princely family residing in Cape Town. The Vatican is another area of accreditation, with the ambassador scheduled to present credentials to the Pope, reinforcing South Africa's engagement with this influential global institution. Overall, the Bern mission operates in a context of strong bilateral relations, economic cooperation, and shared values, while navigating challenges of limited resources and systemic inefficiencies. It remains an important platform for advancing South Africa's foreign policy priorities in Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and the Vatican, leveraging Switzerland's expertise in mediation, vocational training, and innovation, while addressing the concerns of Swiss investors and ensuring South Africa's voice is represented in key international forums.

The ambassador highlighted the chronic ICT environment challenges, resulting in the system's down time for long periods. The diminishing budget and high cost of rentals for official accommodation was also raised. The Mission reported having some old Locally Recruited Personnel (LRPs), whose prolonged employment has proved very costly.

7. HE Mr JN Mamabolo, High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

South Africa's High Commission in London,, is one of the country's largest missions abroad, staffed by 22 transferred officials and 31 locally recruited personnel, with representation from departments such as Defence, SSA, Police, and Transport. The mission also covers Commonwealth affairs. The UK's political landscape shifted significantly following the July 2024 elections, which brought a Labour government to power. This has resulted in a recalibration of foreign policy towards multilateralism, climate diplomacy, and engagement

with the Global South. The UK is cautiously re-engaging with the EU on trade, security, and migration, while continuing to emphasize its Commonwealth ties and global influence through forums such as the G7, G20, and UNSC. Africa, and South Africa in particular, is viewed as a strategic gateway for UK engagement, especially in trade and energy. Preferential trade access under the SACUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement remains a priority. Domestically, the UK faces pressures around economic growth, NHS service delivery, immigration, and cost-of-living challenges, with migration emerging as a politically sensitive issue. Defence spending is set to rise to 2.6% of GDP by 2027, while development aid is being reduced from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI.

Bilateral relations between South Africa and the UK are deep and multifaceted, underpinned by strong people-to-people links, with an estimated 1.1 million South Africans residing in the UK and 3,500 students enrolled in higher education institutions. Relations are structured through the Bilateral Forum, which meets biennially, with the 13th meeting hosted in Cape Town in November 2025. The Forum reviewed progress since the 2022 State Visit and will be formalised by an MOU by the end of 2025. Cooperation spans climate finance under the Just Energy Transition Partnership, science, health, innovation, and higher education. Migration and mobility remain sensitive, with increasing restrictions on skilled and student migration. The UK has raised concerns about 3,500 illegal South African overstayers, requesting cooperation on repatriation. Tourism is a major area of engagement, with the UK consistently South Africa's leading source of long-haul visitors from Europe, contributing R8.9 billion in spend in 2024. Cultural diplomacy is vibrant, supported by the 2013 Arts and Culture MOU, with exchanges in film, fashion, music, and creative industries. However, the mission faces constraints in servicing requests due to staff shortages and limited budgets, including the inability to host a National Day or undertake regional promotional visits. Collaboration with BrandSA continues, though the absence of a permanent representative in the UK since 2023 has weakened outreach.

Economic relations remain strong, with the UK one of South Africa's most important trading partners. Total trade in goods and services reached £10.6 billion in the four quarters to Q3 2024, with UK exports to South Africa at £4.5 billion and imports from South Africa at £6.1 billion. The UK was South Africa's 7th largest trading partner globally and 2nd largest in Europe in 2023. Investment ties are equally significant: UK outward FDI stock in South Africa stood at £23.6 billion in 2023, while South African FDI stock in the UK was £3.8 billion. UK

companies invested in 454 projects in South Africa in 2023, creating over 6,500 jobs with capital investment of US$7.24 billion, spanning sectors such as business services, IT, communications, industrial equipment, mining, energy, and tourism. Notable investors include Unilever, Vedanta Zinc International, and Serco. The mission has actively promoted investment opportunities, including a trade and investment roadshow led by Deputy President Paul Mashatile in 2024. However, the absence of a DTIC representative since 2023 has limited technical engagement with UK businesses, who prefer direct interaction with line departments.

Operational challenges persist. The mission manages six state-owned properties in London, many requiring urgent refurbishment and maintenance, including upgrades to heating systems, CCTV, and plumbing. Projects underway include façade cleaning, boiler replacement, and refurbishment of Cavendish House, while negotiations with the Crown Estate continue over the 99-year lease and planning for South African House. ICT modernisation projects are being implemented, including global desktop and laptop refresh, datacenter upgrades, and network modernisation under the Global WAN Project, though performance issues remain. Consular services are extensive, with the mission handling around 100 cases per month, including visas, civic services, and assistance to South Africans in distress. Despite resource constraints, asset management has been exemplary, with 100% verification and compliance. Overall, the London mission remains a critical platform for advancing South Africa's foreign policy, navigating complex geopolitical dynamics, and fostering economic, cultural, and people-to-people ties with the UK. It continues to balance its high-profile mandate with operational challenges, ensuring South Africa's priorities are represented in both bilateral and multilateral arenas.

8. HE Ms N Scheiber, Ambassador to Ireland

The South African Embassy in Dublin maintains historic and cordial relations with Ireland, rooted in shared values and experiences from the anti-apartheid struggle and Ireland's own peace process. Ireland was a strong supporter of South Africa's liberation, and President Cyril Ramaphosa played a notable role in Ireland's Good Friday Agreement. These ties have been reinforced through high-level visits, including Minister Alvin Botes' participation in the third Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) in September 2024, Deputy President Paul Mashatile's working visit later that month, and President Ramaphosa's official visit in October 2025. The JCC, established in 2017, provides a structured mechanism for cooperation in trade, investment, education, science, innovation, and gender equality. The 2024 session agreed to

expand trade missions, strengthen the Kader Asmal Fellowship Programme, share biometric and facial recognition expertise for civic services, and finalize new agreements in gender-based violence and disability rights. Ireland's recognition of Palestine in 2024 and its active role in ICJ proceedings against Israel highlight its strong commitment to international law and human rights, aligning with South Africa's own positions in multilateral forums.

Economic relations between South Africa and Ireland are robust and growing. Ireland is South Africa's 11th largest trading partner in the EU, while South Africa is Ireland's largest partner on the African continent. Bilateral trade rose by 12.5% in 2024 to US$637.8 million, with South African exports increasing by 41.2% to US$168 million and imports from Ireland rising by 5% to US$470 million. South African exports are dominated by primary products, while imports from Ireland are diversified and value-added. Irish companies have invested heavily in South Africa, with US$2.81 billion in capital investment across sectors such as renewable energy, software, aerospace, communications, food and beverages, automotive components, and financial services, creating nearly 1,500 jobs. South African companies have also invested in Ireland, with 16 firms undertaking 20 projects worth US$275 million, creating over 1,200 jobs. These include Aspen Pharmacare, De Beers, Remgro, Foschini Group, Ninety-One, OUTsurance, Synexa Life Sciences, and Triggerfish Animation Studios. This two-way investment flow underscores confidence in both markets and highlights opportunities in technology, pharmaceuticals, business services, and creative industries.

Cultural diplomacy is an important dimension of the mission's work. The embassy actively participates in national days and events hosted by other missions and government institutions in Dublin, while promoting South African wine and tourism. Diaspora engagement is a priority, with initiatives such as the Diaspora Institute presentation by Kingsley Aikens exploring networks for inward investment. Nelson Mandela Day was celebrated with Tiglin homeless shelter, reinforcing South Africa's values of solidarity and social justice. The mission has hosted events such as the launch of a book on the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, a celebration of South African composer Motshwane Pege, and engagements with Irish universities. These activities strengthen people-to-people ties and showcase South Africa's cultural heritage.

Operationally, the mission faces significant challenges. All properties, including the chancery, are rented, and while asset verification is fully compliant, ICT modernization has not yet been implemented. Network issues persist, and only a few Cisco phones are functional. The visa

printer is not operational, forcing the mission to issue handwritten visas, while delays in obtaining stop-list approvals from the Department of Home Affairs cause disruptions for business travelers. The mission is inundated with immigration and civic services, serving an estimated 25,000 South Africans living in Ireland, many with dual citizenship. Appointments are fully booked months in advance, and the shortage of staff exacerbates delays. South Africans in Northern Ireland, who fall under the London Mission, often use Dublin for civic services due to cost, further increasing the workload. Staff shortages have forced the mission to use drivers and messengers to assist with applications, while the 3rd Secretary for Administration is overwhelmed with visa and civic duties.

Budget constraints limit the mission's ability to undertake projects beyond obligatory expenses, and the staff establishment is inadequate for the workload. The mission has four transferred staff and eight locally recruited personnel, but the high demand for political, administrative, and consular services far exceeds capacity. Despite these challenges, the mission continues to perform well, leveraging structured mechanisms like the Joint Commission of Cooperation (JCC), fostering trade and investment, and promoting cultural diplomacy.

In conclusion, the Dublin Mission underscores the strategic importance of Ireland as a partner for South Africa. The relationship is anchored in shared history, strong political dialogue, growing economic ties, and vibrant cultural exchange. While operational challenges in staffing, ICT, and consular services persist, the mission has achieved significant successes in expanding trade, attracting investment, and strengthening people-to-people relations. By addressing resource constraints and leveraging Ireland's commitment to human rights, innovation, and multilateralism, South Africa can deepen its partnership with Ireland, translating diplomatic goodwill into tangible outcomes that support inclusive growth, skills development, and sustainable cooperation.

9. Discussions

Concerns were made regarding the remote work arrangement of officials due to asbestos in the office building of the South African Mission at the Hague and enquired about the health risk and whether there are adequate tools of trade to curb against the potential impacts on productivity.

The members expressed apprehensionwith handwritten visas at these embassies, attributing this practice to outdated or non-functional printing equipmentwhich was seen as a major security risk.The Portfolio Committee acknowledged with concern the ICT challenges that are being experienced across all Missions.

The Portfolio Committee requested that the Department provide a comprehensive list detailing the ideal requirements for an Embassy office, alongside a realistic assessment of the current resources available within their respective Embassies.

Noting the Dutch Embassy in Pretoria's implementation programme where they engage the youth in South Africa, it was asked whether the South African Mission in The Hague has been involved in any reciprocal programmes in The Netherlands.

It was notedthat Switzerland's dual vocational training model is a hallmark of its education system, with nine years of compulsory schooling followed by a choice between academic and vocational routes. Over 70% of students opt for vocational training, which combines practical work in companies with theoretical instruction. This model has been credited with producing a highly skilled workforce and could serve as a valuable reference for South Africa's own skills development initiatives.

There was a suggestion that there must be strengthening of South Africa's market access to EU's, investment support and flows, bilateral & multilateral partnerships, and regional integration.

South Africa was asked to comparatively assess the advantages and disadvantages around the EU forming stronger economic ties with Egypt as well as looking at areas of collaboration that align with being responsive and competitive to the changing economic dynamics.

Noting the shifts in geopolitical developments, a need was identified for South Africa to expand its trade and investment relations with Austria, specifically within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to allow the diversification of exports from Austria particularly in areas of infrastructure, digitalisation, energy, environmental and climate technologies.

Having noted the on-coming African Union-EU Summit in Luanda, Angola, in November 2025, it was asked how South Africa has positioned itself to seek a deeper understanding and collaboration.

The issues of crime and drug trafficking affecting Belgium and other parts of Europe was noted.The Mission was requested considerproviding a review and assessment on the implications of the end/cutting of Financial Support to SADC EPA unit by the European Union

A question was raised about the challenges facing the UK mission's ICT systems and property leases. Clarity was also sought on the difficulties in obtaining accurate statistics on South Africans in Ireland.

Furthermore, the committee asked about the persistent issuance of handwritten visas in Germany and Ireland, raising concerns about fraud and security.

There was also a question about reciprocal visa arrangements with the UK, given the high cost and short duration of UK visas for South Africans, while UK citizens enjoy visa-free access to South Africa.

The committee inquired about the state of South African-owned properties abroad, noting concerning reports of dilapidation and squatting.

The committee pressed for improved consequence management and timely action to prevent asset depreciation.
The committee asked how the Missions in Europe leveraged international companies in these countries to avail opportunities for thesmmes and young people in South Africa.

The Committee sought an analysis as to how Europe perceived South Africa, in terms of it having a Government of National Unity and the case in the International Criminal Court against acts bordering on genocide by Israel in Palestine.

10. Responses

There ought to be a review of the non-tariff barriers such as Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regulations that have been seen to impose stringent standards that are often difficult and costly for SA exporters to meet.

South Africa and its Mission to provide a review and assessment on the implications of the end/cutting of Financial Support to SADC EPA unit by the European Union inspite of the €10 million support Program by the EU to six SADC EPA States in maximising utilization of benefits and opportunities provided for under the SADC-EU EPA in February 2025.

The response clarified that a team of ten had arrived to address longstanding IT issues, with upgrades expected to take about a month, and that the lease on the mission's property was nearing its end, prompting considerations for renewal or alternative arrangements.
The response explained that both Irish and South African authorities struggle to provide precise numbers due to privacy laws and dual citizenship, but embassy estimates range from 25,000 to 60,000, with increasing demand for civic services.

The missions responded that broken visa printers and outdated ICT systems necessitate manual processing, which is cumbersome and increases the risk of errors, and that appeals for repairs have been ongoing without resolution.

The response acknowledged the disparity and indicated that the matter would be raised with the relevant minister to seek a more equitable arrangement.

The missions explained that many properties are heritage buildings requiring specialized, costly maintenance, and that delays in refurbishment or disposal have led to further deterioration.

The missions responded that while remote work is sometimes necessary, especially for transferred staff, it is less feasible for local staff handling consular services, and that ongoing building issues complicate operations.

It was further noted that South Africa to review the quality of its funding to the EU to address challenges related to quality infrastructure and technical capacity in agricultural value chains

11. HE Dr LG Msengana-Ndlela, Ambassador to Greece, also accredited to Bulgaria, Bosnia Herzegovina, North Macedonia Montenegro, Serbia and Non-resident High Commissionerto Nicosia, Cyprus

The South African Embassy in Athens, accredited to Greece, Cyprus, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from July 2025 also Bulgaria and North Macedonia, plays a strategically important role in advancing South Africa's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans. All seven accredited countries are UN members, giving the mission a valuable role in lobbying for South Africa's positions in multilateral forums, candidatures, and global governance reform. The mission also monitors political developments in a region influenced by the EU, UK, Turkey, Russia, China, and the USA, where longstanding successionist movements in Kosovo, Northern Cyprus, and Republika Srpska continue to shape regional dynamics. Greece has invited South Africa to share lessons from its UN Security Council membership, particularly on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Cyprus, set to assume the EU Council Presidency in 2026, is strategically located near the Suez Canal and Levant, serving as a military and commercial hub, while the Balkans link Central Europe to the Mediterranean and Black Sea, making them vital for trade corridors, energy pipelines, and military transit routes.

Relations are being strengthened through Minister Lamola's participation at the Delphi Economic Forum in Greece in April 2025, where he highlighted opportunities in South Africa, the AU's Agenda 2063, and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Maritime cooperation is a major focus, with the mission developing a Maritime Strategy (2025/6–2028/9) in consultation with stakeholders. Draft texts for a bilateral MoU on maritime transport and mutual recognition of seafarer certificates have been exchanged, aiming to promote skills development, cadetships, and job opportunities for youth and women. Plans include student exchanges with Greek universities and industry networking events at exhibitions such as Posidonia in 2026. The mission proposes a dedicated DTIC and DIRCO regional hub, possibly based in Rome, to service Mediterranean countries with a focus on logistics, transport, and the oceans economy, including ship registry promotion, marine manufacturing, dry-docking, and bunkering.

Trade relations vary across the accredited countries. South Africa imports mineral fuels, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and plastics from Greece, while exporting aluminium, fruit,

animal fodder, fish, and processed foods. With Cyprus, imports include pharmaceuticals and machinery, while exports feature ships, fuels, fish, beverages, and vehicles. Serbia exports machinery and medical equipment to South Africa, while importing beverages, optical instruments, and construction materials. Montenegro's imports include machinery, chemicals, and rubber, while exports from South Africa include aluminium, fruit, salt, and cement products. Bosnia and Herzegovina exports machinery, optical instruments, wood, and footwear, while importing South African machinery, beverages, cosmetics, and fruit. These exchanges highlight opportunities to expand South African exports in agriculture, beverages, and manufactured goods.

Higher education, science, and innovation are also key areas of cooperation. Scholarships are available through Serbia's Non-Aligned Movement programme, with most recipients being black South African students. Universities in Montenegro and Bulgaria are interested in academic exchanges, reflecting historical ties with South Africa. Greece and Cyprus offer opportunities for education agreements, scholarships, and language teaching at South African schools. The European School of Public Law provides postgraduate scholarships, while Cyprus hosts South African technology entrepreneurs. Serbia and Bulgaria are advanced in ICT and digital transformation, and Greece has introduced mandatory AI training for parliamentarians, offering lessons for South Africa.

People-to-people relations are strong, with a significant Greek diaspora in South Africa and cultural initiatives celebrating figures such as Nelson Mandela and George Bizos. The mission has partnered with the Benaki Museum and Byron College to showcase documentaries and youth programmes. Public diplomacy initiatives include promoting South African fashion design in Greece and exploring symbolic gestures such as street naming in Montenegro, Serbia, and Cyprus. Serbia's Museum of African Art has proposed hosting a Nelson Mandela exhibition in 2027 during the International Expo.

Administratively, the mission faces challenges due to limited staffing and budget constraints. It is accredited to seven countries but operates with only five transferred staff and eight locally recruited personnel, leaving several posts vacant. The chancery, located in a state-owned property, suffers from a broken HVAC system, with procurement underway for repairs. The official residence, built in the 1930s, requires major renovations, with a condition assessment proposed. Asset verification is nearly complete, with a 98.53% compliance rate reported in

August 2025. Consular services are strained by high demand across multiple countries, compounded by the absence of a dedicated Home Affairs official. Visa processing is hampered by defective barcodes, forcing handwritten visas, and outdated ICT systems limit efficiency. The mission has proposed adopting private agency-supported visa applications and moving toward fully online processes in the long term.

In conclusion, the Athens Mission is strategically positioned to advance South Africa's interests in a complex region that bridges Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Balkans. Its work spans multilateral lobbying, maritime cooperation, trade promotion, education exchanges, and cultural diplomacy. While operational challenges in staffing, property management, and ICT persist, the mission continues to strengthen ties with accredited countries, leveraging opportunities in logistics, energy, agriculture, and innovation. By consolidating these partnerships and addressing structural constraints, South Africa can expand its influence, diversify trade, and deepen people-to-people connections in this strategically vital region.

12. HE Ms S D Mthembi-Mahanyele, Ambassador to Spain, also accredited to Andorra

South Africa's mission in Madrid continues to nurture cordial and strategic relations with Spain, a country that regards South Africa as a key partner in Africa and an important player in multilateral structures such as BRICS, the G20, the UN, and the AU. Bilateral consultations, held annually at Deputy Minister level, provide the framework for structured engagement. The 15th consultation in Pretoria in April 2023 focused on trade and investment, climate change, renewable energy, market access, AU–EU relations, human rights, and South Africa's upcoming G20 chairmanship. The 16th consultation, scheduled for December 2025 in Spain, is expected to deepen political and socio-economic cooperation. Spain and South Africa share common positions on peace, security, infrastructure development, and intra-African trade, often lobbying for and supporting each other's candidatures in multilateral forums. Spain's Foreign Ministry has emphasized South Africa's strategic role in Africa, with both countries collaborating on crises in Mozambique and Sudan. Spain has also aligned closely with South Africa on the Gaza conflict, joining South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in 2024 and later becoming part of the Hague Group coalition advocating sanctions against Israel. Cooperation also extends to human rights, with South Africa contributing to the International Commission against the Death Penalty, headquartered in Madrid, under the presidency of Judge Navi Pillay.

Economic relations between South Africa and Spain have grown significantly over the past decade, with Spain ranking as South Africa's fourth trade partner within the EU. Bilateral trade reached €2.77 billion in 2024, nearly quadrupling in ten years, with South Africa exporting raw materials, agricultural products, and automotive parts, while importing Spanish machinery, vehicles, and technology. Spain is a major investor in South Africa, with foreign direct investment exceeding €821 million and more than 150 Spanish companies creating over 20,000 jobs in infrastructure, renewable energy, financial services, tourism, textiles, IT, automotive manufacturing, and mining. Spanish firms are heavily involved in South Africa's renewable energy sector, participating in 23 projects under the REIPPPP programme, supported by the Industrial Development Corporation. Spain has pledged €2.11 billion to support its companies investing in South Africa's energy transition. Notable companies include Grupo Antolín, Fersa Bearings, and Acerinox, which owns Columbus Stainless in Middelburg. South African companies also operate in Spain in sectors such as real estate, food services, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and IT. The creation of the Ibero-African Business Council in 2024 further strengthens commercial ties, with its upcoming forum in Tenerife set to focus on infrastructure, energy transition, project financing, and vocational training.

Cultural diplomacy and people-to-people exchange form another pillar of the mission's work. The Basque Regional Government has offered training opportunities for South African lecturers in vocational education, while Spain has confirmed plans to open an Aula Cervantes in South Africa to promote Spanish language learning. Academic cooperation spans renewable energy, tourism management, agriculture, aquaculture, and marine sciences, with agreements between South African universities and the Spanish Foreign Ministry. Scholarships from the Real Madrid Graduate Institute provide South Africans with access to sports management education. The mission has also advanced skills development initiatives, engaging Spanish universities to train South African students and academics in critical areas identified by the Department of Labour. LaLiga's presence in South Africa since 2015 has fostered grassroots football development, social integration, and opportunities for gifted players and coaches to train in Spain. South Africans now play in Spain's Premier Women's League, while LaLiga's academies promote education and life skills alongside sport. In 2025, LaLiga launched FC Futures, selecting 40 South African children for training camps in Spain. South Africa's membership in UN Tourism, headquartered in Madrid, provides further opportunities for youth employment in the tourism sector. Cultural exchanges also include collaborations between

South African artists and Spanish institutions, such as the upcoming exhibition of Dumile Feni's "African Guernica" alongside Picasso's "Guernica" at the Museo Reina Sofia in 2026.

Administratively, the mission operates with a budget of €1.18 million, primarily allocated to staff compensation and services. Both the chancery and official residence require significant refurbishment, with projects awaiting HQ approval. Asset verification has been successfully completed, though ICT modernization has disrupted operations. Consular services remain active, assisting 20–60 South Africans monthly with passports, IDs, birth and death registrations, and certificates, while issuing around 100 visas per month despite challenges with the vDOS system. The mission has implemented audit recommendations, updated security systems, and maintained full compliance in asset management. However, resource constraints limit travel and staffing, with vacancies for a Political Counsellor and Ambassador's driver. Despite these challenges, the mission continues to deliver on its mandate, balancing fiscal pressures with effective diplomacy, economic engagement, and cultural cooperation. Overall, the Madrid mission remains a vital platform for advancing South Africa's foreign policy, strengthening economic ties, and promoting cultural and educational exchanges with Spain, while ensuring South Africa's priorities are represented in both bilateral and multilateral arenas.

13. HE Ms NN Jezile, Ambassador to Italy also accredited to Albaniam, Malta and San Marino

The South African Embassy in Rome plays a strategically important role in advancing South Africa's bilateral and multilateral interests in Italy and across its accreditation to Malta, Albania, and San Marino. Italy, as a member of the European Union and a major global economy, is a critical partner for South Africa in areas of defence, border security, financial intelligence, and sustainable development. The mission also engages with Rome-based United Nations agencies such as FAO, WFP, and IFAD, which are central to global food security, humanitarian assistance, and poverty reduction. Through these institutions, the mission supports South Africa's Medium-Term Development Plan priorities of inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and building a capable developmental state. The presence of specialised attachés in defence and agriculture underscores the mission's focus on advancing South Africa's security and sustainable development agenda.

Relations with Malta, Albania, and San Marino are cordial and largely multilateral. Malta and South Africa cooperate on human rights and rule of law, with several memoranda of understanding under consideration in culture, sport, and transport. Albania, which recently appointed an honorary consul in Cape Town, shares socio-economic challenges with South Africa and is keen to deepen cooperation, though it continues to lobby for recognition of Kosovo. San Marino maintains limited but friendly ties, with cooperation in multilateral forums and ceremonial exchanges. These relationships, though secondary to Italy, broaden South Africa's diplomatic footprint in Southern Europe.

South Africa and Italy share a long history of diplomatic relations dating back to 1929. Italy views South Africa as the most advanced and diversified economy in Sub-Saharan Africa and a strategic commercial partner. Bilateral consultations in Rome in November 2024 emphasized converting long-standing ties into tangible projects. Trade remains significant but imbalanced: in 2024, South Africa exported goods worth approximately US$873.7 million to Italy, while imports from Italy reached US$2.46 billion. Italian exports include machinery, mineral fuels, electronics, vehicles, and pharmaceuticals, while South African exports are smaller in scale. Italian companies maintain a strong presence in South Africa, supported by chambers of trade and initiatives such as "Italy meets South Africa." Opportunities exist in machinery, technology, infrastructure, and business-matching platforms. The Italian community in South Africa is large, with over 30,000 citizens of Italian origin holding South African passports, and tourism flows are strong in both directions.

Italy's economic profile reveals both strengths and challenges. GDP growth is modest, projected at 0.6% in 2025, with inflation below 2% and unemployment around 6%. Public debt remains high at 138% of GDP, though fiscal resilience is supported by domestic debt holdings. Structural issues include weak productivity, low R&D spending, and demographic decline. Small and medium enterprises dominate the economy, accounting for nearly all businesses and over half of exports, but many face generational transition challenges. Regional disparities between the industrial north and less developed south persist, alongside bureaucratic and labor rigidities. Italy nevertheless maintains competitive advantages in manufacturing, design, green transition leadership, and scientific excellence, with strong institutional investors backing innovation.

Economic cooperation between South Africa and Italy is diverse and promising. Strategic areas include green energy and renewable infrastructure, industrial manufacturing and machinery, agri-tech and food processing, science and R&D, digital infrastructure, and sustainable finance. Italy's expertise in clean energy and South Africa's abundant renewable resources create opportunities for joint solar, wind, and hydrogen projects. Industrial collaboration can support mineral beneficiation and manufacturing ventures, while Italian agri-tech can enhance South African smallholder productivity. Scientific cooperation is already advanced through projects like the Square Kilometre Array and AI partnerships, with potential for expanded joint labs and innovation hubs. Digital infrastructure partnerships could support smart manufacturing and cybersecurity. Financing mechanisms such as green bonds, blended finance, and co-investment platforms can mobilize Italian and EU capital for South African infrastructure projects, particularly in ports, rail, and logistics.

The mission also supports South African SMEs in accessing Italian and European markets through trade missions and business-matching platforms. Initiatives in agro-processing, fashion, energy, and water have helped South African firms integrate into European supply chains. Cultural diplomacy complements economic ties, with the embassy hosting events that showcase South African cuisine, arts, and heritage.

Operationally, the mission manages state-owned properties in Rome, including the chancery and official residence, both undergoing extensive renovations to modernize facilities. Projects have addressed heating, plumbing, electrical systems, air conditioning, and structural refurbishments, though challenges such as recurring dampness and exposed infrastructure persist. ICT systems remain slow and outdated, affecting productivity and visa processing, despite interventions from headquarters. Asset verification is incomplete, with action plans underway to achieve compliance. Consular services are significant, with nearly 900 cases handled between April 2024 and March 2025, including passports, birth registrations, visas, and assistance to South Africans in distress.

In conclusion, the Rome Mission is strategically positioned to advance South Africa's interests in Italy and Southern Europe, leveraging Italy's economic strengths and multilateral institutions based in Rome. While trade imbalances and operational challenges remain, opportunities in renewable energy, manufacturing, agri-tech, science, and digital infrastructure offer pathways to deepen cooperation. By converting diplomatic goodwill into tangible

projects, South Africa can expand its export footprint, attract investment, and strengthen its role as a trusted partner in Europe, while ensuring that its mission infrastructure and services remain capable of supporting this mandate.

14. Mr CA Le Roux, Charged Affairs: Portugal

The South African Embassy in Lisbon manages relations with Portugal, a country of 10.7 million people with a stable government, growing economy, and low unemployment, though facing challenges in health, education, and housing. Bilateral relations are friendly and historically rooted, with structured consultations at Deputy Minister level providing a framework for cooperation. The eighth session of these consultations was held in Pretoria in March 2025, co-chaired by Deputy Minister Alvin Botes. Pending official visits by the Portuguese President, Foreign Minister, and Defence Minister are expected to further strengthen ties. The mission's annual plan focuses on three strategic areas: political relations, trade and investment, and tourism.

Trade relations are significant but imbalanced. In 2024, South Africa exported goods worth R3.4 billion to Portugal, while imports totaled R6 billion, leaving a deficit of R2.6 billion. South African exports include fruit, iron and steel, fish, plastics, and mineral products, while imports are dominated by machinery, vehicles, textiles, and equipment components. The mission has prioritized the automotive sector, agricultural exports, and skills training. Successes include Portuguese companies investing in South Africa: Sodecia established a R414 million factory in Silverton, Salvador Caetano invested R400 million in distribution networks for Chinese car brands, and Rangel Logistics opened a R125 million hub. The mission is facilitating a trade visit by the Tshwane Economic Development Agency in February 2026, focusing on automotive and agri-processing. Secondary priorities include citrus, fish, and renewable energy.

Tourism is another area of opportunity. In 2024, 20,000 Portuguese tourists visited South Africa, below the pre-pandemic high of 31,000. With over 400,000 South Africans of Portuguese descent, there is strong potential for growth. Challenges include the lack of direct flights and limited promotional campaigns. The mission has engaged TAP, Portugal's national airline, as well as TAAG and Emirates, to improve connectivity. It also works with South

African Tourism's Paris office and participates in major Portuguese tourism events such as BTL and roadshows.

Skills training and education cooperation are expanding. Porto Business School has offered scholarships valued at R2 million to South Africans, with five students currently enrolled in its Global Online MBA. Collaborations with Toutele Agricultural College and Vision Quest Institute aim to design an Agritech MBA program. The Department of Higher Education is consulting with Porto Business School on tailored courses, while the CSIR has approached the school to develop cybersecurity programs. A science and technical agreement signed in 2015 provides a framework for these initiatives.

Portugal's foreign policy emphasizes Europe, the Atlantic, and the Portuguese-speaking world, while also supporting its diaspora, economic internationalization, and multilateralism. The war in Ukraine has forced Portugal to refocus on economic and security priorities. Relations with Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, and Namibia remain important, reflecting Portugal's historical ties with Africa.

Operationally, the mission manages two state-owned properties: the chancery, which is scheduled for sale or renovation in 2026, and the official residence, which has received approval for refurbishments including carpets, curtains, and structural repairs. The corporate services manager is effective, with no negative audit outcomes reported. The budget is sufficient for administrative costs but lacks funding for projects. Staffing includes five transferred officials, though the ambassador post has been vacant since December 2024. The counsellor for political affairs is due to be transferred out in December 2025, leaving further gaps. Of 15 locally recruited positions, five are vacant, including domestic workers, a chauffeur, a cleaner, and an accounts clerk.

Consular services are provided not only in Lisbon but also through honorary consuls in Porto and Madeira. Demand is growing rapidly due to increasing numbers of South Africans and Portuguese diaspora settling in Portugal, with around 3,700 people served annually. Challenges include slow processing of documents through Home Affairs and manual fingerprinting. The mission has achieved 100% asset verification as of July 2025. ICT systems remain problematic, with slow performance and reliance on handwritten visas due to non-functional Home Affairs

systems. The mission awaits modernization equipment from headquarters to replace outdated infrastructure.

In conclusion, the Lisbon Mission underscores Portugal's importance as a partner for South Africa in trade, investment, tourism, and education. While trade deficits and operational challenges persist, Portuguese investment in South Africa's automotive and logistics sectors demonstrates confidence in the partnership. Opportunities in renewable energy, agritech, and tourism promotion can further deepen ties. By addressing staffing and ICT constraints and leveraging Portugal's historical links with Africa, South Africa can strengthen its footprint in the Atlantic and European spheres, translating diplomatic relations into tangible economic and social outcomes.

15. Ms N Makhuwa, Charge de Affairs: France also accredited to Monaco

The South African Embassy in Paris plays a strategically important role in advancing South Africa's bilateral, regional, and multilateral interests with France and within Europe. Relations between South Africa and France are longstanding and remain of a strategic nature, underpinned by cooperation across multiple sectors. At the bilateral level, the mission ensures that South Africa's foreign policy is given practical expression by deepening political ties, strengthening economic cooperation, promoting trade and investment, and intensifying collaboration in infrastructure, science, technology, education, and skills development. People-to-people links are also a priority; with tourism promotion aimed at increasing French visitor flows to South Africa. The mission's work is aligned with South Africa's national priorities, including tackling unemployment, poverty, and inequality, while also facilitating multilateral engagements through institutions such as the OECD, IEA, and UNESCO. In 2025, Dr. Philemon Mjwara was appointed as South Africa's permanent delegate to UNESCO, further strengthening the country's presence in global knowledge and cultural platforms. The mission also hosts representatives from departments such as Higher Education, Defence, Home Affairs, and SAPS, reflecting the breadth of cooperation.

Structured political dialogue is maintained through the Forum for Political Dialogue (FPD), co-chaired by the respective Ministers of International Relations. The ninth session of the FPD was held in Paris in May 2025, covering cooperation in education, science, culture, energy, and trade. It is expected that the FPD will be elevated to a Joint Ministerial Commission on the

margins of the G20 Summit. High-level engagements between President Macron and President Ramaphosa continue, often on the sidelines of multilateral meetings such as the G7, addressing peace and security in Africa, South Africa's Just Energy Transition, and global geopolitical developments including
and Gaza. In 2025, the mission successfully hosted the South Africa–France Investment Conference, led by Deputy President Paul Mashatile, which included bilateral meetings with President Macron and Prime Minister Francois Bayrou. France is expected to continue its engagement at the highest level, with President Macron anticipated to attend the G20 Summit in South Africa.

Economically, France is a major investor in South Africa, with investments rising from R20 billion in 2019 to R50 billion in 2022, before stabilizing at R32 billion in 2023. French companies are active in energy, manufacturing, and services, including support for Koeberg Nuclear Station. Trade remains imbalanced, with French exports to South Africa valued at €1.9 billion compared to South African exports of €513 million in 2024. South Africa's exports include chemicals, vehicles, minerals, and agricultural products such as avocados. France is South Africa's 14th largest investor, with around 400 French companies employing between 65,000 and 100,000 people. The mission actively promotes South African exports through participation in trade fairs such as SIAL Paris and Grand Pavois.

Key priorities in economic diplomacy include the establishment of a French–South Africa Business Council, unveiled during the investment conference, to enhance bilateral relations. Forty bankable projects were presented by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, covering diverse sectors with solid financial and technical specifications. Collaboration opportunities include nuclear energy facilities, renewable energy investments, and critical minerals such as lithium and cobalt. Partnerships in healthcare manufacturing, particularly with SANOFI, aim to strengthen vaccine production and innovation in South Africa. Infrastructure cooperation extends to water treatment and waste management with companies like SUEZ. A flagship economic diplomacy initiative seeks to address South Africa's triple challenges while promoting black industrialists, women-led businesses, and youth entrepreneurs.

Trade promotion is supported through South Africa's participation in major French platforms such as Maison & Object, Cannes Film Festival, Viva Tech, SIAL International Food Trade Show, and Paris Fashion Week. These events provide rare market access and high economic

returns, with South African designers and exporters securing contracts and expanding their global reach. The mission also liaises with French companies such as Air Liquide and Total to monitor investments in South Africa. While France is the sixth fastest-growing importer globally, it ranks only 26th among South Africa's trade partners, with South African exports valued at R10.1 billion in 2024. Opportunities exist to expand exports in plastics, chemicals, mining, steel, agriculture, and services such as pharmaceuticals and textiles.

Tourism promotion is another priority. Air France has expanded direct flights between Paris and Cape Town, reflecting strong demand and seasonal growth. The mission partnered with Club Med and South African Tourism to launch a new resort in KwaZulu-Natal, a R2 billion investment expected to stimulate SMME development, skills transfer, and employment in the hospitality sector. The mission continues to collaborate with stakeholders to position South Africa as a destination of choice for French tourists and corporates.

Operationally, the mission faces staffing and property management challenges. Of 10 transferred DIRCO personnel, eight posts are filled, while 11 of 24 locally recruited positions remain vacant. Recruitment is underway to fill gaps in administration, maintenance, and support services. The chancery and official residence, both state-owned, require major renovations due to structural deterioration. Corrective measures include condition assessments, disposal of underutilized assets such as a parking lot, and phased asset verification and disposal of redundant furniture. The mission manages over 4,000 assets, with 95% verified, and aims to complete disposal processes by March 2026.

Consular services are significant, with the mission assisting approximately 50 South Africans per week at the consulate, plus additional cases via post. Services include passports, birth registrations, citizenship matters, emergency travel certificates, and support for South Africans in prison or hospital. Visa applications are processed through an online booking system, though frequent outages in the eVisa platform force manual processing, causing delays. Risk management challenges include austerity measures, unreliable ICT infrastructure, deteriorating buildings, and inadequate human resource capacity, particularly the absence of DTIC, Agriculture, and SSA representatives. Mitigation strategies involve partnerships, sponsorships, upgraded networks, and facilities management interventions.

In conclusion, the Paris Mission underscores the strategic importance of France as a partner for South Africa in politics, economics, and multilateral engagement. While trade imbalances and operational challenges persist, opportunities in investment, energy, healthcare, infrastructure, and tourism provide pathways to deepen cooperation. By leveraging structured dialogues, high-level political engagement, and strong cultural and economic ties, South Africa can strengthen its role as a trusted partner in Europe, translating diplomatic relations into tangible outcomes that support inclusive growth, industrialization, and skills development.

16. Discussions

Committee members expressed disappointment with the state of South African properties abroad, linking poor maintenance to reputational risks and questioning the government's commitment to supporting its diplomatic missions. They raised questions about the impact of language barriers on economic diplomacy, the effectiveness of current staffing models, and the consequences of conflicting local and South African laws for mission operations.
Further questions were posed about the impact of domestic political developments on the work of missions abroad, the direct link between diplomatic activities and addressing South Africa's triple challenges (poverty, unemployment, inequality), and the demographics of SMEs and individuals benefiting from trade and investment programs. Members asked how the missions could better communicate real-time challenges and needs to Parliament and what support structures could be improved.

The Committee asked for a brief comment about the state of IT infrastructure at the missions, specifically requesting a one-sentence summary.

The committee also discussed property management, suggesting that the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) should manage the state's international property portfolio to improve efficiency and revenue generation. There were recommendations for more regular reporting to Parliament, the use of think tanks for research and development, and the need for a 24-hour operational model for the Department of International Relations to accommodate global time zones.

There was a robust discussion on the inadequacy of ICT infrastructure, with concerns about handwritten visas, data security risks, and the broader implications for international trust and

security. Members questioned how the missions could be expected to deliver on economic and diplomatic objectives without modern technology and sufficient resources.

The Committee also acknowledged operational challenges, such as limited resources, bureaucratic delays in finalizing agreements, and infrastructure issues at missions abroad. Despite these, the missions have maintained strong relationships with host countries and have been proactive in supporting South African interests, including facilitating scholarships and promoting cultural ties. The importance of digital transformation and improved IT infrastructure was noted as a gap needing urgent attention.

17. Responses

The response was clear and direct: “Non-functional.” This was followed by an elaboration that, despite the department having a digital strategy, implementation at the mission level was severely lacking, with issues such as poor Wi-Fi connectivity and inadequate office equipment.

18. HE MS NJ Mngomezulu, Ambassador to Poland and handling Civic and Immigration Services for Ukraine

The presentation outlines Poland’s economic, geopolitical, and diplomatic context, with a focus on opportunities for South Africa. Poland, with a population of 38 million and a GDP of over $1 trillion, is the sixth largest economy in the EU and the largest in Central and Eastern Europe. Its diversified industrial base spans manufacturing, automotive, ICT, renewable energy, and agriculture, positioning it as a strategic gateway to EU markets. Poland’s agricultural strength is complemented by its adoption of agri-tech and smart farming solutions, while its geo-strategic location makes it a vital logistics and energy hub. The country attracts foreign investment through stability, skilled labor, and proximity to major European markets.

Geopolitically, Poland is a strong supporter of Ukraine, serving as a NATO hub for military and logistical aid, though tensions exist due to unilateral bans on Ukrainian agricultural imports. Poland views Russia as a systemic threat, expanding its military to become NATO’s second-largest force. Within the EU, Poland plays a dual role—supporting collective security while clashing with Brussels on trade and legal issues. Relations with the United States remain

critical, as Poland seeks assurances of continued American military presence amid shifting U.S. policies.

South Africa and Poland maintain structured bilateral dialogue under a framework established in 1995, with the most recent consultations in 2024 affirming cooperation on Palestine, Ukraine, and global governance. These talks paved the way for the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation (JCEC) in 2025, with Poland expressing interest in South African agriculture, mining, energy, food processing, and tourism. Agreements on science, technology, higher education, astronomy, shipbuilding, and mining were reaffirmed, highlighting broad collaboration.

Economic opportunities include partnerships in Poland's green economy, particularly in electric vehicles, batteries, and hydrogen, where South Africa's platinum group metals, cobalt, and manganese are vital inputs. Agro-processing ventures, citrus and maize exports, and food security collaborations are also promising. Infrastructure and manufacturing partnerships, such as rail, water systems, and smart cities, align with Polish expertise. Education and innovation exchanges are emphasized, with 200 scholarships available for South African students in engineering, ICT, medicine, and the blue economy.
The mission has facilitated strategic partnerships, including waste management ventures with T4B and Phambili, smart city lighting projects with LUG Lights, and yacht manufacturing collaborations with Torhamer Marine Group. Financial institutions such as KUKE Export Credit Agency and BGK Development Bank are working with Investec and DBSA to finance infrastructure and renewable energy projects. The Polish Chamber of Commerce co-hosts the Africa–Poland Economic Forum, fostering SME partnerships and investment promotion.

Trade between South Africa and Poland has grown unevenly since 2015, with exports peaking in 2022 but declining sharply thereafter, while imports from Poland have steadily increased, creating a widening trade imbalance. In 2024, South African exports to Poland included mineral products, hides and leather, foodstuffs, iron and steel, machinery, and chemicals, while Polish exports to South Africa were dominated by equipment components, machinery, chemicals, vehicles, vegetables, and processed foods.

Challenges to economic diplomacy include limited support from South African agencies, under-promotion of South African wines, lack of tourism funding, and severe budget

constraints restricting travel and participation in trade events. Despite these, the mission has appointed honorary consuls in Gdańsk and Silesia to strengthen regional engagement. Mitigation measures include partnerships with travel agencies, collaboration with Aquila Collection for safari promotion, and leveraging honorary consuls for trade missions.

People-to-people cooperation has expanded through the establishment of the Poland–South Africa Parliamentary Group, which supported the renaming of Nelson Mandela Square in Warsaw. Cultural ties are reinforced through monuments commemorating South African aircrew in WWII and participation in local events. Operationally, the mission faces staffing shortages, rising rental costs, IT challenges, and difficulties in recruiting locally due to low wages. The South African community in Poland encounters banking, driver's license, and visa challenges, while the embassy struggles with increased visa demand from Ukrainians and neighbouring countries, compounded by shortages of visa stationery and outdated equipment.

In conclusion, the presentation emphasizes the strategic importance of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, as a dynamic frontier for South African trade and diplomacy. With its infrastructure, legal framework, and geographic position, South Africa is well-placed to serve as Europe's preferred African hub. By investing in stronger engagement, South Africa can expand exports, attract green technology investments, and translate diplomatic relations into tangible economic outcomes that drive industrialization, job creation, and skills development.

19. HE Mr GM Tsengiwe, Ambassador to Hungary also accredited to Croatia and handling Civic and Immigration services for Romania

The South African Mission in Budapest, accredited to Hungary and Croatia and providing consular services to Romania and Serbia, plays a critical role in advancing South Africa's interests in Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary, with a population of 9.6 million, is an EU and OECD member whose economy faces modest growth and structural challenges, including income inequality, gender pay gaps, and underfunded infrastructure, despite strengths in education, public safety, and work-life balance. Croatia, with 3.8 million people and a GDP of $84.7 billion, has successfully integrated into the EU, adopted the euro in 2023, and relies heavily on tourism, which contributes about a quarter of its GDP. Both countries are EU and NATO members, with political landscapes dominated by right-leaning parties, and the

mission's focus is on economic diplomacy, skills development, tourism promotion, and structured cooperation.

Bilateral relations with Hungary were established in 1991, with Nelson Mandela being the only South African president to pay a state visit. Relations are managed through political consultations and the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation (JCEC), co-chaired at deputy minister level, with the next session to be hosted by South Africa. Cooperation in higher education is particularly strong: Hungary offers 100 scholarships annually to South African students, with nearly 1,000 beneficiaries since 2017 and 146 active students in 2024. The inaugural Hungary–South Africa Rectors Forum in 2025 expanded collaboration to joint research, publications, and academic exchanges. Other areas of cooperation include water resource management, where an MoU exists but is not yet operational, and science and technology, with plans to relaunch agreements and expand joint projects. Space cooperation is also emerging, with an MoU between the South African National Space Agency and Hungary's Ministry of Foreign Affairs providing a framework for collaboration.

Relations with Croatia are conducted through political consultations at senior officials' level, with the last session held in December 2024. Four agreements have been signed, including a dormant broad cooperation agreement from 2000, now under review. Current work focuses on a draft MoU in arts and culture, as well as education, science, and technology. Croatia's expertise in tourism offers opportunities for South Africa, with a draft MoU on tourism awaiting input. Croatia has also proposed cooperation between diplomatic academies. These initiatives highlight the potential for South Africa to benefit from Croatia's strengths in tourism and education.

The geopolitical environment in Hungary is complex. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's nationalist and anti-migration policies often clash with EU positions. Hungary's pro-Russian stance during the Ukraine conflict has drawn criticism, undermining regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Visegrad Group. Hungary opposes sanctions against Russia and Ukraine's EU membership, citing minority rights concerns. On the Israel–Palestine conflict, Hungary has consistently sided with Israel, vetoing EU condemnations and considering relocating its embassy to Jerusalem. Relations with China are strong, with Hungary hosting major Chinese investments such as EV battery factories, while ties with the US fluctuate

depending on administrations, currently strengthened under President Trump. Croatia, by contrast, aligns closely with EU positions and has made significant strides in integration.

Trade relations with both countries remain modest but promising. In 2024, South African exports to Hungary totaled R701 million, while imports reached R8.29 billion, dominated by machinery, vehicles, and equipment components. South African exports included vehicles, textiles, and chemicals. In Croatia, exports reached R198 million, while imports totaled R845 million, with trade covering machinery, chemicals, iron and steel, foodstuffs, and textiles. South African companies active in Hungary include Intertoll EUROPE, Mondi Business Paper, NEPI Rockcastle, and Specialist Mechanical Engineers, while Hungarian firms such as Ganz Engineering and Auromenergomasch operate in South Africa. In Croatia, South African firms include Hyprop and Pepkor Holdings, while Croatian companies such as Dok-Ing and Pointers are present in South Africa.

Economic opportunities are expanding. Hungarian firms like Control-X (medical equipment) and Vajda-Papír (hygiene products) are exploring partnerships in South Africa. The mission leverages platforms such as the Hungary Business Golf Championship and Budapest Wine Festival to promote South African products and investment. Croatia offers opportunities in the blue economy, with universities expressing interest in marine engineering and naval architecture exchanges. These initiatives align with South Africa's goals of skills development, innovation, and sustainable growth.

People-to-people relations are fostered through cultural diplomacy, Mandela Day events, diplomatic fairs, and university collaborations. Parliamentary engagement is also growing, with deputy speakers from Hungary and Croatia expressing interest in strengthening ties with South Africa's Parliament.

Operationally, the mission faces challenges. Properties in Budapest are rented, with no state-owned assets. Budget constraints limit initiatives and regional visits. Asset verification has been completed, but ICT systems remain slow and outdated, with visa printers prone to errors. Staffing includes four transferred officials and 11 locally recruited posts, of which three are vacant. Consular services cover Hungary, Croatia, Romania, and Serbia, processing 312 immigration applications and 58 civic matters in four months. Tourist visa demand has declined

since September 2025 due to exemptions for Hungarian, Croatian, and Romanian citizens. Around 350 South Africans reside in Hungary, mostly students under scholarship programmes.

In conclusion, the Budapest Mission is strategically positioned to advance South Africa's interests in Central and Eastern Europe. While trade imbalances, geopolitical tensions, and operational constraints pose challenges, opportunities in education, science, tourism, and economic partnerships are significant. By leveraging Hungary's scholarship programme, Croatia's tourism expertise, and emerging industrial and technological collaborations, South Africa can deepen its footprint in the region, expand exports, and strengthen people-to-people ties, contributing to inclusive growth and sustainable development.

20. HE Ms Mosa D, Sejosingoe, Ambassador to Czech Republic

The presentation highlights the evolution of South Africa–Czech Republic relations since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1991. These relations have matured over time, supported by growing commercial and business-to-business activity. Political consultations are held annually at Deputy Minister level, alternating between Pretoria and Prague, under the Declaration of Intent signed in 2000. The Czech Republic regards South Africa as a key partner on the African continent, with Czech companies viewing South Africa as a gateway to Sub-Saharan Africa. Areas of cooperation span energy, transport, agriculture, health, defence, technical collaboration, education, tourism, and multilateral forums. The current ambassadors are H.E. Ms MD Sejosingoe in Prague and H.E. Mr Tomás Uličnỳ in Pretoria.

The most recent political consultations took place in May 2025 in Prague, covering energy, education, health, cybersecurity, agreements, and candidatures. Several agreements and memoranda of understanding are in place or under discussion, including defence cooperation, scientific and technological collaboration, transport, and social security. Academic cooperation is operational through a MoU between the University of South Bohemia and South Africa's Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, focusing on aquaculture. While some agreements remain active, others have lapsed or are pending renewal, reflecting the need for alignment between departments.

Politically, the Czech Republic underwent significant change following parliamentary elections in October 2025. The populist center-right opposition party ANO, led by former Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, won with 34.5% of the vote but fell short of a constitutional majority. Coalition talks with far-right parties SPD and Motorist are expected to result in a new government, signaling a right-wing ideological shift with implications for domestic policy, migration, and governance. This political transformation will influence Czechia's foreign policy, which is increasingly focused on security and defence, stronger NATO and EU alignment, and resilience in energy, semiconductors, and supply chains. The Russia–Ukraine conflict has reinforced Czechia's view of Russia as a revisionist state, prompting heightened military spending and support for Ukraine's reconstruction.

Trade and economic relations are anchored by the Joint Committee on Economic Cooperation (JCEC), last convened in Pretoria in December 2024. Czech companies are active in South Africa in sectors such as electronics, textiles, energy, and tourism, while South African firms operate in Czechia in food processing, IT, logistics, and manufacturing. South Africa's Industrial Policy Action Plan identifies priority areas for Czech investment, including biofuels, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, renewable energy, ICT, chemicals, and clean technology. In 2024, South Africa exported goods worth R6.3 billion to Czechia, while imports totaled R14.6 billion, underscoring a significant trade imbalance. Opportunities exist in renewable energy, electric vehicle manufacturing, medical devices, pharmaceuticals, ICT, battery technology, agri-tech, fintech, and e-commerce. Czechia's expertise in precision agriculture and green technology aligns with South Africa's mineral wealth and rural development needs. Tourism is also a strategic pillar, with collaboration in hospitality, eco-tourism, and wine tourism supported by institutional linkages between InvestSA and CzechInvest.

The mission structure in Prague is led by Ambassador Sejosingoe, supported by transferred officials and locally recruited personnel. Staffing challenges persist due to low salary scales, leading to resignations and vacancies in key administrative and political positions. The mission plans to address retention through salary reviews. The approved budget for 2025/26 is €861,204, split between employee compensation and goods and services. Budget constraints limit procurement of capital goods, with outdated furniture and ICT equipment affecting operations. The mission manages approximately 800 assets, with disposal of non-functional items underway. Tools of trade include leased properties, vehicles, and ICT systems, though slow desktop performance remains a challenge.

Consular and civic services are relatively stable, with no major cases reported. The South African community in Czechia consists mainly of students and short-term contract workers, many of whom relocate within the EU. The mission maintains contact through a WhatsApp group, though challenges persist with lengthy processes for civic and travel documents from the Department of Home Affairs. Measures to avoid audit findings include maintaining registers for irregular expenditure, updating supplier databases, and conducting regular asset verification.

In conclusion, the Czech Republic represents a strategically important partner for South Africa in Central Europe, offering access to EU markets and opportunities for diversification in sectors such as health, logistics, food processing, and space technology. The bilateral relationship is underpinned by political dialogue, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange, but faces challenges in trade imbalances, staffing, and budgetary constraints. With Czechia's geopolitical shift toward security and resilience, South Africa has an opportunity to position itself as a reliable partner in supply chains, green technology, and strategic industries. Strengthening these ties can translate into tangible economic outcomes, supporting industrialization, skills development, and broader diplomatic engagement in Europe.

21. HE Ms BD Letsatsi-Duba, Ambassador to Turkey Also accredited to Uzbekistan

The South African Embassy in Ankara, accredited also to Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, operates in a region of both opportunity and volatility. Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan are growing economies with sectoral strengths in defence, textiles, engineering, and medical industries, while also serving as energy hubs with significant oil and gas reserves. Their geographic positioning provides access to Eastern Europe, Eurasia, the South Caucasus, the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, Central Asia, and the Middle East, making them potential gateways for South African exports and investment. Opportunities include technology transfer, scientific collaboration, scholarships, and participation in multiple trade routes such as the Trans-Caspian Corridor and TRACECA. These countries align with Global South ideals, with Uzbekistan joining BRICS, and they host major international forums, offering South Africa platforms to advance its diplomatic agenda. However, the region is marked by volatility due to the Russia–Ukraine war and Middle Eastern conflicts, entrenched leadership with limited democratic space, and weak trade and tourism ties with South Africa.

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Türkiye are longstanding, dating back to the exchange of diplomatic notes in 1991. Since then, 17 agreements have been concluded, covering air transport, investment protection, tourism, education, police cooperation, double taxation, customs, and trade. The establishment of a Bi-National Commission (BNC) in October 2025, during President Mashatile's working visit, marked a new phase in relations, with additional agreements signed on free zones, higher education, sports, and economic cooperation. Defence, maritime, agriculture, and health agreements are anticipated, while over a dozen agreements with Azerbaijan remain pending. High-level engagements have been frequent, including calls and meetings between Presidents Ramaphosa and Erdoğan, visits by Ministers Pandor and Lamola, and participation in G20 and BRICS forums. These interactions underscore the strategic importance of Türkiye as a partner in both bilateral and multilateral contexts.

Trade and investment remain modest but show potential. South Africa's exports to Türkiye declined from $543 million in 2022 to $386 million in 2024, while imports fell from $1.5 billion in 2022 to $809 million in 2024, leaving a persistent trade deficit of $423 million. Bilateral investment is limited, with inward investment from Türkiye at $10.9 million and outward investment from South Africa at $27.7 million. The mission has sought to address this imbalance through economic diplomacy initiatives, including preparatory meetings for Turkish stakeholders ahead of the Africa Mining Indaba, participation in the Palandöken Economic Forum and Kültepe Economic Summit, and engagement at the International Defence Industry Fair, where a technology transfer MoU was signed between Pamodzi and Aselsan. The embassy also facilitated South Africa's participation in the Türkiye–Africa Business Forum (TABEF), hosting delegations and business-to-business meetings with DEİK and the Black Business Council.

Cultural and public diplomacy complement economic efforts. The mission has partnered with universities and research institutions, renewing contracts between CSIR and TUBITAK, and participated in events such as the Mardin University Courage Awards and Youth Month commemorations. Nelson Mandela Day was marked in collaboration with the UN and local organisations, while South African fashion designers showcased their work in Türkiye through W&RSETA initiatives. These activities strengthen people-to-people ties and highlight South Africa's cultural and scientific contributions.

Operationally, the mission manages its budget and staff complement under challenging circumstances. The 2025/26 budget totals €1.23 million, with compensation of employees and goods and services as the main cost drivers. Savings were achieved through relocating the chancery, reducing rent from €25,000 to €12,000 per month. Staff includes six transferred officials and nine locally recruited personnel, though vacancies remain in key posts such as translator, trade relations officer, and DHA officer. The mission has proposed leveraging South African expatriate talent in Türkiye to fill gaps. Governance and compliance are maintained through standing committees, monthly expenditure reports, and asset verification, though risks persist in security infrastructure and contingency planning.

Consular services are extensive, reflecting the embassy's role in supporting South Africans in Türkiye and its accredited countries. In 2024, the mission processed 312 civic and immigration cases, 163 notarial and legal services, and 31 consular protection cases, including assistance with arrests, detentions, and repatriations. Visa and migration facilitation accounted for over 1,200 applications, though challenges remain with outdated ICT systems and visa printers, forcing manual processing. The mission continues to liaise with Home Affairs on complex cases, while also addressing the needs of South Africans in distress.

In conclusion, the Turkey Mission underscores the strategic importance of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan as gateways to multiple regions and as partners in energy, defence, and trade. While trade imbalances, limited investment, and operational constraints pose challenges, opportunities in technology transfer, education, maritime industries, and cultural diplomacy are significant. By consolidating agreements, expanding economic diplomacy, and addressing resource gaps, South Africa can strengthen its footprint in this volatile but strategically vital region, translating diplomatic engagement into tangible outcomes for trade, investment, and people-to-people cooperation.

22.HE Mr S Casoo, Ambassador to Ukraine, also accredited to Amenia and representation accredited to Gorgia and Moldova

South Africa's Embassy in Kyiv, accredited also to Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia, operates in one of the most complex geopolitical environments in Europe. The war between Russia and Ukraine, now approaching its fourth year, defines the mission's work and bilateral relations. Ukraine, emerging from its Soviet past, has positioned itself as a Eurocentric state and defender

of liberal democratic values, though its history is marked by instability, from the Holodomor famine and Nazi occupation to the Chornobyl disaster and repeated political upheavals. Since independence in 1991, Ukraine has faced contested sovereignty, culminating in Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion in February 2022. The war has become one of attrition, with Russia occupying nearly 20% of Ukrainian territory, devastating infrastructure, and forcing Ukraine into a defensive posture. Negotiations have failed to converge, with Russia demanding recognition of annexed territories and Ukraine insisting on sovereignty and security guarantees. The Istanbul talks of 2022 and subsequent proposals have not yielded progress, and the battlefield continues to dictate the trajectory of the conflict. Western support remains hesitant and fragmented, while the USA has assumed a central role in mediation, leaving the Global South largely sidelined.

South Africa has maintained a principled position, condemning Russia's invasion and annexation as illegal, while advocating for diplomacy and negotiations under the UN Charter. Its leadership in the African Peace Initiative has elevated bilateral relations with Ukraine, clarifying South Africa's stance and contributing to initiatives such as the Ukraine–Africa Food Programme. South Africa's vote in favour of the UN resolution on Ukraine in March 2025 was well received, and President Zelensky's official visit to South Africa in April reinforced optimism for peace diplomacy. However, the USA and EU dominate negotiations, with Ukraine guided by their agendas. The war has strained Ukraine's economy, with defence consuming 63% of the budget, debt reaching 100% of GDP, and IMF loans defaulted. Socio-economic fatigue is growing, even as public trust in leadership remains relatively high. The managed attrition phase has created a war of endurance, with both sides unwilling to concede, raising the risk of regional escalation. The conflict, alongside the Gaza war, is reshaping global norms around sovereignty, humanitarian law, and arms control, while exposing divisions in international responses.

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Ukraine were historically cordial but limited, with trade never exceeding R2.5 billion and few high-level visits. The war has paradoxically elevated ties, with cooperation expanding in diplomacy, agriculture, maritime, aviation, health, and cultural exchanges. South African companies such as OLX and AMC Engineering operate in Ukraine, while Ukrainian investments include wine estates in Stellenbosch. Student exchanges have dwindled from 54 pre-war to just two, but new academic partnerships have emerged, including MOUs with South African universities and the establishment of a Centre

for Global Ukrainian Studies at the University of Pretoria. Cultural diplomacy has flourished, with joint art residencies, poetry festivals, and exhibitions linking South African and Ukrainian institutions. Tourism remains limited due to travel restrictions and socio-economic challenges, though niche partnerships have been facilitated. The mission is also negotiating agreements on visa waivers, agriculture, and defence cooperation, preparing for post-war opportunities in trade, investment, and technology. Draft frameworks envision collaboration in food security, energy resilience, critical raw materials, digital innovation, and defence technology, including drones and AI.

The mission's accreditation to Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova adds further complexity. These states, shaped by unresolved territorial disputes and competing Russian and EU influences, remain volatile. Armenia has drifted westward after Azerbaijan's reconquest of Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia struggles with polarization and Russian pressure, and Moldova has swung decisively toward the EU. South Africa maintains cordial relations, with political consultations and cooperation in academic, agricultural, and technological fields. Trade volumes are modest but growing, with exports ranging from cars and diamonds to leather goods, and imports including iron, steel, and machinery. Investments are limited, though South African companies such as Standard Bank and Golden Peanut Company have operations in Georgia. Mission capacity is constrained, operating from a temporary chancery with limited ICT infrastructure, chronic power outages, and budget restrictions. Consular services are complicated by reliance on sister missions for visa issuance and difficulties assisting distressed South Africans, particularly in Georgia where discrimination against Black South Africans has been reported. Staffing gaps and administrative challenges further strain operations, though asset management and emergency preparedness have been strengthened.

Overall, the Kyiv mission operates under extraordinary circumstances, balancing its diplomatic mandate with resource limitations while navigating a war that is reshaping regional and global politics. It has elevated South Africa's role in peace diplomacy, expanded bilateral cooperation with Ukraine, and maintained engagement with non-resident states despite logistical challenges. Looking ahead, the mission is positioning itself to exploit post-war opportunities in economic diplomacy, cultural exchange, and strategic partnerships, ensuring South Africa's priorities are represented in both bilateral and multilateral arenas across Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

23. Ms Thandi Mgxwali, Charge d Affaires to the Russian Federation also political representation accredited to Belarus

South Africa's diplomatic mission in Moscow, accredited to both the Russian Federation and Belarus, plays a strategic role in advancing the country's foreign policy priorities in Europe. The mission's work is guided by the 7th Administration's focus on addressing poverty, inequality, and unemployment, while also implementing outcomes from the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan and bilateral agreements with Russia and Belarus. With a staff complement of 30, supported by Honorary Consuls in St Petersburg, Vladivostok, and Yekaterinburg, and plans for further expansion in Krasnodar, Kazan, and Minsk, the mission maintains a broad diplomatic footprint despite resource constraints. Its strategic focus lies in economic diplomacy, bilateral cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people relations, ensuring South Africa's voice is heard in multilateral forums such as the G20, BRICS, and the United Nations, while strengthening ties with both Russia and Belarus.

Relations with Russia are historically rooted in mutual respect and political alignment on global issues, particularly the advocacy for a multipolar world where the Global South has influence. High-level exchanges have increased, reinforcing cooperation, though economic ties remain underdeveloped with low trade figures. Belarus enjoys cordial relations with South Africa but requires greater attention to deepen engagement. The political environment is shaped by the ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict, with Russia controlling significant territory and expanding defence cooperation with Iran, North Korea, and Belarus. Diplomatic initiatives through BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and African peace efforts continue, though frustration persists over the lack of a ceasefire despite renewed U.S.–Russia dialogue. Escalating rhetoric around long-range weapons and strained arms-control frameworks add complexity to the mission's work.

Economic diplomacy remains challenging under sanctions, banking restrictions, and reputational risks that deter South African companies. Russia has responded with import substitution, parallel imports, and a pivot toward eastern trade, creating opportunities in agriculture, mining, energy, and education. South Africa's priorities focus on energy, mining, agriculture, higher education, and science and technology, coordinated through ITEC, BRICS, and bilateral forums. Corporate engagement has been mixed, with notable disengagements by NASPERS and Barloworld highlighting compliance challenges. Nonetheless, achievements

include record citrus and wine exports, seafood exporters gaining Eurasian Economic Union registration, and progress in sheep-genetic exports. South Africa's participation in major Russian and Belarusian trade and cultural events, such as SPIEF, Russia Energy Week, and ROSAGRO, has strengthened visibility, while Minister Gayton McKenzie's visit advanced sport and cultural cooperation. South Africa's presence in the Intervision Song Contest further showcased cultural diplomacy.

Mission management is underpinned by governance structures, audit processes, and budget alignment with the annual plan. Human resource development is supported by new systems introduced by the Russian Foreign Ministry. Operational challenges stem from sanctions, exchange-rate volatility, and rising costs for utilities, travel, and accommodation. The mission has adopted efficiency measures such as virtual diplomacy, cost-effective rentals, strengthened asset monitoring, and expanded honorary consular networks to extend reach without additional expenditure. Despite fiscal pressures, the mission continues to deliver on its mandate, balancing resource constraints with innovative approaches to diplomacy. Overall, the Moscow mission remains a critical platform for advancing South Africa's foreign policy, navigating complex geopolitical dynamics, and fostering economic and cultural ties with Russia and Belarus, while ensuring that South Africa's priorities are represented in both bilateral and multilateral arenas.

24. Committee Discussions

One member questioned the Ambassador about Hungary's diplomatic posture toward South Africa, especially in light of South Africa's support for Palestine and its stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The member asked how Hungary's close relationship with Israel affects its attitude toward South Africa, particularly regarding the two-state solution and the ongoing ICC case on genocide. Clarity was sought about the impact of South Africa's non-alignment policy in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, asking whether this posture has affected bilateral relations and trade trends, given South Africa's historic ties with Russia.

The committee acknowledged the challenges and asked for clarification on specific obstacles, such as the lack of support from South African departments and the impact of budget cuts on embassy operations.

Committee members asked about the implementation of agreements, the status of trade and investment projects, and the embassy's engagement with local universities and businesses in Czech Republic

On operational challenges faced by missions in Europe, Members highlighted the poor state of rented properties, delays in asset disposal, and the negative impact these issues have on South Africa's diplomatic image. Members asked why the process for disposing of dilapidated properties is so slow and what can be done to expedite it. Concerns were also raised about the slow pace of ICT modernization, with some missions reportedly forced to print documents externally, posing security risks. Members asked what steps are being taken to address these vulnerabilities and why artificial intelligence and IT upgrades are not being prioritized.

The committee also questioned the effectiveness of interdepartmental cooperation, especially regarding scholarships and labor export opportunities for South African youth. Members asked why departments are slow to respond to opportunities and why ministries often fail to reciprocate diplomatic invitations. The issue of handwritten visas was discussed at length, with questions about the risks this practice poses to border security and how it could facilitate illegal activities such as child trafficking.

The meeting underscored the importance of direct parliamentary oversight and engagement with South Africa's missions abroad, especially in regions facing complex geopolitical and economic challenges.

There was a call for more proactive follow-up from South African departments to ensure that agreements and memorandums of understanding are implemented and that identified opportunities are not lost to competing countries.

Members called for a more strategic and resource-backed approach to South Africa's engagement with Central and Eastern Europe. By prioritizing economic diplomacy, addressing operational challenges, and strengthening institutional support, South Africa can better leverage its diplomatic presence to drive trade, investment, and skills development, thereby advancing national interests and benefiting its citizens both at home and abroad.

25. Responses

The ambassador explained that despite identifying opportunities, departments often deprioritize Poland, making it difficult to showcase South African products or attract investment. She also described the embassy's reliance on honorary consuls due to limited resources and the importance of people-to-people cooperation, such as the establishment of the Poland-South Africa Parliamentary Group.

The ambassador provided examples of successful partnerships, such as the PF Nanowoven plant in Cape Town and the Photon Energy Group's solar projects, but also noted setbacks, such as the loss of a major investment to Egypt due to regulatory hurdles in South Africa.

Ambassadors from Poland, Hungary, Croatia, and the Czech Republic highlighted that while diplomatic relations are generally cordial and structured, there is a pressing need to translate these relationships into tangible economic and educational benefits for South Africa. Opportunities abound in sectors such as green energy, agri-processing, shipbuilding, and vocational education, but South Africa is not fully capitalizing on them due to limited synergy between domestic departments and missions, as well as a lack of targeted support for new markets.

A recurring factor was significant budgetary and operational constraints faced by missions, which hamper their ability to promote trade, tourism, and investment effectively. Missions are often forced to rely on honorary consuls and personal networks to compensate for insufficient resources, and the inability to fill key local positions further strains their capacity. The lack of budget also impacts the missions' ability to participate in or host important events, which can lead to missed opportunities and reputational risks.

26. HE Ms FS Magubane, Ambassador to Denmark

South Africa's mission in Copenhagen operates within Denmark's stable constitutional democracy, where King Frederik X ascended the throne in January 2024 and Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen leads a coalition government of Social Democrats, Liberals, and Moderates. Denmark, with a population of just over six million, also encompasses the autonomous territories of Greenland and the Faroe Islands, each with their own parliaments and representation in the Danish Folketing. Relations between South Africa and Denmark are

cordial, rooted in shared values of democracy, human rights, and social justice. Denmark was a strong supporter of South Africa's liberation struggle, being the first Western country to impose unilateral sanctions against apartheid in 1986. Formal diplomatic relations were established in 1994, and today the partnership is underpinned by 39 bilateral agreements, including the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in February 2022. High-level engagement has continued, with Prime Minister Frederiksen's working visit to South Africa in June 2023 and subsequent technical committee meetings in 2025, setting the stage for a Deputy Ministerial Review in 2026. Cooperation spans energy, agriculture, water, environment, education, and culture, reflecting the breadth of the bilateral agenda.

Economic relations are significant though imbalanced. In 2023–2024, Danish exports to South Africa reached over R6.1 billion, while South African exports to Denmark amounted to R1.65 billion, highlighting the need to expand South Africa's trade footprint. South Africa's exports are dominated by fats, oils, and agricultural products, while imports from Denmark are largely medicaments and industrial goods. Trade is governed by the SADC–EU Economic Partnership Agreement, and Danish companies such as Novo Nordisk, Maersk, DSV, Vestas, and Grundfos have a strong presence in South Africa, contributing to sectors ranging from pharmaceuticals to logistics and renewable energy.

Sectoral cooperation is robust: the Strategic Water Sector Cooperation, now in its third phase, links municipalities in both countries; agriculture partnerships involve food safety and veterinary collaboration; and the SA–Denmark Energy Partnership Programme has supported Eskom for over a decade, with Denmark also joining the Just Energy Transition Partnership to assist South Africa's energy transition. Environmental cooperation is reinforced through a 2019 MoU on green transition and climate adaptation, with South African ministers participating in Copenhagen's climate forums. Novo Nordisk's partnership with Aspen Pharmacare to produce insulin in Gqeberha exemplifies how Danish investment supports South Africa's health sector.

Economic diplomacy initiatives have included business seminars with Danish investors, wine promotion events in collaboration with Wesgro, and tourism showcases such as the Africa Showcase in Copenhagen in April 2025. Cultural diplomacy has been equally active, with South Africa's participation in the Diplomatic Bazaar, Africa Day celebrations, and the screening of a Miriam Makeba documentary in partnership with the Danish Film Institute. The mission also successfully hosted South Africa's National Day in June 2025 with sponsorship

from Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners. Denmark's broader engagement with Africa is reflected in its new African Strategy launched in 2024, which aims to strengthen diplomatic footprints, expand trade and investment, and increase study exchanges. Denmark has also participated in the Nordic-African Foreign Ministers' Meeting and was invited by South Africa to join the G20 as a guest country, contributing to development and climate working groups. These platforms provide South Africa with opportunities to advance its national interests and priorities in multilateral settings.

Operationally, the mission has faced challenges but also achieved progress. The chancery renovation project was completed in October 2025, with municipal approvals pending for extensions, while the official residence is undergoing refurbishment with tenders closing in November 2025. Budget constraints remain a concern, limiting the mission's ability to fully implement strategic activities, host diplomatic events, and replace outdated vehicles. Staffing is lean, with only four transferred officials, though approval is underway to strengthen capacity with an additional political secretary. Consular services are active, assisting around 100 cases per month, including visas, civic services, and support for South Africans in distress.

The mission also verifies Danish companies offering employment to South Africans and provides fingerprinting services for SAPS clearances. Despite limited resources, asset management has been exemplary, with 100% verification and compliance. ICT systems, however, remain problematic, with slow connectivity and outdated equipment affecting efficiency, though efforts are underway to restore full electronic visa processing following the chancery relocation. Overall, the Copenhagen mission continues to deliver on its mandate, balancing resource constraints with strategic diplomacy, economic engagement, and cultural promotion. It remains a vital platform for advancing South Africa's foreign policy in Northern Europe, leveraging Denmark's expertise in renewable energy, climate adaptation, and innovation, while ensuring that South Africa's priorities are represented in both bilateral and multilateral arenas.

27 HE HR Princess ZN Dlamini, Ambassador to Sweden, also accredited to the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Finland, the Republic of Lavtia, the Republic of Lithuania

South Africa's mission in Stockholm, led by Ambassador Zenani Dlamini, is accredited to Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, with non-residential coverage of the latter four. The mission is staffed by transferred officials including counsellors, secretaries, and a defence attaché, supported by nine locally recruited personnel, though staffing gaps remain. All accredited countries are constitutional democracies with developed free-market economies, and their proximity to Russia has shaped their defence and foreign policies in response to the ongoing Russia–Ukraine war. Finland and Sweden joined NATO in 2023 and 2024 respectively, committing to increased defence spending, while Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania already exceed NATO's 2% GDP threshold. As EU member states, their trade with South Africa is regulated through the SADC–EU Economic Partnership Agreement. The mission's work is framed by South Africa's national priorities of inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and building a capable developmental state, with engagements focused on investment promotion, skills development, and governance cooperation.

Economic diplomacy has been a central focus. Ambassador Dlamini has engaged Swedish authorities and business leaders to support investment retention, particularly with Stella Polarium, a major battery producer whose South African operations generate significant export revenue. Meetings with Mining Finland explored cooperation in critical minerals, circular economy initiatives, technology transfer, and environmental stewardship, while engagements with SITRA, the Finnish Innovation Fund, aligned circular economy principles with AU and G20 agendas. The Nordic Development Fund has been approached to support South Africa's just energy transition, while the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy continues twinning programmes with municipalities such as Saldanha Bay and Sarah Baartman, with plans to expand further. Nordic Business Services has facilitated funding for water infrastructure projects in South Africa, demonstrating the mission's role in leveraging Nordic expertise for local development. These initiatives reflect a broader effort to attract foreign direct investment, enhance beneficiation, and build sustainable industries.

Skills development and academic cooperation have been advanced through the South Africa–Sweden University Forum (SASUF), which has connected over 4,000 researchers and funded more than 100 collaborative projects, many involving distance learning institutions. Joint publications have increased significantly, with co-authored papers receiving high citation rates. Phase III of SASUF, launched in September 2025, involves nearly all South African public universities and their Swedish counterparts. Cultural and educational exchanges include a

long-standing partnership between the Royal College of Music in Sweden and South African institutions such as North-West University and the Lady Grey Arts Academy, supported by EU Erasmus Plus funding. These programmes involve exchanges of professors, students, and joint research, while Swedish students undertake teaching practice in South African schools. Such initiatives strengthen academic ties, promote innovation, and contribute to poverty reduction through skills transfer. The mission has also facilitated study tours, such as the Western Cape Police Oversight delegation's visit to Sweden to learn evidence-based violence prevention models, supporting South Africa's efforts to build a capable and ethical state.

Geopolitical relations remain complex. South Africa's non-aligned stance in the Russia–Ukraine war has drawn criticism from Nordic partners, with concerns expressed about ties to Russia and China. During official visits, Ambassador Dlamini has faced difficult receptions, particularly in Latvia, while Sweden has raised worries about potential leaks of military technology related to Gripen aircraft. Nonetheless, increased defence spending in the region presents opportunities for South Africa's defence industry. Trade volumes between South Africa and the Nordic countries remain imbalanced, with imports far exceeding exports, except in Latvia. In 2024, South Africa exported R2.39 billion to Sweden but imported R21.87 billion, highlighting the need to normalize trade through mechanisms such as Open Trade Gate Sweden. South African companies have shown limited interest in the Swedish market, though firms like SRK Consulting, Mondi Coatings, Origin Wine, and Analysis Mason have established a presence.

Operationally, the mission faces significant resource constraints. Its budget has been reduced by over SEK 3.3 million, leaving sections underfunded and limiting diplomatic functions. The political section lacks tools such as promotional materials, while outdated vehicles and insufficient funds hinder travel and citizen assistance in accredited countries. Staffing gaps, including the unfilled post of First Secretary Political and a consular clerk, strain the mission's ability to manage visa and consular services, which average 125 civic applications monthly. Honorary consuls assist in Estonia and Finland, but none exist in Latvia or Lithuania. Despite these challenges, the mission has maintained full compliance with audits, asset verification, and financial reporting. ICT systems, however, remain unreliable, with slow logins, non-functional PCs, and communication breakdowns affecting efficiency. The visa system functions but is hampered by technical glitches. Overall, the Stockholm mission continues to deliver on its mandate, balancing limited resources with strategic engagement in investment,

skills development, and governance cooperation, while navigating geopolitical sensitivities and trade imbalances. It remains a critical platform for advancing South Africa's foreign policy in Northern Europe, ensuring that national priorities are represented across bilateral and multilateral arenas.

28. HE Ms D C Kotze, ambassador to Norway, also accredited to Iceland

The South African Embassy in Oslo operates in a dynamic geopolitical environment shaped by Europe's shifting security landscape. For South Africa, Norway offers a valuable platform for dialogue on global governance, peacebuilding, and energy transition. Norway is not a member of the EU but is integrated through the European Economic Area and Schengen Zone, aligning closely with EU and NATO positions while maintaining independent diplomacy. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Norway has deepened its NATO cooperation, expanded defence commitments in the High North, and provided substantial humanitarian and reconstruction support to Ukraine through the Nansen Support Programme, amounting to NOK 205 billion. It has also launched a long-term defence plan costing NOK 600 billion between 2025 and 2036. As one of Europe's key suppliers of natural gas, Norway has reinforced its geopolitical importance by compensating for reduced Russian energy imports.

Norway's foreign policy is anchored in peace diplomacy, sustainable development, human rights, and multilateralism. It is an active global peace facilitator, engaged in Sudan, Colombia, the Middle East, and Ukraine, and provides over 1% of its GNI in official development assistance, among the highest worldwide. Norway contributes significantly to EU-funded research and innovation, particularly in renewable energy, digitalisation, and environmental sustainability, areas that align closely with South Africa's development agenda. This convergence creates a strong foundation for cooperation in peacebuilding, climate justice, and multilateral reform, positioning Norway as a principled ally in advancing South Africa's and Africa's voice in global governance.

Bilateral relations between South Africa and Norway, formally established in 1994, are guided by shared commitments to democracy, inclusion, and sustainability. Norway was a long-standing anti-apartheid ally and today prioritises cooperation in peacebuilding, renewable energy, and maritime industries. Trade is dominated by fuels, metals, and agricultural goods, which make up over 80% of South Africa's exports to Norway. Norway's emphasis on human

rights, sustainability, and gender equality complements South Africa's foreign policy objectives, enabling collaboration in AU, SADC, and UN frameworks. Norway's PANORAMA Strategy (2021–2027) further strengthens ties by fostering long-term academic and scientific partnerships, including with South Africa.

The embassy engages Norwegian policymakers, parliamentarians, and think tanks to amplify South Africa's policy influence, particularly in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Norway's reputation as a neutral mediator provides opportunities for South Africa to advance dialogue on negotiated settlements and inclusive diplomacy. The mission also leverages Norway's participation in the Just Energy Transition Partnership, which channels climate-related funding into renewable projects that support green industrialization and inclusion. Beyond politics, the mission links South Africa to Nordic innovation ecosystems through partnerships in research, sustainability, and technology transfer.

Economic diplomacy is a priority, with collaboration focused on renewable energy (offshore wind, hydrogen, solar), the blue economy (fisheries, aquaculture, maritime logistics), and green minerals (sustainable mining and processing technologies). Norway's expertise in green technology and offshore engineering supports joint ventures with South African firms. In 2024, Norwegian exports to South Africa were valued at USD 117.9 million, while South Africa enjoyed a marginal trade surplus of R863 million. Norway's outward FDI stock of USD 11.7 billion presents opportunities for investment in South Africa's green and digital sectors. The embassy prioritises inclusive economic diplomacy by linking Black-owned, youth-led, and women-led enterprises with Norwegian markets, working with Brand South Africa, Wesgro, and the Black Business Council. Norfund has invested in South African renewable projects in partnership with Black-owned firms, supporting the Just Energy Transition and economic transformation. Investments by Norwegian companies such as Scatec have created jobs through renewable energy projects, while Norfund's funding of ANB Group in agriculture has generated over 2,200 permanent jobs and up to 6,000 seasonal jobs.

Soft diplomacy and people-to-people relations are also central to the mission's work. Initiatives include academic partnerships between universities in South Africa and Norway, participation in the PANORAMA Strategy, Mandela Day events, film festivals, and cultural exhibitions. The embassy supports South African students and diaspora networks in Norway, building mutual understanding and long-term goodwill beyond politics and trade. Consular services are

significant, with approximately 2,000 South Africans residing in Norway. Services include ID and passport applications, birth and death registrations, emergency travel certificates, and commissioner of oath duties. Between April and September 2025, the mission processed 510 immigration cases, including 257 visas and 178 study exchanges, alongside 238 civic services.

Operationally, the mission faces challenges in ICT and resource allocation. New desktops lack cooling systems, causing frequent malfunctions, while network access is slow and unreliable. Telephones are insufficient, impacting security and productivity, and the visa printer is outdated, forcing handwritten visas. Financial resources are limited, with no operational budget in 2024/25, leaving staff to finance promotional events themselves. Infrastructure is also constrained, with no state-owned properties and high rental costs in Oslo. Despite these challenges, asset management is strong, with 100% verification achieved in August 2025.

In conclusion, the Oslo Mission underscores Norway's strategic importance as a partner for South Africa in peacebuilding, renewable energy, maritime industries, and inclusive economic growth. While operational and resource challenges persist, the mission has successfully leveraged Norway's global reputation as a peace facilitator and leader in green technology to advance South Africa's domestic transformation agenda. By deepening cooperation in energy, innovation, and people-to-people ties, South Africa can consolidate its role as a trusted partner in the Nordic region and translate diplomatic relations into tangible outcomes that support sustainable development, job creation, and global governance reform.

29. Committee discussions

There was a strong emphasis on people-centered oversight, with the committee seeking to enhance communication channels between missions and parliament to address issues proactively, rather than reactively.

The committee recognized the importance of cultural diplomacy, maintaining South African heritage abroad, and leveraging multilateral forums for advancing national interests.

The committee sought information on educational and job opportunities for South Africans in Denmark.

Questions on property management and ICT echoed concerns about delays in renovations and outdated equipment.

The meeting ended with appreciation for the mission's efforts under difficult circumstances and a commitment from the committee to continue supporting and engaging with the mission to address outstanding issues, especially regarding budget, ICT modernization, and staffing.

30. Responses

The Missions noted that while there are no dedicated Department of Trade and Industry officials at some of the missions, they actively interface with DTI and other departments, and that support is generally forthcoming when needed. The ambassadors emphasized the importance of timely departmental responses, especially regarding critical matters like visa printers and the processing of civic documents, which sometimes face delays.

The ambassador highlighted ongoing programs, such as training for students in renewable energy and agriculture, and noted that the mission works to expand such opportunities, often in partnership with Danish institutions and companies. The Ambassador emphasized that the mission's role is to ensure South Africa's visibility and to facilitate access to opportunities for all, especially the youth and historically disadvantaged groups.

The South African mission in Denmark has made notable progress in strengthening bilateral relations, particularly through the Strategic Partnership Agreement, cooperation in sectors such as energy, water, agriculture, and education, and facilitating opportunities for South African businesses and students in Denmark.

The mission is actively working to promote economic diplomacy and ensure that emerging and previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs gain market access in Denmark, notably through wine promotion events and business seminars.

31. Oversight and Presentations by the embassy in Brussels

A detailed presentation from the Corporate Service Manager outlined the budget for 2024 and 2025-2026, indicating a planned increase of R300,000 for maintenance and staff compensation.

They expressed concerns about the inability to fill critical positions due to insufficient actual funding, despite having a budget on paper. Additionally, a condition assessment of state-owned properties revealed urgent refurbishment needs, with significant costs involved.

The mission outlined several operational challenges, including compliance with complex local laws that have resulted in lawsuits and tensions with labor organizations. The Mission emphasized difficulties in procurement due to a limited number of service providers and the inability to use cash for transactions, complicating the purchase of necessary items. Additionally, there are issues with financial management, including language barriers and tight reporting requirements.

The Mission outlined several challenges regarding furniture and property maintenance. The basement contains old furniture that officials refuse to use or dispose of, while the reduction in rental homes has led to issues with fitting existing furniture. Maintenance delays are exacerbated by the age of the chancellery, which has significant problems, including a failing roof.

The Science Attaché explained South Africa's longstanding scientific collaboration with the EU, emphasizing the importance of securing continued access to EU research funding. She discussed the risks of South Africa being required to contribute financially to future programs and the ongoing negotiations to maintain the current arrangementprovided an overview of South Africa's Science and Technology Cooperation with the EU, she highlighted the importance of the EU's science and technology cooperation for South Africa, noting that the country has accessed over R1 billion through programs like Horizon 2020. The funding supports various research areas aligned with national priorities, and South Africa is currently negotiating to maintain its access to EU funding amid discussions about potential changes to the framework program.

The Defence Attaché described the breadth of his responsibilities and highlighted the importance of bilateral defense cooperation and information sharing. He noted the challenge of working alone and the need for additional support. Heemphased the need to represent the South African National Defense Force in various international meetings. He furtheroutlined his duties, which include advising on defense equipment, facilitating classified information exchange, and maintaining relationships with defense industries in Belgium and the

Netherlands. Additionally, he mentioned their involvement in commemorating South African soldiers from past wars.

The Agriculture Attachéemphasized the role of the Agriculture Attache in sustaining markets and promoting investment opportunities while collaborating with countries affected by EU regulations, such as those concerning essential oils and the EU Green Deal. The mission expressed frustration over the lack of communication and support from provincial levels, which hampers their efforts to represent South Africa effectively. Additionally, the Mission noted the low participation of emerging farmers in trade fairs.

31.1 Committee Discussions

Members acknowledged the technical issues presented by the mission, particularly regarding ICT and staffing vacancies, and stressed the importance of addressing these challenges for improved efficiency. The Committee understood the frustrations of the diplomatic staff, advocating for a safer and more supportive work environment.

Members expressed appreciation for the staff's dedication under difficult circumstances. They emphasized the importance of addressing ICT and infrastructure challenges, improving interdepartmental responsiveness, and ensuring the safety and well-being of mission staff.

Specific questions were posed about employee health and wellness support.

Questions were raised about the duration of vacancies in key positions, such as the State Security Agency and Department of Trade and Industry.

Members asked whether ICT challenges posed security risks and requested further explanation of how staff shortages affected the mission's work.

Members responded by recognizing the strategic value of these partnerships and the necessity of government support for international research engagement.

Members inquired about the impact of these vacancies and infrastructure problems on the mission's effectiveness, seeking clarity on how these issues hindered progress and service delivery.

Members acknowledged these concerns, noting the broader issue of non-responsiveness from ministries and the need for more effective coordination to support economic diplomacy and small business development.

The meeting concluded with commitments from the committee to follow up on the issues raised, integrate these findings into oversight reports, and advocate for improved support and resources for South African missions abroad. The dialogue reflected a strong sense that the challenges impacted on the mission's effectiveness and staff welfare.

Clarity was sought on how long the State Security Agency and Department of Trade and Industry positions had been vacant.

There was a suggestion to consider evacuation plans for officials in Europe due to heightened risks, which was acknowledged as a critical need, especially given the current global climate.

31.2 Responses

The manager described infrastructure issues, such as the urgent need for building refurbishments and the limitations imposed by outdated assets and vehicles.

The Mission confirmed while some departments provide such services, others do not, highlighting a gap in support for those stationed abroad.

The Mission highlighted that ICT was indeed a major challenge, affecting operations and posing risks, while vacancies placed additional burdens on staff and hindered progress.

The response was that the DTI position had been vacant for more than five years, while the SSA position had been vacant for two years

31.3 Portfolio Committee Engagement with the LRPs

The Acting Chairperson introduced the delegation, emphasizing the importance of local support, while members acknowledged the contributions of local staff and the need for cultural understanding. The Chairperson outlined the delegation's objectives, which include engaging with locals to advocate for South African interests.

Staff members introduced themselves, highlighting their backgrounds and tenure at the Emabssy. Some have been with the Embassy for 36 years, while some have served for 40 years.

The staff at the South African mission in Belgium raised several challenges during the meeting. They highlighted that the workload has been very high in recent years, which has led to increased sick leave among both local and transferred staff. This heavy workload was described as a significant ongoing issue affecting their well-being and productivity.

Another major concern was the lack of a pension package for local staff upon retirement, unlike what is provided in South Africa. Staff questioned why such a benefit is not extended to them, given their long years of service. Additionally, there were complaints about non-compliance with local Belgian labor laws, particularly regarding remuneration and employment conditions. Staff reported that their concerns about labor law compliance had not been adequately addressed, despite involving unions and sending registered letters to South Africa without receiving a response.

Remuneration issues were further detailed, with staff noting that local laws governing pay and benefits are not always respected by the mission. There were also complaints about leave days not being handled properly. Another grievance was salary parity: staff who started many years ago receive the same salary as those who joined much later, despite having more experience and years of service.

Technical challenges were also mentioned, specifically that the computers provided are very slow, making it difficult for staff to perform their duties efficiently. Lastly, staff expressed a desire for the reinstatement of a policy that allowed local staff to visit South Africa for orientation, which they felt would help them better understand the country and their roles within the mission.

The Committee acknowledged these issues, assured staff that technical concerns were already noted, and encouraged open sharing of further information.

A specific request was made by staff for the reinstatement of a policy allowing local staff to visit South Africa for orientation and exposure, including a visit to Parliament, to better understand the country and its governance.

31.4 Meeting with the Belgian Flemish Parliamentarians

The Committee delegation was invited for a working lunch hosted by Members of the Belgian Flemish parliamentarians. The discussion quickly unveiled the hosts areas of interest in South Africa, with pointed questions why South Africa was in BRICS, and the views of the committee on the possibility of the Western Cape seeking to be autonomous. The Chairperson hastened to explain that South Africa has no intention of exiting the BRICS Formation as it resonates with its principles and values. As an organization, BRICS is going to stand the test of time through the geopolitical storms in its way. The issue of the Western Cape was addressed and strongly state that South Africa being a democratic country, anyone has a voice. However, those advocating for the autonomy of the Western Cape are free to fantasise about such a possibility, it remains a pipe dream, a wish that can never happen. There was great interest in the functioning of the GNU, including how various parties have come together to serve the people of South Africa. The luncheon went well.

32. Oversight visit to Embassy of South Africa to Netherlands

Clarity was sought on whether the Director General, Mr Zane Dangor, was formally notified of the serious health and safety risks posed by asbestos in the South African Consulate building in The Hague, and if there was any investigation and if so was there any action.

It was asked that although the Director General swiftly approved remote work and the search for temporary premises, how did this arrangement affect the civic, immigration, and consular services remotely, and how has this decision negatively affected South African nationals and other members of the public in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In view of the dilemma of the Mission's management faced in having to choose between protecting the health of staff and maintaining uninterrupted service delivery to the public, it was asked what interim solution was therefore implemented.

Clarity was sought on why it took until 6 November 2025 for Head Office to approve the acquisition of the very same temporary office accommodation that had already been identified by the Mission's Standing Committee and recommended to Head Office as far back as September 2025.

Clarity was sought on what outstanding administrative steps still prevent the Mission from signing the lease agreement for the approved temporary premises.

Beyond the asbestos crisis, what persistent IT connectivity problems continue to hamper the operations of the South African Mission in The Hague and does the missions have connectivity issues, shortcomings with desktops, laptops, and landline telephones.

Clarity was sought if the South African Mission in The Hague currently run any targeted public diplomacy or outreach programmes specifically aimed at Dutch youth, and does the Mission actively promote South African universities to Dutch students and institutions.

It was asked if there were any special facilitation measures the Mission provides for Dutch students applying for study visas to South Africa.

32.1 Responses

It was expressed that during October 2025, the Director General, Mr Zane Dangor, received a submission from the SA Mission in The Hague in which serious concerns were raised by staff about prevailing health and safety risks in the workplace. This followed the surfacing of a written report of an investigation that was conducted in 2016 that confirmed the prevalence of asbestos in the Consulate building.

The Ambassador highlighted staff's concerns about the risk to their health and that of unsuspecting members of the public who come to the office to receive civic, immigration and other consular services at the Mission. Furthermore, in the submission the Mission requested

approval for staff to work remotely effectively from 03 November 2025 and for the Head of Office to fast-track the acquisition of temporary office accommodation, as recommended by the Missions Standing Committee and supported by the Head of Mission in September 2025.

Grasping the severity of the situation, the DG granted approval for both requests. However, the unlimited consequence of the approval was that services to South African nationals living, working and/or studying in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and other members of the public requiring civic, immigration or other consular services would be negatively affected as the system would not allow for the remote services thereof.

Prior to the acquisition of temporary office accommodation, the matter presented a considerable moral challenge for the Mission's management in that it was being expected to make a choice between the health of the staff juxtapose the service delivery imperatives, recognizingthat the hazards to the health of staff could cause serious and costly litigation to the department. In light of the above, it was decided that a limited range of services to the public would be rendered from Official Residence, while putting pressure on the Head Office to fast-track the acquisition of temporary office accommodation where a full suite of services to South African nationals and other members of the public could be rendered without delay.

On Thursday 6 November 2025, the Mission received approval from Head office to proceed with the acquisition of temporary office accommodation identified by the Mission's Standing Committee and recommended to Head Office in September 2025.
It was noted that the Mission is now engaging with the Agent of the prospective Landlord to finalise matters relating to the vetting of the Lease Agreement by the office of the Chief State Law Advisor and the signing thereof.

It was expressed that Mission's IT system connectivity remained a significant challenge.

Challenges included both the hardware in the form of desktops and laptops as well as landline telephones being inefficient in South African Missions thereby creating a challenge for the members of the public in communicating with the Mission, that is excluding the Cisco line.

Another challenge that was highlighted is that the cellular phone that is being utilised to receive calls from civilians does not have the functions of an appropriate switchboard with the

capability to cue calls, thereby resulting in frustration over service by members of the public. Unfortunately, that situation negatively impacts on the image of the Mission.

It was said that the fundamental policy question ought to be directed to the DIRCO Head Office. It was expressed that an ideal Embassy is one with a complete staff establishment where all positions are filled, operating from a decent building, supported by an adequate budget to cover all the programmatic work of the Mission and ability to meet basic needs. In turn allowing for the transferred staff and LRP to wave the flag in front of the building with pride and determination.

The South African Mission in the Netherlands interacts with Dutch students at various Universities when invited to give presentations on various aspects of its Diplomatic work in the Netherlands. However, the Mission does not have targeted programmes focusing on Dutch youth due to budget constraints.

Working with South African Universities, the Mission promotes South African higher learning institutions as being among the best in the world.

The Mission always makes block time arrangements for Study Visas for Dutch students wishing to study in SA, appreciating that foreign students are a source of revenue for South African universities. However, there is a need for SA institution to not only allow such revenue raising opportunities to crowd out opportunities of South African students in need of admission placement.

33. Conclusions

33.1 There is a critical need to address the poor state of South Africa’s state owned diplomatic properties in Europe, as many are in disrepair, undermining the country's image and diplomatic effectiveness. The committee emphasised the urgency of improving asset management and speeding up responses to maintenance and disposal requests.

33.2 It was noted with concern that Ambassador Stone Sizani was absent for the oversight, and there was no official written apology from him to the Portfolio Committee. It was recalled that it was not the first time the Ambassador conducted himself in that manner, as he was absent

without an apology in 2023 when the Portfolio Committee conducted oversight at the South African Mission in Berlin where he is resident. The Portfolio Committee resolved to immediately bring the concern and displeasure to the attention of the DG and the Minister, that he be requested to explain himself and appropriate action be followed, while keeping the Portfolio Committee informed

33.3 ICT modernisation in missions is lagging, posing security risks and operational inefficiencies. The committee highlighted the need to prioritize and accelerate ICT upgrades, including addressing vulnerabilities that could expose sensitive information. The concern was that the Department has reported inconsistencies regarding progress on the implementation of the Digital strategy in the Missions abroad. The visited Missions reported chronic ICT environment challenges, resulting in the system's down time for long periods. The Department has reported that ICT modernisation project in the Missions was completed. However, it transpired from the engagements with the Missions in Europe that the ICT infrastructure is far from being optimal.

33.4 Budget constraints are severely impacting the missions' ability to fulfill their mandates, host diplomatic events, and maintain South Africa's international standing. The committee committed to engaging with National Treasury to align budget allocations with the missions' needs.

33.5 Staffing shortages and high vacancy rates are hampering the effectiveness of missions. The committee called for urgent action to fill in funded posts and review staffing policies.

33.6 The Committee stressed the importance of reciprocal visa arrangements with European countries and advocated for fairer, more accessible opportunities for South Africans, especially students and young professionals.

33.7 There is a need for better coordination among government departments, including State Security, Labour, and Higher Education, to maximise the benefits of international agreements, scholarships, and labour export opportunities.

33.8 The Committee reaffirmed its oversight role, pledging to ensure that Missions responses are not sanitized and that issues raised by missions are addressed directly and transparently.

33.9 Commendation was given to all the ambassadors that honoured the regional oversight call. Appreciation was further declared for those serving in conflict zones, particularly in Ukraine and Russia, for their dedication under challenging circumstances.

33.10 The Committee committed to ongoing engagement, practical follow-up, and support for missions, emphasizing that these meetings are foundational for continuous improvement and effective parliamentary oversight.

33.11 The Portfolio Committee resolved to institutionalise regional engagements, making them annual events to ensure continuous feedback and oversight. There was consensus on the need for better coordination between missions and Parliament, as well as with other government departments, to address challenges and capitalise on opportunities.

33.12 The consular section in most missions is under strain due to high service demand and limited resources, with issues like manual visa processing and insufficient ICT support hampering efficiency.

33.13 Missions reported facing many challenges including complex local labour laws; procurement difficulties due to limited-service providers, and financial management complications from language barriers.

33.14 There is also a lack of responsive support from departments in South Africa to the areas of cooperation identified by South Africa's Missions abroad.

33.15 The overall conclusion is that while the mission staff are dedicated and resilient, their effectiveness is undermined by structural, financial, and administrative obstacles that require urgent attention and coordinated intervention from both the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and other government stakeholders.

34. Recommendations

In order to further assist the Department with enhancing its performance, the Committee recommends that the Minister ensures that the Department implements the following and

reports to the Committee within one month of the adoption of this report by the National Assembly:

34.1 Ensure that structural, financial, and administrative obstacles that require urgent attention in the Missions abroad are addressed and provide a quarterly progress report on steps taken to remedy the impediments.

34.2 Initiate an investigation and consider appropriate measures into the conduct of Ambassador Stone Sezani, who absented himself from the Portfolio Committee's oversight to Europe without an official apology.

34.3 Expedite engagements with National Treasury to align budget allocations with the growing mandate and diplomatic service delivery needs of South Africa's Missions abroad. Budget constraints are severely impacting the missions' ability to fulfill their mandates.

34.4 Prioritise temporary relocation of all personnel from the state-owned properties used as offices for the Mission at the Hague because of an investigation that was conducted in 2016 that confirmed the prevalence of asbestos. Report in 30 days on progress in this regard.

34.5 Consider coordinating departments of Finance, State Security, Home Affairs, Trade, Education, Small Businesses, Labour, to maximize the benefits of international cooperation agreements, scholarships, and labour export opportunities as identified by South Africa's Missions abroad.

34.6 Collaborate with departments of Education and Public Service to work with Missions abroad for more accessible opportunities for South Africans, especially students and young professionals.

34.7 Provide a review and assessment of the implications of the end/cutting of Financial Support to SADC EPA unit by the European Union.

34.8 Provide a detailed report on how South Africa's Missions in Europe are facilitating cooperation between entities in their areas of accreditation with smmes and women and youth programmes/projects in pursuit of economic diplomacy.

34.9 Engage the Ministers of Basic and of Higher Education to consider the Switzerland's dual vocational training model regarded a hallmark of its education system, with nine years of compulsory schooling followed by a choice between academic and vocational routes. This model has been credited with producing a highly skilled workforce and could serve as a valuable reference for South Africa's own skills development initiatives. Provide an updated report on the action taken on the matter.

34.10 Ensure that issues raised by missions are addressed directly and transparently and submit a quarterly report on the progress made towards being responsive to their needs to support effectiveness.

34.11 Speed up responses to maintenance and disposal of unused assets requests to enable Missions to clear the old movable assets. Missions lack storage spaces and most of these assets are piled up in basement garages posing as fire hazards.

34.12 Engage the Minister of Home Affairs to pursue reciprocity in visa arrangements with countries whose nationals enjoy visa-free access to South Africa.

34.13 Submit a turnaround strategy responding and taking into consideration that the consular section in most missions is under strain due to high service demand and limited resources, with issues like manual visa processing and insufficient ICT support hampering efficiency.

34.14 Ensure the Office of the Chief State Law Adviser (IL) submits a turnaround strategy to approach contracts and conditions of employment of Locally Recruited Personnel (LRPs) regarding challenges with leave entitlements and retirement age local laws.

34.15 Consider urgently filling out funded posts and review staffing policies for Missions abroad. Shortages and high vacancy rate are hampering the effectiveness of missions.

34.16 Prioritise and accelerate ICT upgrades, including addressing vulnerabilities that could expose sensitive information in Missions abroad.

34.17 Account on the inconsistencies in reports from the Department to the Portfolio Committee regarding progress on the implementation of the Digital strategy in the Missions abroad. The visited Missions reported chronic ICT environment challenges, resulting in the system's down time for long periods.

34.18 Provide a comprehensive process detailing the ideal requirements for an embassy office, alongside a realistic assessment of the current resources available within the respective embassies.

To the Portfolio Committee

34.19 Formally report to the Speaker of Parliament the concerns regarding the conduct of South Africa's Ambassador to Germany, HE Stone Sizani, who did not honour the oversight call to account to the Committee on his work in furtherance of South Africa's Foreign Policy.

34.20 Engage with the Presidency to express the view that the conduct observed of Ambassador Sizani as indicated, does not meet the standards expected of a representative of South Africa's national interests abroad.

Report to be considered.