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International Relations Presentation: Draft Policy on Parliamentary Diplomacy

Date

Background and Context

- The 7th Parliament International participation locate its participation within the context of a rich legacy, knowledge and experience acquired over the past 30 years of democratic governance.
- Since its inception, the 7th Parliament had witnessed a broadened participation across the International fora our parliament is affiliated to, including the strategic International conferences that sought to profile the country's image and policy positions in pursuance of South Africa`s national interests through the soft power of parliamentary diplomacy.
- Suffice to say that South Africa`s International Relations Policy is conducted against the background of a dynamic domestic, regional, global political and economic environment, which at times characterised by geopolitical tensions in different parts of the world . In this light, the South African Parliament`s international engagement on policy content must support and reflect the values enshrined in the South African Constitution.
- These values also find expression in the aspirations of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 strategy, the Southern African Development Community Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (SADC RISDP), National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.



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Background and Context Cont...



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- Parliament Strategy places more demands on Parliament to deepen engagement at international fora and further prioritise the transformation of undemocratic institutions of global governance.
- The Parliamentary Group on International Relations provide coordination and governance of Parliaments international participation through the mandate of the Joint Rules of Parliament.
- The PGIR further provides policy and strategic direction on Parliament's international engagements, including its relations with other Parliaments and international parliamentary organisations;
- It Coordinates Parliament's international engagements, including its relations with other Parliaments and membership of, and participation in international parliamentary organisations;
- PGIR Operational Guidelines and Policy Perspectives places responsibility on Members to represent Parliament participation in all international Foras in the spirit of implementing the policy of the PGIR.



Draft on Parliamentary Diplomacy



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- The 7th administration had undertaken to operationalize the implementation of its priorities through the development of a draft policy on parliamentary diplomacy.
- The objective of the policy is to provide an overarching strategy for South Africa's parliamentary diplomacy in line with the country's legislative framework and national interests.
- Facilitate a coordinated and strategic approach to parliamentary diplomacy at both political and administrative level with the South African Legislative Sector.
- Articulate how South Africa's influence and stature on the international stage can be enhanced through active participation in bilateral and multilateral parliamentary diplomacy.
- Facilitate economic diplomacy that prioritizes African-led development, the restructuring of global financial systems, the promotion of trade policies that empower the Global South.



Draft on Parliamentary Diplomacy Cont...



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- Recognizes the evolving role of parliamentary diplomacy in global politics and its significance in advancing South Africa's national interests. This policy establishes a framework for the South African Parliament's engagement in International Affairs.
- This policy further recognizes Parliament's unique role in shaping the multipolar world order that prioritizes Africa sovereignty, economic self-sufficiency, and self-determined development.
- Parliamentary diplomacy must not only support existing executive foreign policy, but it must actively challenge global structures that perpetuate economic dependency, inequality and marginalization of African States including the reform of institutions' global governance.



Priorities of the Draft Policy on Parliamentary Diplomacy



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Through parliamentary diplomacy, Parliament aim to:

(i) Strengthen its domestic constitutional mandates of law-making and oversight

(ii) Complement the efforts of the executive branch by promoting South Africa`s foreign policy objectives, constitutional values and national interests in the sphere of legislatures

(iii) Strengthen collaboration with other parliaments and international parliamentary institutions to advance issues of common interests

(iv) Strengthen Africa`s voice in global governance, by ensuring that Africa is not merely a participant but a decision-maker in international affairs and

(v) Exercise parliamentary independency to ensure that Parliament does not merely validate the executive`s foreign policy, but critically shapes it in alignment with pro-poor, Pan African, and pro-sovereignty principles.

It is important to note that this policy distinguishes parliamentary diplomacy from Parliament`s traditional role in international relations, which primarily involves overseeing the implementation of South Africa`s foreign policy through parliamentary Committees.

Promoting and Protecting of National Interests through Parliamentary Diplomacy



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- Chapter 7 of the National Development Plan argues that South Africa`s evolving international engagement is based on two central tenets, Pan-Africanism and South-South Solidarity. It further notes that South Africa`s evolving international relations work must endeavour to shape and strengthen national identity, cultivate national pride and patriotism to ensure social cohesion and stability, and grow the economy for the development and upliftment of all South Africans.
- **It is against this backdrop that, Parliament`s mandate and conduct of international relations will reflect the objectives expressed in these key policy documents of the state and posture its participation towards the attainment of such policy imperatives.**
- Essentially this means protecting, (i) national sovereignty and constitutional order (ii) safety and security of all South African citizens (iii) Well-being, Human Security and Human Development (iv) Economic Prosperity (v) A better Africa and world (vi) Principle of Anti-Colonial Resistance and African Self Determination: Unsure the principle of actively challenging global economic and political structures that perpetuate African underdevelopment by rejecting all forms of economic coercion, advocating for the comprehensive restructuring of international institutions.



Integrating the Policy Framework into Parliamentary Diplomacy Principles and Activities



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Informed by these core National Interests, South Africa's parliamentary diplomacy is based on the following principles:

- **Complementarity:** In the spirit of complementarity, South Africa's parliamentary diplomacy operates in harmony with the executive branch. Efforts are aligned with South Africa's Constitution, National Interests, and national development goals, ensuring a cohesive approach that represents South Africa's unified stance on international matters.
- **A better Africa and world:** South Africa is seen as an influential player on the continent and in the world. It is a member of the G20 and BRICS, as well as in the top 10 strategic partners of the European Union. This positioning enables the South African Parliament to increase the voice and representation of Africa in all global bodies. Through international parliamentary platforms, delegations of Parliament can use their access and influence to include African and developing world views and interests on global agendas. Also, to actively contribute to building a multipolar world by prioritising strategic alliances within the Global South, particularly through BRICS, AfCFTA, and the African Union.



Principles Cont...

- **Norm-setting:** This entails Parliament promoting South Africa's constitutional values, interests, and legislative frameworks through various applicable methods at parliamentary diplomacy engagements. It also includes promoting democratic electoral processes through its participation in election observation missions, underscoring its dedication to advancing free, fair and transparent democratic practices in Africa and beyond.
- **Strategic engagement and interaction:** This principle emphasises Parliament's active involvement in international forums, capacity-building events, and bilateral meetings with existing and potential strategic partners. Engagement will be based on the promotion of respect for international law, human rights, democracy, and social justice at regional and international levels, showcasing South Africa's commitment to fostering stability and cooperation on the global stage.
- **Capacity Building:** South Africa must continually invest in the development and support of parliamentarians and staff. Through knowledge exchange with parliamentarians and staff from other countries, South Africa seeks to enhance its domestic parliamentary mandates and contribute effectively to international dialogues, initiatives, and parliamentary best practices.



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Key Operational Activities on Policy Implementation

South Africa's approach to parliamentary diplomacy involves key strategies, including bilateral parliamentary exchanges, engagement at IPI, collaborative legislative endeavours, capacity-building activities, and utilising diplomatic channels to advance international and domestic objectives.

External Activities:

- Delegation proposing persuasive motions for resolution or suggesting amendments to draft resolutions that reflect South Africa's constitutional values and pursuit of democratic principles, social justice, and human rights.
- Participating in international conferences, seminars, and workshops to promote, dialogue, share best practices, and build networks with parliamentarians from other countries.
- Contribute to conflict resolution through parliamentary engagement
- Delegations contributing to the development of international and regional guiding documents, notably model laws, that reflect South Africa's values and interests.
- Inclusion of parliamentarians in executive delegations to selected UN meetings to enhance their understanding of UN activities and monitor the implementation of UN decisions by Member states.
- Forging new strategic bilateral partnerships to advance South Africa's interest and enhance collaboration at the multilateral level.



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Mechanisms to Equip Members to be formidable



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- ***The International Relations and Protocol Division (IRPD)***: The IRPD serves as the central administrative hub of Parliament's international relations, providing logistic, protocol and ceremonial, and content-based support and guidance for Parliament's diplomatic engagements.
- To support the PGIR towards strategic parliamentary diplomacy, the IRPD provides various content-related services to support delegations in conducting strategic parliamentary diplomacy that aligns with South Africa's national interest.
- The policy outlines the following mechanisms to equip Members as key players and actors on the implementation of parliamentary diplomacy:
- Submission of delegation reports, decisions, resolutions, and other policy-guiding documents produced through parliamentary diplomacy to the committee system, where legislative and oversight powers reside.
- Strengthening relations through regular engagements with key stakeholders, including
- Fostering a collaborative relationship between the Parliamentary Group on International Relations (PGIR) and parliamentary committees through streamlined information-sharing and engagement.



Mechanisms to Equip Members Cont...

- Strategic engagement involving the PGIR, key committee chairpersons, and Presiding Officers for periodic strategy development and review.
- Establishing appropriate sub-bodies under the PGIR to coordinate and liaise on inter-parliamentary activities and subsequent national parliamentary work.
- Periodic engagement between the PGIR and non-state actors on international policy questions to involve public participation in Parliament's diplomatic work.
- Develop clear areas of focus for any formal bilateral agreement with accompanying plans of action.
- Develop a training manual to ensure members are well-informed about the significance and modalities of international engagements.
- Implement continuous capacity building initiatives for parliamentarians and staff involved in international relations. This may include includes seminars, webinars, training programs, workshops, and exchange programs with other parliaments to enhance their competencies and effectiveness.
- Utilise digital tools and platforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy. This includes conducting virtual meetings, using online collaboration tools, and maintaining a digital platform for easy access to documents and delegation reports.



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Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- The policy on parliamentary diplomacy further establishes a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to monitor the progress and impact of parliamentary diplomacy initiatives. The mechanism involves submission of regular reports, and adjustments to the strategy as necessary. The framework shall specifically measure the impact of parliamentary diplomacy, including economic benefits, Africa`s leadership in global governance. Ensuring that parliamentary diplomacy is performative and yield tangible results in strengthening African sovereignty and self-sufficiency.
- During the July meeting of the Parliamentary Group in International Relations, the Speaker of the National Assembly addressed the meeting and brought the following policy matter to the attention of Members of the Committee;
 - PGIR needs to reflect on what its role should be in enabling Parliament to fully align with issues of International Relations,
 - PGIR should be the forum to craft such a policy on how respective parties represent parliament with other parliaments and when they are not representing parliament, of which she noted that there is currently no framework in place to guide



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Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Cont...

- The PGIR should not merely be processing reports. Reports do not only come from the IR Division and Committees but also from the Executive and the Judiciary, our administrative reports require increased research capabilities so that we have sufficient time to analyse matters across platforms-not all Members are seized with matters taking place within all the forums and that should lead to reports being agreed to in the House without the full comprehension about what is being agreed to.
- Another matter for consideration is the area for friendship groups, who decides on which friendship groups and what the understanding behind it. How are the friendship group committees supported and what content drives it. This requires a policy
- The Speaker further noted that many parliamentary committees travel and there should be an interface with PGIR to provide guidance and direction
- Basic protocol issues and understanding of diplomacy for members were raised. The Speaker referred to certain standards of etiquette that must be adhered to Internationally. The PGIR should enable members to receive adequate training and invite Ambassadors to come on board to strengthen this area.
- The Speaker ended by noting that overall the PGIR should close gaps in policy where there is no framework in place to deal with international issues to guide all members of parliament. Tracking decisions directed at committees must also end up in the house. Debates must find their way to plenaries and not just be published in the ATC.



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