

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY L N SISULU, MP, MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (SAIIA)

JOHANNESBURG, 3 APRIL 2019

“Representing Africa in the World: Setting Priorities for South Africa’s Third Term in the UN Security Council”

Moderator,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad for this opportunity to finally formally make your acquaintance. We have had an extremely difficult schedule since our mid-term re-arrangement of government, so it has been a rough ride for us. But we are here now and I hope we can establish a relationship where we can further consolidate our partnership and where we can benefit from this platform as we navigate treacherous waters or as we might need to explain difficult decisions we have taken or are faced with daunting challenges such as the matter of our relations with our neighbours. We would like to have a relationship with yourselves that enables us to tap into the resource that you are.

For today you have asked me to address you on our third term at the UNSC. We feel particularly privileged to hold this position at this time and even if I to say it myself, this is one area I feel confident to say we are doing well so far, but that will be for you to judge.

We hold our non-permanent seat on the basis of a request to the African Union to allow us to hold the seat. We have the experience; we have the profile; and in the year of Madiba’s 100th anniversary it would be a fitting tribute to him, for us to use our position to cement his values of Human Rights and to use that position to fight for reforms of the Institution and ensure that all the values he stood for are ingrained in the culture of all peace loving nations.

Our candidature was endorsed by the AU. That is a confidence boost we do not take for granted. What this means is that we are constantly conscious of our responsibility towards the continent. We have our own strong views on most of the matters under consideration, but we are sensitive to the fact that we represent more than ourselves and this can be a difficult balancing act. But we have managed it very well. We have created a very strong lobby group in New York among the African diplomats and they played a significant role in the support we received and continue to receive. That well knit, informed network of our African diplomats provides us with the confidence and support we need. It has emboldened us. I must say I am very proud of our posture at the Security Council, except for the glitch on Myanmar, which I’ll return to later in the discussion.

On June 8, 2018 South Africa was elected by 183 votes to serve in the UNSC Non-Permanent Seat for 2019-2020 tenure. The increased number of votes for South Africa was a signal of confidence by the International Community. This heralded a New Dawn in South Africa’s diplomacy, it provided an opportunity for a recalibrated engagement with other nations of the world. We began our two-year term as an elected member of the United Nations Security Council on 1 January this year.

We took the opportunity in September last year to use our status as observers to attend meetings of the Council, even though it was not necessary. We did it to introduce ourselves and to show that we have a hands on approach to our work.

South Africa's position in the Security Council reflects our founding principles; values and pillars anchoring our foreign policy including:

- Our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, including political, economic, social and environmental rights;
- Promotion of democracy as an important impetus to finding lasting solutions to the problems of humankind;
- Respect for international law that should guide the conduct of relations between states;
- Commitment to international peace and the utilisation of internationally agreed nonviolent and non-interference mechanisms to resolve conflicts; which is also based on Article 2 of the United Nations Charter confirming that: "The Organisation is based on the principle of sovereign equality of all its members, and all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purpose of the United Nations".
- Commitment to pursue economic development through regional and international economic cooperation in a just and interdependent world.

To cement the principles outlined above, I would like to state our objectives for the two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC:

- a. Continuing the legacy of Nelson Mandela – working for a just and peaceful world and a peaceful Africa, where all can live in liberty, protected by just laws.
- b. To achieve this, South Africa upholds in the strongest terms the principles of the UN Charter without bias toward any country.
- c. We support the peaceful resolution of conflicts, with a focus on prevention, the utilization of mediation approaches, and the promotion of inclusive dialogue. As such South Africa vociferously advocates for all parties at the negotiating table at any negotiating forum to ensure the participation of women.
- d. South Africa operates within a rules based multilateral system, this is a key principle of our engagements and a fundamental foundation of our tenure. It is important that the rules are upheld and applied to all and by all. In this regard, we are concerned about the increased threat to multilateralism.
- e. Our objectives are also deeply rooted in the African Unions aspirations as we work towards the achievement of the AU's silencing the guns on the African continent by 2020 and agenda 2063.

This year marks the third time in twelve years that we will have the privilege and opportunity to boldly serve the people of our country, Africa and the world on the premier international body tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security.

South Africa's first tenure as an elected member of the United Nations Security Council commenced on 1 January 2007 and ended on 31 December 2008. The candidacy of our country was endorsed by the Africa Group and South Africa was elected unopposed onto the Council by the UN membership, securing the highest number of recorded votes during the election (186 votes in favour). That should show you the confidence the world has in us.

Our primary objective then was to contribute to the resolution of conflicts and stabilisation of post-conflict situations on the African continent. South Africa also actively engaged on all issues on the Security Council's agenda pursuant to the global mandate associated with Council membership. Despite its lack of experience and institutional knowledge then, South Africa registered significant successes in this first tenure, both in terms of the substantive issues on the agenda of the Security Council and in refining its working methods. South Africa achieved leadership positions and also influenced a large number of Council outcomes in diverse areas. We created the most active elected delegations in the Security Council on virtually all the issues on the Council's agenda. That energy has been rekindled.

Like other elected members, we were sometimes powerless to help address the most serious challenges to the Security Council's credibility brought about by the double standards of its permanent members in responding, or failing to respond, to crises in different parts of the world as their own national interest defined. These experiences, which are not unique, have driven us to make the demand that the Security Council is an institution in urgent need of comprehensive reform that addresses both Council expansion and representivity and reform of its working methods.

In 2005, a few months before the UN World Summit, Africans gathered in Ezulwini, a small town of eSwatini, and adopted the "Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations" – now commonly known as the "Ezulwini Consensus". The Ezulwini Consensus was endorsed by the African Union Summit in Sirte, Libya, which adopted the "Sirte Declaration and [Draft] Resolution to the General Assembly on the Reform of the United Nations."

The Ezulwini Consensus is clear on the "demands" of Africa with regard to Security Council reform, which calls for a minimum of two seats in the permanent category to be given to Africa, and further calls for Africa to occupy five seats in the non-permanent category. Regarding the issue of the veto, the Ezulwini Consensus calls for its abolishment, but it goes on to say that in case that it is not possible, Africa demands that it should receive all privileges enjoyed by other permanent members.

The Ezulwini Consensus is informed by the need for Africa to claim its place in the permanent category of the Security Council as the principal structure of decision-making in the area of peace and security. When the Security Council was constituted in 1945, almost all of Africa was under the yoke of colonialism and oppression. Only a few member states from the Continent were part of the San Francisco Conference namely, South Africa, Egypt and Liberia.

We have recently steadfastly moved to resolve this matter. We stand by this and use every avenue available to put our views and position across as we strive towards our ideals as encapsulated in the consensus.

We have learnt a great deal from our past – our successes and our failures. We have resolved many problems in this period with the power given to us in the UNSC. There has been a nagging negative commentary about our tenure, especially from the Western States and their media and the commentary runs that in this period South Africa 'squandered its moral authority' in the Security Council and undermined its Human Rights ethos. In their view, South Africa's positions on Zimbabwe

and Myanmar seemed difficult to reconcile with the South African Constitution and the country's national values.

On Zimbabwe, as you no doubt know, South Africa believed that the Western countries, led by the United Kingdom wished to "undermine" regional efforts pursued by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the AU, including the South African-led facilitation process. Like in the case of Myanmar, the European members with the support of the USA favoured punitive measures against the government in Zimbabwe and did not fully endorse constructive dialogue as a long-term solution.

The commentary also included our position on Myanmar, which was one of the most highly divisive subjects of the UNSC during 2007/8. South Africa voted against a resolution tabled by the Western countries in the Council condemning the human rights situation in the country. South Africa's conviction and argument was that the Resolution would have compromised the "good offices" of the Secretary-General who was charged with dealing with the sensitive matters of peace, security and human rights in that country. We also argued that the Resolution put out on Myanmar dealt with issues that would be best left to the Human Rights Council. South Africa also argued that the resolution did not meet the Charter mandate conferred upon the Security Council, which is to deal with matters that are a threat to international peace and security.

But here is what is important. The key success during South Africa's first term was that the country was particularly instrumental in helping to revitalise the debate on the relationship between the UN and regional organisations. Former President Mbeki hosted the Security Council Summit on the relationship between the AU and the UN on 16 April 2008, the result of which was the unanimous adoption of Resolution 1809 (2007). This Resolution recognised the need to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing regional organizations when they undertake peacekeeping under a United Nations mandate. The Resolution called upon the Secretary-General to set up a high-level panel of UN and AU distinguished persons, to make specific proposals on how to improve the effectiveness of the cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations, including in matters of financing and training.

Other notable achievements by South Africa included:

§ The co-leadership of the Security Council Mission to Africa with the United Kingdom (breaking the tradition that only developed countries could lead Council delegations)

§ Drawing attention to the role of women in peace and security. South Africa successfully proposed the first ever Presidential Statement (PRST) on the role of women in the maintenance of international peace and security to mark International Women's Day. South Africa also actively supported the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) on Women, Peace and Security focusing on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

§ South Africa took the lead on the issue of addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and hosted a thematic debate on the issue during each of its two Presidencies of the Council. South Africa also secured the adoption of a Presidential Statement on the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons

We are very proud of our achievements and our positions. It increased our international standing substantially and we still look back in the glory of that success. This was South Africa's golden age in foreign relations.

South Africa's second tenure in the Council (2011 tot 2012) was building upon its experience during its previous term, aimed at contributing to achieving peace and stability on the African continent and in all the regions of the world.

South Africa influenced a large number of the Council's outcomes and actively engaged on all issues on the Security Council's agenda pursuant to the global mandate associated with its membership. South Africa's leadership role made significant contribution to the work of the Council on African issues particularly on Sudan/South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Somalia, DRC, and Mali and its position on the Middle East and Western Sahara is well recognised.

Arguably the most controversial decision during South Africa's second tenure was the vote in favour of Resolution 1973(2011). The vote was taken in the midst of the political uprisings in the Middle East (commonly referred to as the 'Arab Spring'). The Resolution authorised "all military means" to protect civilians in Libya. The Resolution was adopted by ten countries in favour, none against and five abstentions. All of South the three African countries serving on the Council, South Africa, Nigeria and Gabon voted in favour of the Resolution.

NATO instead used the Resolution to legitimise a military bombing campaign in Libya. This unchecked use of force by NATO resulted in providing air support to a Libyan revolutionary movement on the ground as well as arming civilians and transforming them into combatants. This approach by NATO and the calls for regime change by Western Capitals emboldened the revolutionaries to the extent that it prevented any viable chance for negotiations.

The subsequent bombing campaign by NATO ran contrary to the concerted efforts of the African Union through its Ad-Hoc High-Level Committee (of which South Africa is part of). The resultant change of regime by the military campaign also undermined the AU's Constitutive Act which sought to prevent the unconstitutional change of governments of its Member States.

I have taken a long time laying out the typography so that you understand the space that we occupy and that determines our posture right now.

We are in our third term. We have learnt from our mistakes and our less publicised successes. The questions we are often asked are why have we chosen to put forward our candidature for the Security Council. This I have already explained to you. What do we hope to achieve? What contribution can we make? The most common question that is posed is: why bother? Why bother expanding time and resources to serve on the Security Council.

Countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean who were formally under colonial occupation have become independent. We have seen the world been through the cold war. We have seen the end of the brutal system of Apartheid. We have seen the emergence of regional bodies such as the African Union and the European Union. Throughout all this time, the United Nations has remained at the centre of global politics as the standard bearer for collective multilateral action to address changing global challenges.

I have elaborated on our contribution in the past two terms. We are determined to do better with the advantage of experience. We all know the value that the United Nations can bring. Almost from the beginning of its existence in 1945, the UN was at the forefront of highlighting the struggle of South Africans against racial segregation. This international solidarity greatly contributed to our freedom. The world today faces even more pressing threats including rising nationalist sentiments and growing unilateralism. International agreements are sidelined to pursue selfish national interests.

It has become all the more necessary for those countries that want to see a better world for all to work collectively to address contemporary challenges such as peace and security and development and all of those matters that affect all of us.

Since 1994, South Africa has committed itself to this collective ideal by working with and often leading multilateral organisations. We have chaired the African Union, SADC, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and served on a myriad of multilateral bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the Security Council, to name a few. We do this, because we wholeheartedly believe in the value of nations working together for a common destiny.

We put forward our candidature to serve on the Security Council because we believe that due to our experience over the last 25 years in contributing to peace and security on the Continent and globally, we can make a positive contribution to the work of the Security Council. We put forward our candidature because 60% of the matters discussed concern us as African countries or countries that are undergoing the same challenges we have experienced.

We also believe that South Africa's tenure at the United Nations Security Council would contribute to a better South Africa, contribute to a better and safer Africa in a better world. South Africa's own history, fight against colonialism and Apartheid and the progress we have made to build a better South Africa remain important departure points for any South African contributions at the Security Council. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranks South Africa first out of 54 African countries on the following:

- Representation of women in the judiciary
- Protection against ethnic and religious discrimination
- Capacity of election monitoring agencies.

The Good Country Index of 2017 in terms of International Peace & Security rated South Africa 15 out of 125 in 2014 and second (2nd) out of 163 in 2017. From the results it is clear that South Africa makes a major contribution in the realm of International Peace & Security by ranking second. We intend to do even better.

We have chosen for our tenure the theme, "Continuing the Legacy: Working for a Just and Peaceful World". We will utilise our membership of the Security Council to place emphasis on and prioritise the importance of women, peace and security. This we have indicated is one of our priorities and we were happy to have Germany, and most countries, especially those whose Foreign Ministers are women, endorse this position. We will pursue it vigorously, including holding a debate on the matter during our Presidency of the Security Council in October 2019. We will ensure that the debate is streamed live in South Africa.

Next year will mark the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which was spearheaded by our neighbour Namibia, during their term on the Security Council in the year 2000. Through Resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions, the UN created a political framework that officially mandates a gender responsive approach to all aspects of peace and security work. Despite the commitments in this resolution, women remain excluded within peace processes, including in the drafting of peace agreements, and their involvement in United Nations peacekeeping is limited.

In addition, the contribution of women and girls to the peace-building process remains undervalued and under-resourced, leaving a vital tool regarding transformative change and sustainable peace

underutilised. Women and girls who continue to be disproportionately affected by conflict situations, especially with regard to sexual abuse and violence would be a vital contribution in ensuring peace holds. It is clear that the effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda directly contributes to the objective of long-term global peace and security. Thus, it is of particular priority for us to mainstream issues related to women into all the issues on the agenda of the Security Council.

South Africa's international contributions have been bolstered by our efforts at home. The International School of the DIRCO Diplomatic Academy has capacitated more than 500 women (South African and African) on conflict resolution, negotiation and mediation addressing the mistaken notion that there are not women with knowledge and experience to lead and participate in peace processes. We have also launched the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum, as a policy vehicle on women, peace and security for women to share their ideas and experience and to make inputs into local, regional and international policies related to peace and security. This idea and the network of women have been emulated by others to form the Nordic, Femwise (Africa), Mediterranean, Commonwealth and other Women Mediation Networks.

As you are aware, in 2020, South Africa will Chair the African Union. Serving on the Security Council at the same time will allow us an opportunity to emphasise closer cooperation between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union. As part of the May 2013 Solemn Declaration marking the AU's 50th anniversary, the AU Heads of State and Government adopted the programme for silencing the guns by 2020. Our Chairship of the AU while serving on the UN Security Council will be an opportunity for us to work towards the achievement of this aspiration. We must silence the guns, there must be peace, that without which everything else is compromised.

We have served a little over three months in our current term on the Council. During this time the Council has dealt with issues ranging from Somalia, the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, the Western Sahara, Palestine, Syria, Yemen and Venezuela. South Africa participated in all these deliberations and engaged actively in the work of the Council. We have perfected our systems and can assure you our presence is palpable. We might not have the power of veto, but our voice is strong and our moral authority is back.

I wish to use this opportunity to reflect on some of the key issues that we have dealt with in this brief period of our current tenure. On the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa welcomed the peaceful holding of the elections and we commended the Congolese people and political actors for the conduct of the elections, which saw broad and inclusive participation of political parties. We have called on the members of the Security Council to reiterate their continued support and commitment, in collaboration with regional actors and international partners, for the consolidation of peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, we fully supported the mandate renewal of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), of which we are part of, to ensure long-term peace and stability in the country.

Regarding events in Venezuela, South Africa has maintained its principled position of calling for non-interference in the internal processes of Venezuela. We have argued that interference in a sovereign state should not be used as a tool for unconstitutional regime changes. South Africa's approach to Venezuela was premised on support for inclusive political dialogue to resolve the political crisis in the country, and to support any legitimate efforts to provide humanitarian support to alleviate the hardship experienced by the people of Venezuela. In this regard, we have emphasised that humanitarian aid should be de-politicised to ensure that it reaches those in need and that the UN needs to take a lead in ensuring that the will of the people is guaranteed without interference.

On the issue of Palestine, South Africa has reiterated grave concern about the continued disregard for the prevailing and long standing Middle East Peace Process and attempts to prejudge final status issues particularly with regard to the borders, and the status of Jerusalem through unilateral actions. The situation between Israel and Palestine is one of the oldest issues on the Security Council's agenda. It is one of the only issues that the Council has been meeting monthly on for several years. However, little or no action is taken by the Council primarily because of the US veto.

The Council has over the years adopted several landmark resolutions on the matter including, under the 'land for peace' formulation, Resolutions 338 and 242 (upon which the moribund peace process is based). These Resolutions require that Israel should withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967 in exchange for comprehensive peace and recognition from its Arab neighbours.

Our position on the matter of Israel has been very clearly expressed by the ruling party and also our public statements on the occasion of the shooting of protestors in Gaza last year. We immediately recalled our Ambassador for consultation and demarched the Israeli Ambassador to South Africa. We are in the process of following the downgrade resolution of the ruling party and stage one has been completed. Our Ambassador is back in South Africa and we will not be replacing him. Our liaison office in Tel Aviv will have no political mandate, no trade mandate and no development cooperation mandate. It will not be responsible for trade and commercial activities. The focus of the Liaison Office would be on consular and the facilitation of people-to-people relations.

On Syria, South Africa encourages dialogue, and has consistently called upon the parties to pursue a political solution, and support a political settlement of the Syrian issue. South Africa thus believes that the only sustainable solution to the Syrian question remains the achievement of a political solution through an inclusive Syrian-led dialogue aimed at achieving a political transition reflective of the will of the Syrian people with guaranteed protection for all groups in Syrian society.

The issue of Myanmar is currently being deal with by both the UN Security Council and the Human Rights Council. The conflict in Myanmar, a predominately Buddhist country, is characterised by sectarian violence between the Rakhine Buddhist and Rohingya Muslim communities. The Rohingya, who numbered around one million in Myanmar in 2017, are one of the many ethnic minorities in the country. Rohingya Muslims, are the largest percentage of Muslims in Myanmar, with the majority living in Rakhine state.

Current issues in Myanmar include the denial of citizenship to the Rohingya communities viewing them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and have previously been excluded from the 2014 census. The Rohingya have migrated across the region in significant numbers since the 1970's with their numbers estimated much higher than official figures. Prior to the current crisis, thousands of the Rohingya made perilous journeys out of Myanmar to escape communal violence and alleged abuses by the security forces.

In November 2018, South Africa abstained on a resolution on Myanmar in the Third Committee (which deals with human rights and humanitarian issues). This resolution condemned the Myanmar military for its atrocities against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority, and demanded an independent investigation into these human rights abuses. A majority of 142 nations backed the resolution. Only 10 voted against and 26 abstained. A key stated justification for South Africa's position was that thus far, the matter should be dealt with by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva rather than the UN General Assembly in New York.



South Africa's abstention on the aforementioned Third Committee Resolution was however reversed when the matter came up for a vote in the General Assembly in December 2018 and South Africa voted in favour of the resolution.

In investigating the matter it was clear that South Africa's stance on the matter, that the 'old principle' of automatically voting against country-specific human rights policies to guard against regime change was now obsolete and it was agreed that henceforth the Minister and her senior officials would review every vote of this nature before it was cast. South Africa remains on guard at all times to ensure that votes on country-specific human rights resolutions are not used to engage in regime changes and destabilise countries.

These are but a few of the issues we have dealt with in the last few months. As you will notice, our approach, while recognising the specificities of each individual conflict, has been to advocate for inclusive political dialogue leading to a lasting solution. It has been clear from conflicts that have festered for decades that short-term coercive measures that ignore elements of society will not lead to long-term peace.

South Africa's experience on the Security Council has once again proven to us the fundamental need for the reform of the Council and the expansion of its membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories to ensure legitimacy and credibility of this vital UN Organ.

In responding to an ever-changing world, the Council cannot remain static and must adapt to ensure greater legitimacy and effectiveness. While reform is not discussed in the Security Council itself as it is a matter dealt with by the wider membership in the General Assembly, South Africa is determined to work towards the improvement of the working methods of the Council to ensure that it is transparent and accountable, thereby ensuring greater effectiveness and legitimacy for its work.

As I conclude, I can assure you that South Africa will not be a bystander in the Council. Within the inherent constraints of the Council, we will strive to make a positive and significant contribution to the international community's efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts the world over based on our foreign policy objectives.

I thank you.