

Public lecture by HE Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation

SAIIA, Head Office

3 April 2019

On Wednesday, 3 April, SAIIA hosted the Minister of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, at its head office in Johannesburg on the topic “Representing Africa in the World: Setting Priorities for South Africa’s Foreign Policy”.

The public lecture provided an opportunity for members of the public, including SAIIA’s diplomatic, corporate and individual members, to interact openly with the minister on a variety of issues relating to foreign policy. The minister indicated that public outreach of this nature played an important role in making sure that South Africa’s foreign policy was inclusive and the product of robust citizen-engagement.

[In her speech, the Minister unpacked some of the lessons learnt](#) from South Africa’s previous terms in the UN Security Council (UNSC). She clarified that the decision to support Resolution 1973 on Libya was done so in concert with Nigeria and the African Union, and that the extension of the mandate by NATO was not anticipated at the time. She also spoke of the lesson learnt from a controversial decision on Myanmar that confronted South Africa during its first term in the Security Council. On this issue, Minister Sisulu announced a notable departure from previous positions: South Africa is now considering each resolution at home when deciding how to vote at the UNSC. Previously it opted to abstain from country-specific resolutions in line with the decision of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Minister Sisulu also took a number of questions from the floor. Some of the important issues that were raised included:

- South Africa’s tenure in the UN Security Council is encapsulated as an agenda for continuing the legacy of Nelson Mandela by pursuing peace and prosperity for Africa. The Minister underscored South Africa’s intention to advocate for greater gender parity and representation in its work on the council. As such, the theme of Women, Peace and Security, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary in the UN next year, is strongly supported by South Africa.
- The decision by South Africa to withdraw its Ambassador from Israel and maintain only a Liaison Office in that country is the first move in a concerted plan to downgrade its relationship with Israel. The decision comes as the Government seeks to align its policies with that of the African National Congress as it pertains to this issue.
- In responding to a question from the floor probing how South Africa navigated balancing the need to intervene to avert crises with the issue of state sovereignty, the Minister told the gathering that while South Africa’s decisions frequently turned on issues of a technical nature, the government was sensitive to the issue of sovereignty. In using South Africa’s position on Venezuela to illustrate this point, she indicated that South Africa preferred for a UN intervention to focus on creating ripe conditions for a negotiated settlement of the dispute from within the country and all its stakeholders.
- Minister also made public remarks around the recurrent attacks on foreign nationals taking place in South Africa. While refraining from calling it “xenophobia”, the Minister nevertheless condemned the violence in the strongest terms and informed the gathering of DIRCO’s ongoing efforts to engage all stakeholders – including diplomats from Africa – on the issue.
- While calling for greater national and international support for disaster relief efforts following Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, the minister also responded to a

question from the floor on South Africa's development cooperation instruments. She announced that the bottlenecks that prevented the passing of legislature pertaining to the South African Development Partnership Agency have been addressed, and that the bill is ready to be sent to parliament once more.