

REPORT TO THE 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2020 ACTIVITIES IN BRIEF

It is trite that 2020 was a year like no other in our experience and so it was also for SAIIA Western Cape Branch. Fortunately we had managed to host three “live” Speakers meetings before the pandemic hit and the national lockdown started on 26 March. This stopped us in our tracks for a while and then forced us to change the nature of our activities until we decided to branch out again and hold this AGM “live” under Covid-19 protocols.

We kicked off on 22 January (as we had done in 2019) with another very useful briefing on Brexit and the UK’s future relationship with the EU (and South Africa) as a result. The address had been promised by Lord Renwick of Clifton (former Ambassador to South Africa during the transition years of the early 90’s, Robin Renwick). Sadly he fell ill but fortunately our old friend Robert Jackson (former member of the European Parliament, the House of Commons and a minister in John Major’s government) who had addressed us on the subject the year before was able to step into the breach with an address on the subject he had prepared for the UCT Summer School. As before we had a good turnout.

This was followed by an excellent and well attended address by the new French Ambassador Aurelien Lechevalier on 6 February on France and Europe’s relations with Africa. As our usual venue, the Mountain Club was booked we held the event at No 6 Spin Street near Parliament which was a satisfactory alternative. This was followed later in February, on 20th back at the Mountain Club with an address By Dr Rob Adam, SKA Director on the latest developments with the Square Kilometre Array telescope and that was the last of our live events until this one, 9 months later.

We soon realized that our platform needed to go “virtual” and from then on it was zoom meetings and webinars all the way. Our first attempt, in April was a re-streamed webinar held by Human Rights Watch on its work in Africa dealing with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, including police brutality. Also in April we streamed a debate hosted by the Henry Jackson Society in London on “How will the Coronavirus change international affairs” with Professor Niall Fergusson and some members of the House of Commons. Later in the month we offered the virtual book launch of Greg Mills’ latest book “The Asian Aspiration”. Our members were also given access to some excellent webinars held by SAIIA’s Head Office such as the “Tech in Africa” series.

We eventually put our toe in the water and held our own home-grown webinar on 8 July. The topic was “The rise of China in the time of Coronavirus” with well- known stockbroker and investment analyst Michael Power, Cobus van Staden, SAIIA’s senior researcher as discussant and our Exco member Michael Spicer as moderator. The event was a great success, also in terms of participation of our members and it spurred us on to embark on a series of webinars for the rest of the year. We

followed this up immediately with a virtual “Careers evening” event on 10 July entitled “Careers in a post-Covid world”, kindly sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS). A particular thank you to KAS for their continued support and to our co-ordinator, Pippa Segall for all her hard work on this project.

Also at the end of July we hosted the new Russian Ambassador, Ilya Rogachev in a webinar entitled “Shifting sands: how the system of international relations is adapting to developments on the ground”, The discussant was our good friend and member, Prof. Irina Filatova and I chaired the event. Again there was very good participation from our members. August was also a busy month with the popular schools’ quiz held virtually on 20th August. As usual this event was kindly sponsored by the Abe Bailey Foundation and organised by our Exco member Dr Martha Bridgman assisted by Pippa Segall. The very popular Africa Melane was again MC. It was a huge amount of work and no easy task but they carried it off magnificently and our congratulations and thanks go to them and our sponsors. This was followed by a very well attended webinar on how the Western Cape economy will cope after Covid, featuring Tim Harris, CEO of Wesgro and David Bridgman, a former CEO who recently retired from the World Bank as discussant with Exco member, Jeremy Wiley, a former president of the Cape Chamber as moderator.

Our final webinar for the year, on 22 October was on the US presidential elections, featuring former US diplomat and well-known commentator Brooks Spector with Exco member Dr Martha Bridgman as moderator. Unsurprisingly this webinar garnered the most participants of all, no doubt because of the interest in the elections but also because our members have got used to the “new normal” format.

Apart from the schools quiz and the careers evening, as far as the various other portfolios of our Exco members, such as Parliament, universities, liaison with the Cape Chamber and diplomacy are concerned there has been little to no activity since lockdown in March so there is nothing to report. Exco member Richard Morris’ financial report appears below

In these difficult times it is my pleasure to thank KAS for supporting our careers evening and the Abe Bailey Trust for its continued sponsorship of the annual schools’ quiz. Also many thanks to our members and Exco members who contributed questions for the quiz and to Dr Martha Bridgman and Pippa Segall for all their hard work in getting it to function virtually and congratulations to the winners. A full report is available from Dr Bridgman.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership numbers of the Branch are healthy and show a slight increase.

Covid 19 may have an effect on membership. For the year under review, the absence of live events from March to June will have reduced the usual number of visitors joining. For the next period, July 2020 to June 2021 this effect may persist. Also, it remains to be seen how many members do not renew their membership as a result of limitations on live events. It is worth mentioning that there has been a heartening response from our membership base to our appeals for support during this difficult and uncertain time. There are high levels of subscriptions paid as at 9 November 2020: Member+1/Family – 80%; Individual – 54%; Diplomatic – 70%.

In view of the Covid 19 induced restriction on live events it was decided to not increase subscription rates or visitor fees.

The membership category “Donor Member” has been revived as a result of generous donations to the Branch’s Sustainability Fund. Article 8 of the Branch Constitution reads as follows: *“Donor Members. Individuals who pay membership fees in excess of the normal individual membership fee by an amount acceptable to the Executive Committee shall be regarded as donor members.”* More information on this mutually beneficial option for members and the Branch is imminent.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The key SAIIA Western Cape Branch financial results may be summarised as follows:

Year ended	30 June 2020	30 June 2019
Operating surplus i.e. income less expenses	R18,064	R8,794
Capital inflows - donations received	R5,000	-
Net surplus	R23,064	R8,794

These results were satisfactory and the branch financial position improved. However, it is important to bear in mind that much of the operating surplus may be attributed to the sponsored subscription contributions to the branch of R12,500 (year ended 30 June 2019 R7,300) relating to schools that participated in the 2019 and 2018 Quiz events.

We are most grateful for the generous sponsorship of R147,000 (year ended 30 June 2019 R160,000) received from the Abe Bailey Trust for the Inter Schools Quiz Event.

We likewise value the contributions received from the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation for the 2019 Careers Evening and several joint events as well as the R16,000 contribution from SAIIA head office towards our WC Branch administration.

The committee is keen to promote the longer term financial sustainability of the branch. We are therefore delighted to report that several benefactors have between them donated R5,000 to the branch in support of this objective. We arranged with SAIIA head office that these donors were provided with corresponding Section 18A certificates that enabled the related income tax deductions to be claimed in their personal tax returns.

The financial outlook for the year to 30 June 2021 is less promising due to:

- the incursion of Covid 19 with attendant restrictions and uncertainties that have meant a drop in revenue from door takings at events
- the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation suspending their support of our events, for the time being, due to a shift in priorities on their side.

We are thus, more than ever, grateful to our membership for the continued funding from subscriptions that have been kept up to date. This is the primary underpin of the Branch's financial well-being. Naturally we look forward to resuming in-person functions as opposed to webinar events as early as practical.

Thanks go to our administrator, Pippa Segall, our honorary Treasurer, Richard Morris, and our honorary auditor Johan Hauser for their assistance in maintaining and authenticating the branch financial records and accounts.

CONCLUSION

There has been nothing normal about this year though we must confess to having learnt new skills like finding our way around zoom meetings and webinars. After our first 3 "live" meetings we have tried, against the odds, to bring interesting speakers' meetings and seminars to your living room instead of you travelling to the Mountain Club venue in Hatfield street to hear them. Hopefully we have succeeded. Hopefully also, we will be able to go back to the old way of doing things in the new year provided we strictly observe all the Covid-19 protocols.