

## SAIIA Western Cape Branch

### Report for the Annual General Meeting 2024

#### INTRODUCTION

The year since the Branch's last Annual General Meeting has been a turbulent period in global, and indeed, African affairs, I'll touch on the implications of these in the Global Overview, after discussing the activities of the Branch.

#### EVENTS

The Western Cape Branch was able to host nine speaker events, including three panel discussions, two of which were arranged as hybrid events to permit participation by viewers elsewhere in the country. As before, the speakers' events were held at The Athenaeum, and at the School of Economics of the University of Cape Town.

The Branch and its members were able to participate in two others, one on UCT's Hiddingh Campus, where Alvin Botes, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, addressed South Africa's foreign policy priorities; and a second, after the elections, at which the new Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ronald Lamola, and senior officials of his Department (DIRCO) engaged in an exchange on South Africa's foreign policy with SAIIA's Chief Executive Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, and representatives of other research institutes, at the Cape Town International Conference Centre, ahead of the Minister's Budget Speech in Parliament.

The Interschools Quiz and the launch of a book on "Key Issues in African Diplomacy", with Sven Botha, Dzvinika Kachur and Samusha Naidu, rounded out our programme for the year.

The first of the two hybrid events, at UCT's School of Economics, was a discussion on 22 February, on *Climate challenges, threats and opportunities: Africa's Role in Multilateral Negotiations*, with Professor Nina Callaghan of the Centre for Sustainability at Stellenbosch University; Maesekela Kekana, Deputy Director General of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment; and Alex Benkenstein, the Head of SAIIA's Climate and Natural Resources Programme.

The second hybrid event featured the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in South Africa, Nelson Muffuh, speaking on the *UN Summit of the Future* and the *Pact for the Future*, including a *Global Digital Compact* and a *Declaration on Future Generations*. Karabo Mangena, the KAS-SAIIA Scholar on SAIIA's Futures Programme, offered comments on Resident Coordinator Muffuh's presentation. Karabo went on to be a discussant at the UN Day with DIRCO on 28 October 2024 as a result of this interaction.

Professor Alan Hirsch offered a provocative presentation early in February on “The migration policy mess in South Africa—where does it come, from and can it be fixed?” Prof. Abel Esterhuyse of the Faculty of Military Science at Stellenbosch University discussed “The South African National Defence Force” Mandate, Capacity and Constraints”, with commentary by the DA Shadow Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Kobus Marais MP.

The branch continued to invite senior diplomatic personnel to address members, drawing on the engagement of our Vice-Chair and EXCO member responsible for Diplomatic Liaison, Sheila Camerer.

Irish Ambassador Austin Gormley spoke to members on “Ireland’s Future and Relations with South Africa”; Spanish Ambassador Raimondo Robredo Rubio presented a thoughtful address on “A view from Madrid of South Africa’s policy stance”; Estonian Ambassador-at-large for Africa Daniel Schaer, addressed the Branch on “A Tech Savvy Northern European Country looking towards Africa”; and the *Chargé d’Affaires* of the Embassy of Morocco, Hachen El Moummy, spoke on “Morocco, past, present and future”.

The final event in the year’s programme will be an address immediately after the Annual General Meeting, on the *Current British Political Scene and its Prospects*. by Robert Jackson, a Minister in the Cabinets of UK Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major before he left the House of Commons in 2005, a fellow of All Souls College, and a regular visitor to the Western Cape with his wife Caroline, a distinguished former Member of the European Parliament, Mr Jackson has addressed the Western Cape branch on several occasions in recent years,

The list of the events between February and October 2024, appears below.

#### Schedule of Events 2024

	Date	Title	Speaker(s)	Venue	#
1	5 Feb	The migration policy mess in South Africa—where does it come from, and can it be fixed?	Professor Alan Hirsch	The School of Economics, UCT	45
2	22 Feb	Climate challenges, threats and	Professor Nina Callaghan, Deputy Director, Centre for	The School of Economics, UCT	35 in person; 60

		opportunities: Africa's role in multilateral negotiations – hybrid event	Sustainability Transitions at Stellenbosch University; Mr Maesela Kekana, Deputy Director- General, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and Mr Alex Benkenstein, head of the Climate and Natural Resources Programme, SAIIA		online
3	10 April	The South African National Defence Force: Mandate, Capacity and Constraints	Professor Abel Esterhuyse, professor in the Department of Strategic Studies in the Faculty of Military Science, Stellenbosch University at the South African Military Academy; with comments by Kobus Marias, DA Shadow Minister for Defence and Military Veterans	The Athenaeum	45
4	30 April	Public Symposium on South Africa's Foreign Policy	DIRCO Deputy Minister Alvin Botes	UCT Hiddingh Campus	90
5	13 May	Ireland's future direction and the relationship	Ambassador Austin Gormley, Ambassador of Ireland to South Africa	The Athenaeum	58

		with South Africa			
6	11 July	South Africa's Foreign Policy Engagement	DIRCO Minister Ronald Lamola	CTICC	120
7	7 August	A view from Madrid of South Africa's Foreign Policy Stance	Ambassador Raimundo Robredo Rubio, Ambassador of Spain to South Africa	The Athenaeum	42
8	13 August	Morocco, past, present and future. 25 years of transformative development	Mr Hachem El Moummy, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Pretoria	The Athenaeum	23
9	24 August	<b>32<sup>nd</sup> SAIIA Interschool Quiz</b>		Bishops	330
10	2 September	The UN Summit of the Future – hybrid event	UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa, Mr Nelson Muffuh	The School of Economics, UCT	60 in person; 40 online
11	5 September	Book launch: Key Issues in African Diplomacy: Developments and Achievements	Editor Sven Botha and contributors: Dzvinka Kachur and Sanusha Naidu	The Athenaeum	30
12	23 September	Estonia: Tech savvy, northern European country looking towards Africa	H.E. Daniel Schaer, Estonian Ambassador to Kenya and South Africa	The Athenaeum	31
13	18	SAIIA Western	Keynote address by Robert Jackson	The Athenaeum	

	November	Cape AGM			
--	----------	----------	--	--	--

Particular thanks are due to our Branch Coordinator, Pippa Segall, who, as always, played the key role in ensuring that the events ran smoothly, *and* to our team of volunteers who engaged with members and guests, ensured that the facilities were in good order, and served the drinks that made the evenings more convivial.

#### MEMBERSHIP

Although the Executive Committee approved an increase in membership fees by R20 in each membership category in the financial year ending on 30 June, our membership numbers remain steady. We have reached out to the Consular Corps and the Western Cape business community seeking to encourage wider attendance at Branch events. Attendance numbers at events have increased slowly over the year.

We appeal to members to attend Branch events whenever possible; to bring guests with an interest in international affairs; to encourage those willing to do so, to join the Branch; and to engage as far as possible in its activities.

#### Donor Members

The membership category "Donor Member" was revived in 2021 after donations to the Branch's *Sustainability Fund*. Article 8 of the Constitution describes Donor Members as:

"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."

We are particularly grateful to those members who make contributions beyond the sum specified for membership.

#### Membership Table

Nominal figures for Members of Parliament [44 MPs] and Schools [50 schools] are not included in the membership total.

The revenue producing categories [Diplomatic; Institutional; Member+1/Family; Individual; and Student] are shown in bold type.

<b>Category</b>	<b>2023 – 2024</b>	<b>2022 – 2023</b>	<b>2021 – 2022</b>	<b>2020 – 2021</b>
Corporate nominees for JSH	4	4	4	5

<b>Diplomatic</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Institutional</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>School</b>	Nominal	Nominal	Nominal	Nominal
<b>Member+1/Family</b> <b>[recorded as 2 people per membership]</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>88</b>
Complimentary	1	1	3 [adjusted]	10
Honorary	7	7	7	10
<b>Individual</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>60</b>
Members of Parliament	Nominal	Nominal	Nominal	Nominal
<b>Students</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>
TOTAL	165	161	161	204
<b>TOTAL: REVENUE PRODUCING</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>179</b>

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The Branch financial results may be summarised as follows:

Year ended 30 June:	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
	R	R	R	R	R
Operating surplus (deficit) i.e. income less expenses	15,039	2,338	(9,315)	1,054	18,064
Capital inflows - donations received	2,990	7,266	2,650	-	5,000
Net surplus (deficit)	18,029	9,604	(6,665)	1,054	23,064

The operating result for the year reflects a healthy surplus of R15,039 compared to a small surplus of R2,338 for the previous year. The more significant movements relative to the prior year were as follows:

- an increase in investment returns from R13,128 in the prior year to R18,963 in the current year

- a reduction in refreshment costs from R14,671 in the prior year to R9,458 in the current year
- an increase in the contribution from SAIIA Head Office from R21,000 in the prior year to R25,000 in the current year, which enabled the Branch to fund an increase in the honorarium paid to our administrator from R43,942 in the prior year to R48,000 in the current year
- with 7% - 10% increases in the rate of annual subscriptions, the total subscriptions received declined slightly from R28,420 in the prior year to R27,383 in the present year.

Voluntary donations towards the Branch Sustainability Fund fell from R7,266 in the prior year to R2,990 in the current year, but members contributed modestly to costs in other ways. Any person making an individual donation of over R1,000 can apply for a corresponding Section 18A certificate to allow income tax deductions to be claimed on their personal tax returns.

The bulk of the Branch Sustainability Fund has been invested with a longer-term investment horizon: R20,000 was placed in the Coronation Bond Fund and R20,000 in the Coronation Balanced Plus Fund.

The audited financial statements [attached] provide details of the Branch's income and expenditure, and the balance sheet, including the movements on the Quiz Fund.

The Abe Bailey Trust sponsored the Interschool Quiz Event in the amount of R162,600 (up from R158,000 in the year to 30 June 2023.)

We appreciate the support of our loyal members for continued funding from subscriptions and are happy that the resumption of in-person functions after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, expanded our membership base.

Our branch coordinator, Pippa Segall, our honorary Treasurer, Richard Morris, and our honorary auditor, Johan Hauser, merit our gratitude for maintaining, compiling and auditing the Branch's financial records and accounts.

#### RELATIONS WITH THE CONSULAR CORPS

SAIIA Branch Chair, Sean Cleary, was invited to address the Consular Corps in Cape Town at the monthly lunch of the Corps in April. He spoke on SAIIA's relevance to members of the Consular Corps, to South Africa, to Africa, and to international organisations, at this transformative time in global affairs. Vice-Chair and Diplomatic Liaison, Sheila Camerer, was also present at the luncheon.

The Chair was invited to join an exchange with Cde. Liu Juancho, the Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and members of his delegation, at the Chinese Consulate-General in Cape Town. At the invitation of the Consulate-General, Dr Deon Cloete, Head of the SAIIA Futures Programme,

and Karabo Mangena, the KAS-SAIIA Scholar on the Futures Programme, also attended the exchange.

The Chair and Vice Chair were invited to attend the National Day celebrations of Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland and the Republic China (Taiwan). The Chair was also invited to attend the National Day of the People's Republic of China.

#### STUDENT LIAISON

The Student Liaison officer of SAIIA's WC Branch to Stellenbosch University, and member of the Branch Executive Committee, Karabo Mangena, engaged actively in drawing students to events. Karabo reports that the *Careers Event 2024* on 14 August at Wits University offered students insights into employment opportunities in the humanities. After opening remarks by SAIIA CE, Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Dr Holger Dix of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the event included presentations from Prof. Bhaso Ndzendze and Leanne Manas, informative panel discussions, and networking opportunities.

Asenaye Roro has agreed to assist Karabo with student liaison at Stellenbosch University.

Nande Mbixio, the Branch's Student Liaison at UCT, worked to foster a mutually beneficial partnership in events between SAIIA and the UCT International Office. Dr. Quinton Johnson, Director of the International Office, has proposed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize scheduling of joint events. Nande has also engaged with the Department of Political Studies and the Faculty of Law, to promote SAIIA events to a wider student audience on campus.

#### LIAISON WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Jeremy Wiley continued to engage with the Cape Chamber of Business and Industry on behalf of the Branch. The Cape Chamber notified members of Branch events in its newsletter and apprised them of the opportunity to support the Interschools Quiz. John Lawson of the Chamber sought Sean Cleary's support in engaging leading business personalities as angel investors to allow the Chamber to build an implementation team of competent development practitioners to facilitate effective private sector solutions to key impediments to growth in the province.

#### PARLIAMENTARY LIAISON

Laura-Jane Watkins assumed responsibility for parliamentary liaison from Sheila Camerer after her appointment to the Branch EXCO. The constitution of the GNU has influenced the composition of [parliamentary committees](#), including their [chairmanship](#). This requires the Branch to review its earlier parliamentary liaison procedures, and to identify key focal points in Parliament to realign the Branch's Parliamentary outreach strategy.



Following a discussion with a KAS-Cape Town intern she proposed, before her resignation, a Parliamentary Liaison Event focusing on the *Pact for the Future* adopted at the *UN Summit of the Future* in the UN General Assembly on 23 September 2024. The Pact addresses many of Africa's needs and aspirations, including international peace and security, sustainable development and financing, youth and future generations, science, technology innovation including the *global digital compact*, and global governance. While the Department of International relations and Cooperation will be primarily responsible for coordinating the South Africa Government's implementation of its responsibilities under the Pact, the relevant parliamentary committees and staff can play an important role in helping shape the agenda, nationally, regionally and through the African Union.

#### SAIIA WC INTERSCHOOL QUIZ ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The 32<sup>nd</sup> annual SAIIA Western Cape Branch *Interschool Quiz on International Affairs* took place at Bishops on 22 August 2024 with 51 school teams participating. Participants were tested on their reading of ten days of online articles – between 3-7 articles a day – taken from a variety of media outlets in the two weeks before the quiz, sent by email to designated teachers at each school. The questions this year ranged from the famine in Sudan, conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, elections around the world, and the 2024 Olympic Games, to trade and environmental issues. Several participating schools fielded two teams, designated as *Ambassadors* and *Diplomats* respectively, to distinguish one from the other.

The highest scoring teams on quiz might were:

- 1<sup>st</sup> place: Oracle Academy Diplomats
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place: Westerford High School Ambassadors
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place tie: Cedarhouse Ambassadors; and Westerford High School Diplomats
- 5<sup>th</sup> place: Oracle Academy Ambassadors
- 6<sup>th</sup> place tie: Inkwenkwezi Secondary School Ambassadors; Reddam Constantia Diplomats; and St Cyprians School Ambassadors

The Inkwenkwezi Secondary School Ambassadors won the trophy for the most improved team, having advanced from 36<sup>th</sup> place in 2023, to tie for 6<sup>th</sup> place in 2024.

As in previous years, Adv. Murray Bridgman steered the proceedings as Quizmaster with consummate skill, while Africa Melane of Cape Talk Radio served as an ever-engaging Master of Ceremonies. Members of *youth@SAIIA* who were alumni of the Interschools Quiz programme, spoke to this year's contestants about their experiences with the Quiz, and the benefits it had brought to their careers.

The Quiz Committee, chaired most professionally by Martha Bridgman, and the Branch, are deeply grateful to the Abe Bailey Trust for its generous support of the Quiz in the amount of

R162,600 in 2024. We also appreciate several smaller donations, in cash and in kind, notably by Bishops Diocesan College, which again provided the venue and technical support for the event at no charge, coordinated most effectively by Phil Court of the Bishops academic staff.

Special thanks to Pippa Segall, who served again as Quiz Coordinator, and whose excellent organisation and friendly communications successfully engaged the many volunteers who helped make the event a success.

After many years organising the Interscholars Quiz, Martha Bridgman and Poppa Segall will be handing over their responsibilities. Two former *youth@saiia* quiz alumni, Jude Wells and Caleb Kaye, will step up to take over organisation of the Quiz in 2025. Both Pippa and Martha will assist in effecting a smooth transition and will be on call to help Jude and Caleb during the year.

We express our admiration to the learners and their teachers from all 51 schools for their hard work and enthusiasm. Quite a few of the students who participated in the Quiz, also attended the address on the *Summit of the Future* by UN Resident Coordinator Nelson Muffuh a week later and engaged in lively discussion with him. As the purpose of the *Summit of the Future* was to craft a *Pact for the Future, a Global Digital Compact and a Declaration on Future Generations*, Resident Coordinator Muffuh greatly appreciated the attendance and engagement of these learners, which was facilitated by their teachers. This Interscholars Quiz continues to inspire all those who attend, whether as organisers, donors or guests, with confidence in the future of the youth in the Western Cape.

#### A BRIEF GLOBAL OVERVIEW

The past year has been a deeply challenging one in which the plates of the world order have continued to shift tectonically, exposing individual states and international organisations, including the United Nations, the [International Monetary Fund](#) and the [World Bank](#), to great stress, with some, including the UN Security Council and the World Trade Organisation, clearly failing to fulfil their missions.

#### **Wars in Russia and the Middle East**

The destructive war in Ukraine after Russia's invasion on 22 February 2022 dragged on into its third year, causing widespread destruction of civilian lives and infrastructure, and diverting resources needed for social spending and investment into armaments and military logistics. A second war in the Middle East triggered by Hamas' invasion of southern Israel on 7 October 2023, led to Israel's war on Hamas and other jihadist groups in Gaza and the West Bank, and widened to include Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, and later, Iran itself.

After Israel's a significant strike on Iran's radars and missile fabrication plants on 25/66 October, after an Iranian strike on IDF bases on 1 October, Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei said Tehran was prepared to respond forcefully to the "arrogance" of Israel and the U.S. Kamal Kharrazi, a senior adviser to Khamenei, also warned that Iran might reconsider its nuclear doctrine if faced with an "existential threat," The Biden administration engaged actively, with allied support, to discourage a further Iranian response.

### **Casualties in Russia and Ukraine**

Mr Putin has put Russia's economy on a war footing, vastly increasing military production and circumventing Western sanctions by sourcing military equipment, components and arms notably from Iran and the DPRK. Production in war-related industries had risen by 60 percent from autumn 2022 to spring 2024, while production in other manufacturing industries was flat. Regions with war-related production have therefore benefited, as have poorer regions that sent many men to the frontlines.

This higher public spending has underpinned Russia's projected GDP growth of 3.6 percent in 2024, with consumer price inflation of 7.9 percent, while federal deficits remained at about 2 percent of GDP in 2022 and 2023. Revenues from oil taxes have remained high, despite the oil embargo and the oil price cap. Russian economic activity is now dominated by government spending, supported by revenues from energy exports. In Russia's poorest regions the war has offered greater upward social mobility, sustaining high aggregate satisfaction with Mr Putin's leadership. Further increases in military production will however drive inflation higher, and continuation of the war of attrition, which has already cost some 615,000 Russian casualties (115,000 deaths and 500,000 injuries), is likely to increase both emigration of the more privileged, and rising social dissatisfaction.

Despite heavy Russian attacks on its energy facilities, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) projects that Ukraine's economy will grow by 3.0 percent in 2024 and 4.7 percent in 2025.

Ukraine's economy grew by an estimated 6.5 percent year-on-year in Q1 2024, after growing 5.3 percent in 2023, marking a partial recovery from a sharp fall when war began in February 2022. Growth slowed after Q1 2024 because of power shortages and the higher costs of imported electricity.

The U.S. estimates that Ukraine has suffered more than 57 500 killed and 250 000 wounded in the war to date. Ukrainian government figures indicate that three times as many people died in Ukraine in the first half of 2024, as were born there in the same period, presaging a bleak demographic future for the country unless the war is brought to a satisfactory end.

### **Crisis in the Middle East**

In the Middle East, although the IDF, bolstered by intelligence and weapons provided by the United States and other Western countries, has decapitated the command-and-control structures of Hamas and Hezbollah, Israel has not succeeded in securing the release of many the hostages taken on 7 October 2023, and has faced rising criticism for its conduct of the war. By 1 November 2024, at least 43 259 Palestinians have been killed in IDF operations in Gaza, with some 101 827 seriously wounded. Some 3 000 had been killed in Lebanon, with at least 13 550 wounded by the same date. The Israeli government's decision to declare the UN Secretary-General *persona non grata*; inhibit aid flows into Gaza; expand attacks on northern Gaza; and declare the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) a terrorist organisation and prohibit its operations in Israel, had led to widespread international criticism. Haaretz went so far as to publish an editorial on Gaza on 29 October, entitled "If it looks like ethnic cleansing, it probably is."

In addition to South Africa's application for provisional measures against Israel under the Genocide Convention, granted by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the ICJ issued an advisory ruling on the *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*, on 19 July; and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) applied to the ICC on 20 May 2024 for arrest warrants for Yahya SINWAR, Mohammed Diab Ibrahim AL-MASRI, and Ismail HANIYEH from Hamas, as well as Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin NETANYAHU, and Minister of Defence Yoav GALLANT. The ICC Prosecutor asserted that Mr Netanyahu and Mr Gallant, like the three Hamas officers, bore "criminal responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on the territory of the State of Palestine (in the Gaza strip) from at least 8 October 2023:" Sinwar and Haniyeh have been assassinated; Al-Masri's fate is unknown, with the IDF claiming that he was killed in an airstrike on 13 July 2024, while Hamas denies it.

The most disturbing report on the conflict in Gaza is a report verifying fatalities in Gaza in the first six months after 7 October 2023, by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), recording that it had "found close to 70 percent (of the casualties) to be children and women, indicating a systematic violation of the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law" on the part of the Israeli military

The continuation of these attacks "demonstrates an apparent indifference to the death of civilians and the impact of the means and methods of warfare selected," the report said, noting that of the confirmed deaths, 80 percent were killed in residential buildings or similar housing, of which 44 percent were children and 26 percent were women.

OHCHR said this showed a pattern of "high numbers of babies and young children, women,

older persons, and families killed together in residential buildings."

UN High Commissioner Volker Türk said the report showed that civilian casualties were "a direct consequence of the failure to comply with fundamental principles of international humanitarian law – namely the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack." He said that pattern continued "unabated, over one year after the start of the war." Haaretz said in an editorial on 10 November that: "The Israeli military is conducting an ethnic cleansing operation in the northern Gaza Strip. The few Palestinians remaining in the area are being forcibly evacuated, homes and infrastructure have been destroyed, and wide roads in the area are being built and completing the separation of the communities in the northern Strip from the center of Gaza City."

Meanwhile, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu said on 10 November that he had spoken three times with President-elect Trump since the U.S. election and that they "see eye-to-eye regarding the Iranian threat and all of its components." President-elect Trump's new appointments – Sen. Marco Rubio as Secretary of State, Mike Huckabee as U.S. Ambassador-designate to Israel, and Steven Witkoff as Special Envoy to the Middle East – seem to confirm that assertion.

Russia's engagement with Iran to acquire drones and missiles for its war in Ukraine, and with the Democratic People's Republic of (North) Korea to secure ammunition and combat troops, has widened the war in Europe, which had already seen Finland and Sweden enter the NATO alliance, and led to a sharp increase in global military spending to \$306 per person in 2023, the highest number *per capita* since 1990. Meanwhile, the Biden Administration's inability to exercise a determinant influence on the government of Israel in a U.S. election year, has weakened its global standing in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and in parts of Europe.

The United States' demand that Israel should significantly increase humanitarian aid entering Gaza within thirty days expired on 13 November. It is, however, unlikely that the U.S. will formally designate Israel as non-compliant or suspend arms deliveries.

Meanwhile, by June 2024, the *State of Palestine* had been recognized as a sovereign state by 146 of the 193 member states of the United Nations, with UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/23 of 10 May 2024, having granted the State of Palestine additional rights in the UN, including that to be seated with member states, introduce proposals and agenda items in the General Assembly, and participate in committees. It does not have the right to vote on resolutions before the Assembly.

Prime Minister Netanyahu said in the Knesset on 20 February 2024, that "everyone knows that I am the one who for decades blocked the establishment of a Palestinian state that

would endanger our existence." He added that, "no matter what, Israel will maintain full security control over all territory west of the Jordan River," including both Gaza and the West Bank.

### **U.S.-PRC tensions and their wider effects**

The U.S. *National Security Strategy* and *National Defense Strategy* of 2022 characterize China as "the only country with the intent to reshape the international order, and increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do so" (National Security Strategy 2022) and as "our most consequential strategic competitor for the coming decades" (National Defense Strategy 2022).

The U.S. Department of Defense stated further: "The 2022 National Defense Strategy... places a primary focus on the need to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence against China. It also advances a focus on collaboration with a growing network of U.S. allies and partners on shared objectives"

These tensions with China, heightened by Russia's war in Ukraine, and sharpened by the conflict between Hamas and Israel, in both of which theatres, Washington and Beijing have divergent positions, have deepened the schism between the West and the "Global South," in which Africa and the Arab world have become the fulcrum of a tectonic dislocation. The expansion of the BRICS membership (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the UAE, and the inclusion of the African Union in the G20, sustained this fractal momentum during Brazil's presidency of the G20 in 2024, and is most likely to continue it during South Africa's G20 Presidency in 2025. This will reinforce the contribution of the "Global South" to geopolitical tensions, without increasing the efficacy of the BRICS+, or the G20.

In 2024, tensions between the U.S. and the PRC continued to rise as the Biden administration sought to weaken China's efforts to advance economically by retaining the \$360 billion of tariffs and sanctions on the PRC, introduced by Mr Trump, and applying new export controls to restrict Beijing's access to advanced technology. The Administration has banned U.S. investment in sensitive dual-use technologies, quadrupled tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, tripled those on steel and aluminium, and doubled the duty on semiconductors. Several U.S. Governors have signed laws preventing state pension schemes from investing in equities controlled by the Chinese state. President Biden has also issued an *Executive Order* and a related *Memorandum on Advancing the United States' Leadership in Artificial Intelligence; Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Fulfil National Security Objectives; and Fostering the Safety, Security, and Trustworthiness of Artificial Intelligence*, in an effort to ensure continued U.S. dominance over China in military applications of artificial intelligence.

Beijing has protested, introduced a few countermeasures restricting U.S. access to [minerals critical for the energy transition](#); and sought – largely unsuccessfully - to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Europe in respect of the restrictions each has imposed on China's access to sensitive technologies, and the tariffs applied to exclude PRC industrial exports from their markets.

The principle of comparative economic advantage that underpinned the multilateral free trading regime since 1995, has been progressively undermined in the past seven years. Shortly after becoming President in 2017, Mr Trump sought to stimulate U.S. growth through domestic legislation to “make America great again”, and by cancelling multilateral trade agreements, notably vis-à-vis China, that he said were weighted against the U.S. The Biden Administration retained many of these, and expanded some, with bipartisan support in the Congress.

Although the EU initially opposed this move, due chiefly to rising U.S. industrial protectionism, the effects of UK's withdrawal from the EU; the discovery of Europe's dependency on China during the COVID-19 pandemic; the need to reduce dependency on Russian oil and gas imports, the direct costs of the war in Ukraine, and the Biden Administration's emphasis on the centrality of competition between “techno-democracies”, and “techno-autocracies”, led Europe also to promote national champions and increase reliance on protective tariffs. [“Derisking” and “friendshoring” have come to characterise the vocabulary of international trade.](#)

European companies are divided in their responses, as appeared in the recent decision of the European Commission to propose new tariffs of 35 percent on electric vehicles imported from China, on top of the prior 10 percent rate.

Mario Draghi warned that “China's state-sponsored competition” was a threat to the EU. President Macron described Beijing's subsidies as “unbearable”. Commission President von der Leyen said that EU industry had to protect itself against “a potential flood of cheap Chinese EV imports”.

License registrations of EVs built in China rose from 3.5 percent of the EU market in 2020, to 27.2 percent in Q2 2024; and China EV market share in the EU rose from 1.9 percent to 14.1 percent. China's excess production capacity of 3 million EVs per year, destined for export, is twice the size of the EU market.

In the vote on EU tariffs on 4 October, ten EU member states voted in favour; Germany, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia voted against, and twelve states abstained. The Commission will implement the duties for five years. It continued negotiations with China until 30 October to explore a WTO-compatible solution, but no agreement was reached.



German automakers had pressed Berlin to vote against the tariffs to avoid a clash with regulators in their most important market. Beijing threatened to impose countervailing tariffs on European exports. Thus far, these have been imposed only on brandy, but Volkswagen has already warned of potential plant closures and staff layoffs due to its weakening performance.

Beijing filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization over the EU's decision to impose the extra tariffs on electric vehicle imports. According to the PRC Ministry of Commerce, the EU's levies lack a factual and legal basis, violate WTO rules and are a form of trade protectionism. Despite the tariffs, Chinese EV-makers still see the EU as a key target market as they look to expand foreign sales.

The prospect of much higher EU duties also led some Chinese automakers to explore opening factories in the EU, despite higher manufacturing costs. Meanwhile, Toyota announced a hydrogen-powered, zero-combustion engine, with performance exceeding that of EVs, arguing that shifting its production exclusively to EV's would have serious labour market impacts.

### **The global electoral landscape**

This year has also been an extraordinary year for electoral democracy, with 64 countries and the European Union holding elections, in which almost 2 billion adults are eligible to vote - at a time when democracy is in retreat, and a range of digital technologies, including Gen AI, pose novel threats, including dissemination of disinformation, hacking of campaigns, and electoral manipulation. Ahead of the U.S. elections on 5 November, a New York Times Siena poll revealed that only 49 percent of respondents thought that U.S. democracy was "doing a good job representing the people", while 45 percent thought that it did not. Seventy-six percent indicated that democracy was "under threat", while only 20 percent thought it was not.

After the U.S. elections on 5 November, at around midday on 6 November, AP called the race, declaring that Donald John Trump had been elected as the 47<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. In addition to the votes needed in the Electoral College, he also secured a majority of the popular vote. The S&P 500, the Dow and the Nasdaq composite, as well as cryptocurrencies surged to new highs; Emerging Market currencies retreated.

The Republican Party also won control of the Senate and retained a narrow majority in the House of Representatives. After his inauguration, President Trump will enjoy a higher degree of freedom in his executive acts in this second term, after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2024 by a margin of 6-3 that the President enjoys broad immunity in all official acts.



President Trump will significantly shift U.S. domestic policy in several areas – notably tax cuts and deregulation to boost economic growth, while cutting back on what Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy perceive as government inefficiency and wastage.

He will change the Biden Administration's policies on Ukraine and the Middle East, seeking a settlement between Russia and Ukraine, and removing some constraints on Israel, but perhaps collaborating with Moscow to modify Tehran's behaviour. He will reverse Mr Biden's prioritization of alliances in Europe and Asia-Pacific in favour of a more transactional approach, prioritizing his view of what constitutes U.S. interests. This will impact U.S. trade policy, where the President-elect has said he will increase tariffs on imported goods, notably but not exclusively from China. He will change his predecessor's policies on fossil fuels and climate; and will roll-back the Biden Administration's extensive engagement with multilateral institutions, including a range of UN Specialized Agencies.

The disquiet of voters with the state of democratic systems that led to Mr Trump's victory, is not limited to the United States. The elections for the new European Parliament (EP) in June 2024, saw a lesser shift rightwards than pundits had predicted, with the vote share of parties to the right of the European People's Party (EPP), rising from 18 percent in 2019 to just over 24 percent. The centre-right EPP bloc retained 188 seats, slightly increasing its presence in the Parliament. The centre-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D) maintained just under 19 percent. Taken as a whole, the EPP, S&D and the liberal *Renew Europe* group still have more than 400 out of 720 seats, and the Greens will often work with the centrist parties. The elections, however, also saw a strong performance by populist right-wing and far-right parties in many EU countries, notably in France and Germany, propelled by voters' opposition to the cost of "green" policies, anti-migration sentiments and economic insecurity. The rising vote share of the far right reflects both discontent with EU policies, and dissatisfaction with the state of national democracy, with recent surveys indicating that less than half of EU citizens are satisfied with the workings of democracy in their own countries.

A massive defeat for the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom, a severe setback for President Macron's *En Marche!* in France after a snap election that he called after his poor performance in the EP elections, followed by Chancellor Olaf Scholz firing his Finance Minister Christian Lindner, leading to the withdrawal of the FDP from the governing coalition, and triggering a vote of no confidence, followed by early elections, rounded out the year in the European space.

Government leaders from the EU, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and NATO met for the fifth time as the *European Political Community* in Hungary on 7 November after Mr Trump's election victory, and stressed the need for EU unity, with Commission President von der Leyen

cautioning that a trade war would weaken both the U.S. and Europe, even as she congratulated Mr Trump on his victory.

Africa has been equally turbulent: Early in 2024, Senegal's then-President Macky Sall sought to delay polls in February, but mass protests forced him to reverse his decision and enabled a peaceful transition. In May, South Africa's elections saw the ruling African National Congress lose its majority, leading to construction of a [Government of National Unity](#). In October, [Moçambique's elections](#) proved highly contentious, leading to continuing security force action against demonstrators protesting electoral fraud, and leading to a temporary closure of the border with South Africa. Botswana's President Mokgweetsi Masisi sought a second term, while former President Ian Khama returned to campaign against him. The [Botswana Democratic Party](#) lost power after 58 years of continuous rule, in a landslide, and [Duma Boko](#) is the new President, having assumed office on 6 November. Voters will determine the leadership of Guinea-Bissau, Namibia, Somaliland and Mauritius, and the composition of parliament in Senegal, in November. Ghana will go to the polls early in December. Finally, Chad may hold parliamentary polls in late December, if the opposition agrees to participate.

### **Global economic shifts**

In economic terms, as global inflation triggered by stimulative fiscal and monetary policies during COVID-19, faded away, a shift toward lower borrowing costs picked up. With the U.S. Federal Reserve and other Central Banks cutting rates, worries about inflation are giving way to concerns about slow growth. China is the prime example even after its stimulus measures, but the EU, UK and Japan are also of concern. [The IMF projects global growth of 3.2% in 2024 and 2025, with the Advanced Economies at growing at 1.8% and Emerging Markets and Developing Economies at 4.2%.](#)

With disruption to global trade due to lockdowns during COVID fresh in all minds, supply chains are again under pressure, with global shippers facing particular challenges. The war between Iran's Axis and Israel has led traffic through the Red Sea –comprising 12 percent of global trade before the attacks by the Houthis – to fall by two-thirds.

Many ships came to round the Cape of Good Hope, adding 10 days to a journey, and a 40 percent rise in fuel costs. Automakers suspended production due to parts shortages.

Shipping through the Panama Canal suffered from a drought forcing a reduction in the number of ships permitted to pass, from 36 a day, to 20. Strikes in ports on the U.S. east coast sharpened fears, although the strikers returned to work after two days, due to a higher wage offer.

Oil prices surged above \$87 in April due to the war in the Middle East before falling back below \$70 by the end of October. The threat of an IDF strike on Iran's crude oil output increased uncertainty before Israel and the U.S. reached agreement on targeting only Iran's military capabilities, while the risk of war caused a surge in the gold price and in equity markets after 18 October.

In Africa, the 2024 Summit of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation took place in Beijing on 4-6 September, resulting in an Action Plan for 2025-2027, and culminating with the "Beijing Declaration on Jointly Building an All-Weather China-Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era."

Meanwhile, the U.S., EU, African Development Bank, African Finance Corporation and the Southern African Development Bank, launched a joint project to expand and modernize the transportation corridor connecting mining regions in the DRC and Zambia with global markets, through Lobito in Angola, building on the *Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment* (PGII), launched at the G7 Summit in Germany in 2022, in response to China's *Belt and Road Initiative*. The Biden administration announced the *Lobito Corridor initiative* as part of PGII at the G7 summit in Japan in 2023, and an MoU was signed in Brussels in October that year. President Biden is expected to visit Angola in December 2024, shortly before the end of his term, to consolidate U.S. support for the project.

### Reforms in the European Union

The reports on necessary EU reforms by Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi speak to Europe's particular challenges amidst this geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainty. Europe's competitiveness has fallen markedly over two decades. Despite the Lisbon Strategy intended to provide "support for knowledge and innovation in Europe... [and effect] improvement and simplification of the regulatory framework [for] business, and the completion of the internal market for services", the EU missed out on the internet revolution, forfeiting significant productivity gains. The large gap between the economic performance of the U.S. and the EU is due largely to the U.S. tech sector's far superior growth.

The EU is weak in the technologies that will drive future growth, moreover. Only four of the world's top 50 tech companies are European. To digitalise and decarbonise the economy, and strengthen the EU's defence capacity, analysis indicates that investment must rise by 5 percent per annum to levels last seen in the 1960s and 70s.

In his report on EU competitiveness, Mario Draghi noted:

"If Europe cannot become more productive, we will be forced to choose. We cannot [then] be ... a leader in new technologies, a beacon of climate responsibility, and an independent player on the world stage. We will not be able to finance our

social model. We will have to scale back some, if not all, of our ambitions. This is an existential challenge."

He continued:

"Europe's fundamental values are prosperity, equity, freedom, peace and democracy in a sustainable environment.

"The EU exists, to ensure that Europeans can ... [enjoy] these fundamental rights. If Europe can[not] provide them to its people – or has to trade off one against the other – it will have lost its reason for being.

"[We have] to grow and become more productive, preserving our values of equity and social inclusion. ...to [do that] Europe [must] radically change."

He argued that the EU needed to -

- Refocus on closing the innovation gap with the U.S. and China, especially in advanced technologies.
- Craft an integrated plan for decarbonisation and competitiveness; and
- Increase EU security and reduce its dependencies

The European Commission is examining the implications of the Draghi report at present. The outcome is uncertain.

### **South Africa's position**

Like all other parts of the world, South Africa must chart its course amidst this turbulence.

#### **African conflicts**

In Africa, in addition to the fallout from military coups across the Sahel, festering wars in Somalia and the eastern DRC, and the ISIS-M insurgency in Moçambique, the most shocking conflict is that in Sudan between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, where the U.N. says nearly 25 million people - half of Sudan's population - need aid, as famine has taken hold in displacement camps and 11 million people have fled their homes, some three million to other countries. Meanwhile, SANDF personnel are deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and in the Mozambique Channel for Operation Copper maritime security patrol, as well as in the Cabo Delgado province of Moçambique.

#### **South Africa's Government of National Unity**

The construction of a Government of National Unity in South Africa after the elections in 2024, allowed the country and the national economy to recover a measure of political stability akin to the period after 1994, and to aim to achieve in a few years macro-economic stability and growth last seen between 1998 and 2006.

The JSE-FTSE ASLI passed the 80 000 level for the first time in January 2023, and, after a decline through March 2024, has climbed above 85 000. The SA Reserve Bank's consistent monetary policy measures have kept the rate of inflation in the 3-6 percent target band for the past three years. The reduction of the REPO rate in September 2024 by 0,25 percent, in line with international trends, signalled confidence in the medium term macro-economic prospects, prompting hope that capital and retail spending will increase as the cost of capital falls further over the next 24 months.

Accelerated economic growth to boost employment and reduce poverty is the cornerstone of the GNU's economic agenda. Re-industrialisation and investment in infrastructure are once more on centre stage, as they were in the GEAR in 1997, albeit in a different configuration. Operation Vulindlela, driven by the Presidency and the National Treasury with the active support of organised business, is driving structural reforms to transform electricity, water, transport and digital communications. While unemployment will remain dangerously high for the foreseeable future, and the national debt to GDP ratio is 74.9 percent and rising, business confidence has risen modestly.

The Medium-term Budgetary Policy Statement by the Minister of Finance on 30 October was. However, sobering.

Anticipated GDP growth for the next financial year is expected to be 1.7 percent in 2025 and 2026, with 1.9 percent in 2027. Projected GDP growth in the present financial year was reduced to 1.1 percent, from the 1.3 percent growth suggested in the Budget in February 2024.

Tax receipts, other than those from corporate taxpayers – which rose slightly – were R22.3-billion lower than the estimates in February. As lower income is expected in the next two fiscal years, no relief is in sight.

Meanwhile, government debt is projected to peak in FY 2025/26 at just over R6-trillion, with debt-service costs reaching R388.9 billion in the present financial year, to reflect the highest state expenditure item in the national budget. While total debt is likely to stabilise at just over 75 percent of GDP, the decline from that peak will take longer, and be slower, than was earlier projected.

The GNU is proposing a large number of public-private partnerships to the business sector., and these may improve growth and lower reliance on government debt, but provincial and national departments still owe large sums to municipalities which prevents these paying water boards and Eskom for the bulk supplies they receive. Staunching these capital leakages and restoring fiscal discipline at all levels of government is clearly essential.

Mcebisi Jonas has correctly called for a policy reset to develop productive capacity and sustain the institutions needed for this, to mobilise people behind the shared benefits of common solutions. He argues:

“This will require a rethink on industrial policy; fiscal policy; innovation and entrepreneurship; competition policy; skills and human capabilities; social policy; infrastructure provisioning; allocative decisions in Treasury; and our tax regime. It will also require a fundamental rethink of the state, and the role of the state vis-à-vis other social actors like the private sector and civil society.”

This is a tall order!

### **South Africa to assume the G20 Presidency**

Amidst global tensions, and the need for economic reconstruction after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa's assumption of the G20 Presidency at the beginning of 2025, has reinforced the focus of the Government's foreign policy. On 27 October, in the aftermath of criticism by the DA of President Ramaphosa's statement at the BRICS+ Summit in Kazan celebrating South Africa's relations with Russia, [the Presidency issued a statement that](#) read in part:

*“It is this resolute adherence to the policy of non-alignment and to the precepts of the Freedom Charter which informed our Constitution that [leads] South Africa [to] continue... to contribute towards the attainment of world peace and silencing the guns on our continent. ...*

*“It is through the policy of non-alignment that South Africa has been able to constructively engage with both Russia and Ukraine.*

*“... President Ramaphosa has emphasised the centrality of the United Nations Charter and the need for peaceful dialogue in resolving conflict. In the process South Africa has also maintained its strong historical ties with the Russian Federation, whilst enjoying cordial diplomatic bilateral relations with Ukraine.*

*“South Africa has also been unwavering in advocating for a peace process that includes the full participation of both countries.*

*“On Monday, 28 October 2024, South Africa's International Relations and Cooperation Minister, Hon. Ronald Lamola, will host his Ukrainian counterpart, Minister Andrii Sybiha. Amongst the highlights of the visit will be the signing of an Agreement on Visa Waiver for Diplomatic Service or Official Passports.*

*“This will enable South African officials to travel to Ukraine for peace formula meetings without visa logistical impediments. This development, which has been in*

*the making since 2020, signals South Africa's commitment to growing diplomatic relations with Ukraine.*

*"Within the first six months of 2025, the year of South Africa's G20 Presidency, our country will also host the South Africa-European Union summit. South Africa is the only partner in Africa amongst the EU's 10 bilateral strategic partnerships. The summit will further enhance the existing partnership with the European Union.*

*"South Africa will continue working towards strengthening the strategic, trade and political bilateral relationships with key partners including the Peoples Republic of China, United States of America, Germany, Japan, India and others.*

*"South Africa will further consolidate the full implementation of the [African Continental Free Trade Area](#), which is set to eliminate trade barriers, boost intra African trade and achieve prosperity for all of Africa. The AFCFTA will also accelerate manufacturing and industrial capacity on our continent.*

*"As President Cyril Ramaphosa continues to lead the 7th Administration in strengthening all key political and trade ties, working in solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world in Palestine and Western Sahara, while advocating for peaceful resolution of conflicts around the globe, South Africa will maintain a foreign policy that is informed by solidarity, peace, equality, human rights and sustainable development for the benefit of all.*

*"This is the responsibility that President Ramaphosa will continue to exercise without any undue pressure and in line with South Africa's national sovereign interest. "*

This statement by the Presidency must be read in context of the statement of the [BRICS+ Heads of State and Government at Kazan in October 2024](#):

*"We reiterate our commitment to improving global governance by promoting a more agile, effective, efficient, responsive, representative, legitimate, democratic and accountable international and multilateral system. We call for assuring greater and more meaningful participation of EMDCs<sup>1</sup> and least developed countries, especially in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, in global decision-making processes and structures and making them better attuned to contemporary realities. We also call for increasing the role and share of women, especially from EMDCs, at different levels of responsibilities in the international organizations. As a positive step in this direction, we acknowledge the G20 Call to Action on Global Governance*

---

<sup>1</sup> Emerging Markets and Developing Countries



Reform launched by Brazil during its G20 presidency."

The G20 member countries "[Call to Action on Global Governance Reform](#)" was adopted by consensus at the United Nations Forum on 25 September. Under the heading, "More inclusive and fair global governance", the G20 members resolved:

"The group agrees that the proximity of the [UN's] 80th anniversary, which will be celebrated in 2025, reinforces the moment to reinvigorate the *General Assembly*, strengthening its space as the UN's "main deliberative, policy-making and representative body, also acting in dialogue with the *Security Council* for the maintenance of international peace and security. In addition, the group is committed to promoting the effectiveness and efficiency of this space and the agreements made there, as well as increasing the nomination of women to the Assembly presidency.

"The G20 countries also commit to increasing representation in the UN *Security Council* and improving the distribution of responsibility among its members in order to make decisions more transparent. In addition, [they endorse expanding the Council's composition to include nations from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean](#), which are still underrepresented in this space.

Regarding the [reform of the International Financial Architecture](#), the G20 states aim to mobilize financing to address global challenges such as tackling hunger, poverty, and climate change, especially in developing countries and emerging economies.

The G20 countries agreed to promote improvements to allow the system to accelerate compliance with the UN [2030 Agenda](#) through the actions of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs); the revision of the quota formula of the IMF (International Monetary Fund); and by deepening international dialogue on "fair taxation and taxing billionaires."

The G20 Leaders also called for means to *mobilize more fiscal space and concessional financing* to increase the World Bank's capacity to support low- and middle-income countries that need help facing global challenges.

The G20 member countries endorsed a series of measures to *reform the World Trade Organization* through fairer and more inclusive international rules to improve its functions. and strengthen the organization's mandate as a promoter of development."

These objectives parallel those adopted in the [UN Pact for the Future](#), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 22 September 2024, at the [UN Summit of the Future](#).

[An article by Aqib Aslam and Petya Brooks in an IMF publication series, puts the role of the G20 in clearer context.](#) Emerging markets, the authors argue, hold both the reins of future



growth and the keys to the future of multilateralism. As advanced economies turn inward, emerging markets have a vital stake in averting global economic fragmentation. Having grown in both size and economic stature - on the back of greater economic integration and reforms - emerging markets are not only a permanent fixture on the global economic landscape but are the natural champions of multilateralism. The performance of emerging market members of the G20, the authors note, accounted for almost two-thirds of global growth in 2023.

### **U.S. and South Africa agree to cooperate also in successive presidencies of the G20**

Meanwhile, after a period of some tensions between South Africa and the U.S. arising from remarks by the U.S. Ambassador on the presence of the *Lady R*, a sanctioned Russian cargo vessel, in harbour at the Simonstown naval base early in October 2022, the U.S. and South African governments engaged to restore reciprocal understanding. After a visit to Washington by National Security Adviser Mufamadi, the President's legal adviser Nokukhanya Jele, and the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Alvin Botes in April 2023, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan announced, after a call to Mr Mufamadi in October 2023, that the two states had "recommitted to advance shared priorities including trade and investment, infrastructure, health, and climate."

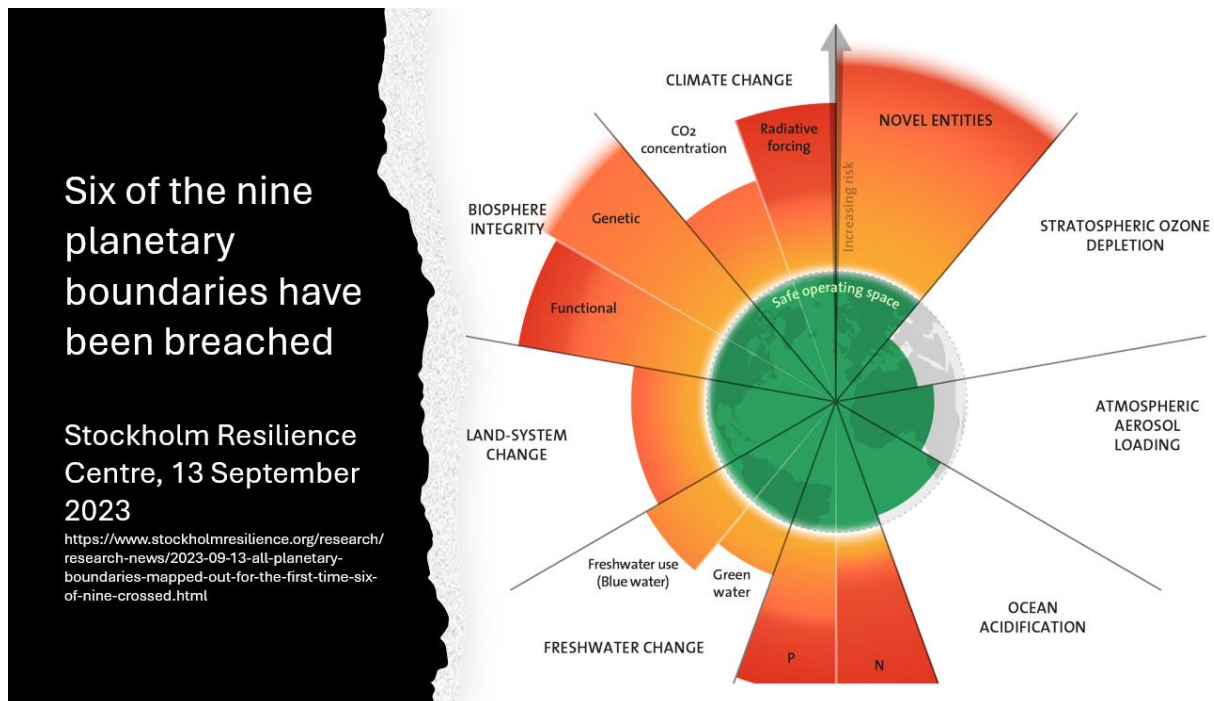
After the inauguration of the GNU, moreover, Secretary of State Blinken met Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola in Washington on 26 September 2024 and emphasized the importance of the U.S.-South Africa partnership. The Ministers committed to continue to work on shared priorities including economic development, health diplomacy, and multilateral institutional reform, and discussed ways to advance common interests when South Africa assumes the presidency of the G20 in 2025 and the United States succeeds South Africa in 2026.

On 8 November, President Ramaphosa and President-elect Trump spoke for some fifteen minutes by phone. The South African presidency described the exchange as a "good call" and said that South Africa looked forward to hosting President Trump during the G20 Heads of State Summit in South Africa in 2025. The government has also appointed former Western Cape Premier, and former South African Ambassador to the U.S., Ebrahim Rasool, as South Africa's Ambassador to Washington. Mr Rasool understands the U.S. policy process and has a wide range of contacts in the bureaucracy, academia, the media, and on the Hill.

That said, South Africa will face new challenges in a Trump Administration, not least in respect of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and perhaps the funding committed for South Africa's Just Energy Transition.

### **COP 29 Climate Conference in Baku after COP 16 Biodiversity Conference**

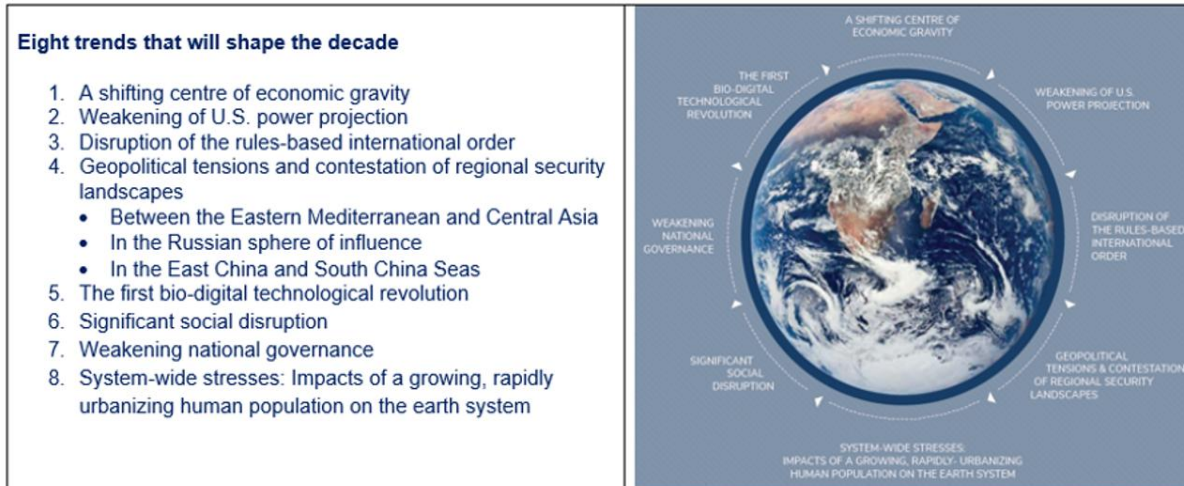
A great deal remains to be done in respect of the *global commons* of *climate*, *oceans* and *biodiversity*. Towards the end of a year of hurricanes, floods, droughts and wildfires around the world, and ahead of the COP29 Climate Conference in Baku, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reported, on 28 October, in its annual assessment that, while nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submitted to the U.N. are enough to cut global emissions by 2.6 percent from 2019 to 2030, up from 2 percent in 2023, they are far from sufficient to achieve the 43 percent cut required to stay within reach of the target to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Six of the nine planetary boundaries identified in decades-long research at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, have, moreover, already been breached.



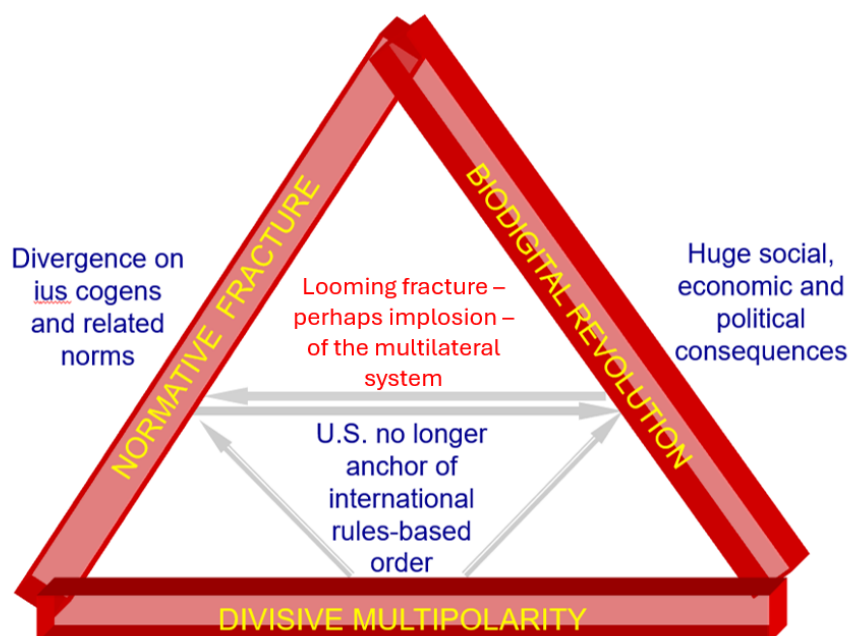
The UNFCCC Secretary-General has called on states to deliver new and stronger commitments to their NDCs before the deadline in February 2025. Meanwhile, the COP16 Conference on Biodiversity disappointed many, with the EU, Japan, Switzerland, the UK, China and Canada, which had enabled agreements on targets in 2022, failing to rally countries around crucial aims.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Global Trends to 2030: 2019-2020 analysis



We are at an historical inflection point, defined by a shift in the geo-economic centre of gravity from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific; a lesser capacity by the United States to project power across the globe to maintain the “rules-based international order” that it redefined after the collapse of the USSR in 1991; heightened geopolitical tensions pitting great powers – notably the U.S., Russia and China – against one another, notably within what Russia and China perceive to be their spheres of influence; a weakening of national governance in a highly connected world triggering social tensions and a tendency towards nationalist populism in many societies; and system-wide stresses on the environment due to the impacts of a growing, rapidly urbanising human population on the earth system.



This disruption is occurring in the absence of mutually agreed rules, also because of the sense in the “global South” that the West is applying the values and principles of the 'rules-based international order' inconsistently vis-à-vis Russia in Ukraine, Israel in Gaza and Lebanon, and in wars in Sudan, the DRC and countries in the Sahel. Conflict management and resolution are rendered greatly more difficult by the erosion of widely-accepted principles of international law – *ius cogens* – to which those seeking to mediate between conflicting parties, can turn in addressing conflicts.

Aggravating this challenge, we are on the cusp of the deepest and most wide-ranging technological revolution in human history - involving not only GenAI and other innovations in information technology which pose challenges to digital trust, but breakthroughs in biotechnology like AlphaFold, and including CRISPR-Cas9 and other transformative capabilities in genetic engineering; all converging with nanotech capabilities; and advanced experimentation in neuro-technologies. This conflation of transformative technologies is redefining both the meaning of knowledge – long assumed to be a human prerogative, but now potentially available to generative pre-programmed transformers (GPT) with the potential to evolve into artificial general intelligence – and even the essence of *human ontology*.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of scientific research institutions and policy institutes like the South African Institute of International Affairs – designated by the South Africa Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) as one of the three thinktanks to lead the Think20 during South Africa's presidency of the G20 in 2025 – has never been greater.

We are proud to be associated with this important task at this critical time.

May I thank the members of the Branch EXCO for their commitment and hard work over the past year!

Richard Morris, our honorary Treasurer, and Johan Hauser, our honorary auditor, enable our continued solvency.

Martha Bridgman, assisted by Pippa Segall, has not only ensured the success of the Interschool Quiz, but, together with Sheila Camerer, my distinguished predecessor as Chairperson, and our liaison person with the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, contributes a wealth of knowledge and experience to the management of the Branch. Jeremy Wiley continued to engage actively with the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Anne Thompson and Anthony Haggie have contributed both perspective and insight, and Anne has applied her knowledge and experience to enhance the Branch's stakeholder

communications.

Prof. *Emeritus* Roger Southall stepped down from the EXCO after many years, where he had been responsible for liaison with the university community in the Western Cape, and we have approached Prof. *Emeritus* Anthony Black, a former Director of the UCT School of Economics and a Senior Research Fellow in the Environmental Policy Research Unit (EPRU), to join the EXCO in that role. I'm delighted that he has agreed to do that. Professor Black has already provided invaluable assistance to the Branch by enabling us to use the lecture facilities of the UCT School of Economics for several important events.

The membership of the EXCO was rejuvenated in 2023 by the addition of Laura-Jane Watkins, who took over the Parliamentary Liaison portfolio from Sheila Camerer. As she and her husband will be leaving for the United Kingdom at the end of 2024, she will, be stepping down from the EXCO after the Annual General Meeting. We wish her all success in the next chapter of her life.

The EXCO was broadened by the appointment of our KAS-SAIIA Scholar on the SAIIA Futures programme, Karabo Mangena, as the person responsible for Student Liaison at the University of Stellenbosch. Karabo is pursuing a master's degree in political science at Stellenbosch University, focusing on the evolution of democracy in South Africa. She not only participated in the Branch programme on the *Summit of the Future* with UN Resident Coordinator Nelson Muffuh, but was invited thereafter to join the [United Nations Day event with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation on 28 October](#), to speak on *Multilateralism for Future Generations*.

The Branch could not function without our Branch Coordinator, Pippa Segall, and all of us join in expressing our appreciation to her for her exceptional contributions.

It remains only for me to thank all our members, and our guests, for their loyal support and constructive feedback throughout the year.

In line with the Branch Constitution, which limits the term of the Chairperson to two consecutive years, I shall be stepping down as Chair after the Annual General Meeting in 2024. It has been a privilege to serve you in that capacity. The EXCO members will elect another Chairperson from among their number.

Seán Cleary  
Chair