

SOUTH AFRICA TAKES UP ITS SEAT ON THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
MEDIA BRIEFING: MINISTER NKOANA-MASHABANE

South Africa on 1 January 2011 began its second term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the period 2011 and 2012. South Africa will serve alongside the Permanent Five members, China, France, the Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States and elected members Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria and Portugal. South Africa in the conduct of its international relations is committed to garner support for our domestic priorities; to promote the interests of the African Continent; to promote democracy and human rights; uphold justice and international law in relations between nations; seek the peaceful resolution of conflicts; and promote economic development through regional and international co-operation in an inter-dependent world. We also strongly believe in the concept and practice of good governance, as one of several important tools and instruments at the disposal of nations in their conduct of world affairs.

In pursuance of these principles, the South African Government adheres to and strongly supports a multilateral, rules-based system. We approach our membership of the Security Council from the premise that the United Nations remains the most appropriate forum for addressing international challenges in the maintenance of international peace and security, which are best served through collective co-operation.

These principles will guide our actions, as we discharge our responsibility, alongside the other members of the Security Council, to make a meaningful contribution to peace, security and development, not only on our Continent, but globally. To this end South Africa will forge close partnerships and promote greater consultation with the other members of the Security Council in the conduct of its work.

Whilst the above principles and values that guide our international work are strong and sustainable we are cognizant of the fact that actual implementation is sometimes not straight forward. The environment in which we will be operating namely the Security Council is the body which has powers beyond any other. The power configuration is not in favour of the non permanent members and national interests sometimes override international commitments. The unfair use or abuse of diplomatic tools at members' discretion can make the work of the Security Council very difficult.

For the first time the configuration of the Council in 2011 will reflect the membership of a potentially reformed Council. In addition to the Permanent Five, we will have the so-called Emerging Powers, some of which aspire to Permanent membership, as well as IBSA and BRICS represented in the Council. South Africa and Nigeria will at the same time also be members of the African Union Peace and Security Council, presenting a unique opportunity to bring greater alignment to the work of these two bodies regarding conflict on our Continent. South Africa will seek to strengthen co-operation between the G3 (Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa) in the Council, with the aim of elevating the African Agenda and the achievement of peace and security on our Continent and to coordinate efforts in this regard more efficiently. This is important in a Council where influence is unevenly distributed and certain members play a dominant role.

South Africa will continue its efforts to promote and enhance the Security Council's cooperation with regional organizations, particularly the African Union's Peace and Security Council. Closer co-operation between these two bodies will contribute to enhancing the convergence of perspectives and approaches in dealing with and responding to peace and security challenges on our Continent.

South Africa will actively contribute to the work of the Security Council by participating in its committees, working groups and other structures. These bodies assist the Council to explore issues in greater depth and to monitor and facilitate implementation of its decisions. In 2011, South Africa in line with its foreign policy priorities, will chair the 1540 Committee dealing with weapons of mass destruction and non-state actors and the Working Group on Conflict Prevention in Africa. South Africa will also serve as Vice-Chair of the Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia Sanctions Committees.

Security Council membership will also present an opportunity to contribute to reforming the working methods of the Security Council and to work towards the achievement of a representative, legitimate and more effective Security Council. Through our daily interactions with the P5 and other Council members, we will attempt to persuade and convince them of the need for the early conclusion of the reform process.

During our membership of the Security Council we will be cognizant of the Charter mandated roles of the different UN principal organs. We will continue to assert that the Security Council, which is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, is but one of these albeit the most important one, because it may authorize the use of force. We will continue to assert the role of the other principal organs, such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the International Court of Justice and argue for vigilance in the Security Council usurping the mandates of these other organs. We remain aware that the formation of major power groupings will contribute to the quality of work that the Security Council will produce.

In our membership of the Council for 2011 and 2012, we will build on our achievements and lessons learned during our first term in 2007 and 2008. We will use the opportunity to consolidate the gains made during this term, but also be aware of the changes we need to make to improve our work to respond effectively to the global issues and challenges facing us.

South Africa will be serving in the Council at a time of great challenges, amongst them the holding of a referendum in Southern Sudan, the crisis in Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire, debates on the Iranian nuclear programme, the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question and the drawdown or exit of UN peacekeeping operations.

In the attainment of its objectives in the Security Council, Government will be consulting widely with all stakeholders on how South Africa's participation at the Security Council can be enhanced and will take steps to ensure that our public is kept informed.