



Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road
New Delhi

Report

on
Panel Discussion

on
‘South Africa’s Africa Agenda: Changing Perspectives on
Africa’s Development’

at

Sapru House, New Delhi
3 November, 2014

A panel discussion on “South Africa’s Africa Agenda: Changing Perspectives on Africa’s Development” was held in Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House on November 3, 2014. Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, DG, ICWA welcomed H. E. Ms. Lindiwe Nonceba Sisulu, Minister of Human Settlement of the Republic of South Africa to this discussion, which, he stated, has acquired special salience in the context of Africa’s centrality in the post apartheid South Africa’s foreign policy in the past two decades. Situating the panel discussion as part of ICWA’s ongoing dialogue process with Africa, he noted India and South Africa’s positive developmental role in this continent. Ambassador Bhatia described Mahatma Gandhi as one of the most important and evocative links between India and South Africa and emphasised that his ideas remain very much relevant in the current scenario of partnership and development in Africa and India.

Amb. Shiv S. Mukherjee, Former Indian High Commissioner to South Africa, chaired the panel discussion. He mentioned a fundamental change in the image of Africa from a ‘dark’ to ‘sunrise’ continent. He informed that in the early 1990s, around 10 out of total 49 Sub-Saharan countries had democratic forms of governance and now the number has reached beyond 40. Amb. Mukherjee noted that the Africa agenda was reflected in Mandela’s enunciation of South African foreign policy in 1993. He stated that some of the fastest growing economies of the world belong to Africa, and South Africa has become the engine of continent’s growth due to the industrial diversification of its economy.

Prof. Rajen Harshe, Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Allahabad, stated that the evolution of post-apartheid South Africa represents one major chapter in the eternal struggle of humanity to establish an egalitarian, non-racial and just social order. Describing Mandela as the most towering anti-apartheid crusader in the history of the last century, Prof. Harshe noted that the first President of post-apartheid South Africa had creatively pressed his imagination into service to carve out a rainbow coalition of multiple races and ethnic groups representing different political parties, under the African National Congress (ANC). He also spoke about South African experiment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that brought victims and perpetrators of racism face to face to resolve their deep seated animosities in an atmosphere that believed in ‘apologise, forgive and forget’. He mentioned in

greater detail South Africa's pre-eminence in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and its active involvement in conflict resolution efforts across Africa.

Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, spoke about the spill over effect of South African economy into trade and investment dynamism of the SADC region and the growth scenario of larger Africa. He stressed that South Africa's substantive progress on the science and technology front has added impetus to ongoing efforts towards industrial knowledge acquisition and technological innovation in Africa. He highlighted South African Development Partnership Agency's (SADPA) critical function in the development cooperation endeavours in Africa and its potential role in the wider mission of South-South Cooperation.

H. E. Ms. Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Human Settlements, Republic of South Africa, stated that her country will celebrate the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's historic position and leadership on passive resistance struggle in the year 2015, in recognition of his iconic role and passion for this form of protest against colonialism. She added that the purpose of the celebration was also to lay claim that Mahatma Gandhi is an African and an internationalist. Gandhi learned and was tutored in the art of struggle, resistance politics and leadership in the crucible of the South African struggle, mentioned the Minister.

Explaining South Africa's foreign policy narrative, the Minister said that South Africa underwent dramatic rehabilitation from an international pariah state during the apartheid years to a bastion of African democracy. She added that the primary challenge during President Mandela's era was to reposition South Africa on the global stage. She also stated that full representation and membership in regional and international organisations and establishing a global diplomatic network and presence was of particular importance for her country.

The Minister proclaimed that in terms of its 'Africa Agenda', South Africa's diplomacy has concentrated on developing the African Union's (AU) new institutional architecture as the continent's governance custodian, on the one hand; and on the other, ensuring delivery and

functional efficacy as well as administrative competence of the New Partnership for Africa's Development as the continent's socio-economic blueprint and home-grown version of a Marshall Plan. She mentioned that at the bilateral level and over the last two decades, all three presidents have devoted considerable political and diplomatic energy to building closer relations with South Africa's main trading partners, especially with the United States and the European Union, but now increasingly with China, Brazil, and India.

The Minister stated that India will be hosting the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit, which will look to further strengthen ties between India and Africa, to the benefit of all countries. In this regard, she affirmed South African Government's commitment to assist with ensuring that this Summit remains successful. On an optimistic note, she stated that they have witnessed the success story that is the new South Africa over the past 20 years and through the growth and development of Africa. She reiterated that it is only through partnerships that progress can take place.

An intense interaction took place on a range of issues including Gandhi's world-view, reciprocity narrative of South Africa's intervention for containment of conflicts in Africa, civilian-military interface in African governance, and International Criminal Court (ICC) and AU in conflict adjudication efforts in Africa. At the end of the panel discussion, Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, DG, ICWA, gave the vote of thanks.

The Report is prepared by Dr. Sandipani Dash, Research Fellow, ICWA.