



Statement by Dr GNM Pandor

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa During the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting

Agenda item B: Global Governance reform

22 February 2024

Your Excellency, Ambassador Mauro Vieira, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federative Republic of Brazil

Excellencies, Foreign Ministers of the G20 nations and invited guests,

We welcome His Excellency, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's call, as the G20 President, for the reinvigoration of multilateralism and the reform of global governance institutions.

I want to briefly reflect on some of the statements made yesterday and refer to South Africa's approach to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with regards to Israel's possible breach of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as a means to illustrate why reform of global governance institutions is so important.

South Africa approached the ICJ as we believe that institutions like the ICJ are important instruments of global governance and that these institutions should be at the forefront of settling disputes peacefully. Also, in terms of the convention, as a state party we are duty bound to take action, if we genuinely believe that the provisions of the convention are being breached. The negative reactions by some states to South Africa doing this is indicative of the prevailing institutional bias within international law which is, that international law and its institutions are not meant to hold powerful countries and their allies to account, even if it's for the crimes of crimes.

This practice has led to decades of institutionalised impunity for the most powerful countries and their allies.

This has to change if we are to end impunity. Transforming and using the institutions of global governance to ensure a more just and equitable international legal order for all is now more urgent than ever. Making international law accessible for all, includes the urgent need for reform of the United Nations system.

Yesterday, while we were debating on whether or not a ceasefire in Gaza is necessary and some questioned its desirability, Nour Naser Abu Al-Nour a, young lawyer and human rights defender with the Palestinian Center for Human Rights was killed with seven members of her family, including her little daughter and father. Nour and her family were killed by an Israeli airstrike at their family home in Rafah, just days after the United Nations Security Council failed yet again, to agree on a ceasefire.

These repeated failures of the United Nations Security Council, which includes actions by one or two powerful countries, due to the disproportionate power they wield in the United Nations Security Council, has been at the cost of countless of lives in Palestine, Ukraine and other conflict situations over many decades. This has to stop.

The Security Council has to be reformed and it has to be done now. At the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg last year, two of the permanent members of the council committed to the urgent reform of the Security Council. We trust that other permanent members of the UNSC who are members of the G20 will follow suit.

We therefore agree with the proposal by Brazil, that the process to review the UN Charter be considered, as without changing certain provisions in the United Nations Charter, reform of the UNSC and the much needed revitalisation of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly will not be possible. We hope that by the time we meet as G20 Foreign Ministers at UNGA, we will have a roadmap towards this review process.

In considering this reform agenda we need to reflect on the lack of enforceability within the international system for those states who breach international law, including binding orders from the apex courts in the international system. We need to debate the kinds of counter-measures that would be effective in reducing perpetual transgressions of international law. This includes revisiting issues such as 'responsibility to protect'. We have seen the principles of Responsibility to Protect abused for geopolitical considerations in the past. Yet, when civilians are killed en masse in Gaza, there are very few voices calling for peace enforcement in Palestine to protect protect civilians while, as agreed yesterday, we move the needle towards a just two state solution.

In addition, South Africa maintains that there is an urgent need to reform the global economic governance system. Whilst the calls for more rapid and fundamental reforms have, in recent years, grown louder, the debate must advance toward tangible outcomes.

The lack of progress in fundamental structural changes necessary for augmenting sustainable development globally is worrisome and further highlights the need to focus on providing more financial resources, which is linked, amongst others, to the reform of the International Financial Institutions and Multilateral Development Banks to make them fit-for-purpose.

In addition, a steady erosion of trust and competition between states is weakening the ability of the international community to work together to address shared challenges.

The obstacles include growing unilateralism; protectionism, geo-political rivalries; inconsistent compliance with-and at times blatant violations of-international law.

Although we have seen an increase in the Bretton Woods Institutions levels of responsiveness to developing country needs, all efforts must be made to not only safeguard these gains, but an international approach is required to increase these gains at a more ambitious pace towards ensuring that these institutions are adequately equipped to provide the levels of support that developing countries require to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Chair,

To support developing countries, particularly those on the African continent to achieve the SDGs, the lending capacity and innovation in the development of suitable financing instruments of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), including the World Bank, must be increased.

In this regard, South Africa urges the MDBs to make progress in implementing the recommendations of the G20 Independent Review of MDBs Capital Adequacy Frameworks.

The mandates of multilateral development banks must be reframed to respond to the needs of developing economies. We must assert the principle of country ownership. Multilateral development banks should support projects and programmes that are aligned to the development priorities and climate commitments of these countries.

Furthermore, MDBs must address the challenge of Illicit financial flows that are detrimental to the economies of many African countries.

In conclusion, South Africa, is committed to working with all members of the G20, and to contribute meaningfully within the troika, to advance the mandate of this very important forum and we look forward to working with the new Presidency, Brazil, to advance the key conclusions of the Leader's Summit later in the year.

I thank you