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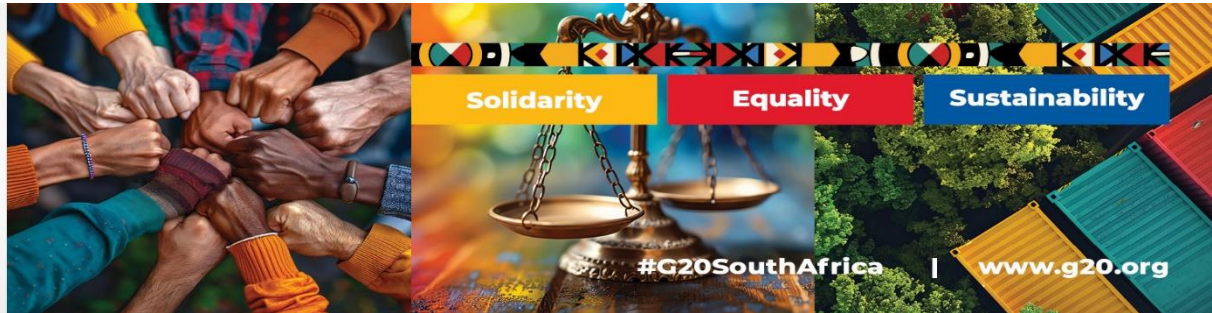
WEEKLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

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SOUTH AFRICANS CALLED TO RALLY BEHIND SANDF TROOPS IN THE DRC

President Cyril Ramaphosa has addressed growing speculation about the conditions faced by South African troops deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), calling on the nation to stand behind its soldiers.

In a statement on Wednesday, 29 January 2025, the President emphasised government's concern over misleading reports and reaffirmed South Africa's commitment to peacekeeping efforts.

"We are concerned about the speculation about the state of our troops and the battle conditions. All South Africans must rally behind our brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to bringing peace to our continent.

"South Africa's military presence in the eastern DRC is not a declaration of war against any country or state. The members of the South African National Defence Force that are in the DRC are part of efforts by both the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the United Nations (UN) to bring peace and protect thousands of lives that are constantly threatened by the conflict in the DRC," the President said.



The President added that the presence of the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC) demonstrates a commitment of SADC member states in supporting the DRC in its efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability and ultimately create an enabling environment for sustainable development and prosperity.

The SAMIDRC is a regional peacekeeping initiative launched on 15 December 2023, to assist the DRC government in restoring peace and security in the eastern regions of the country. This deployment was approved during an Extraordinary SADC Summit held in Windhoek, Namibia, on 8 May 2023, as a response to escalating conflicts and instability caused by the resurgence of armed groups in the area.

According to a press release issued by SADC in January last year, SAMIDRC comprises military contingents from Malawi, South Africa, and Tanzania, working in collaboration with the Congolese Army, FARDC, to combat and eradicate armed groups operating in eastern DRC.

The President's remarks follow the recent intensification of fighting in the eastern DRC, where South Africa lost 13 brave soldiers who were dedicated to their mission and committed to peace.

The fighting is the result of an escalation by the rebel group M23 and Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) militia engaging the FARDC and attacking peacekeepers from the SADC Mission in the DRC.

President Ramaphosa welcomed the UN Security Council's recent position on the situation in the DRC, which calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the reversal of territorial expansion by the M23, the withdrawal of external forces from the DRC, and the resumption of peace talks under the Nairobi Process.

"The territorial integrity of the DRC must be respected in accordance with the UN Charter on the respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of other states," he said.

He urged all parties involved in the conflict to fully embrace diplomatic efforts, including honouring the Luanda Process agreements.

"We call on all parties to this conflict to fully embrace the current diplomatic efforts that are aimed at finding a peaceful resolution, including honouring the Luanda Process agreements.

"We must silence the guns on our continent for the attainment of inclusive development and prosperity," he said.

On Tuesday, the SANDF also issued a statement clarifying the misrepresentation of events circulating in a video clip claiming that SANDF forces surrendered to M23 rebels.

The SANDF clarified that the footage in question depicts a white flag raised, which is an outcome of discussions between the opposing fighting forces to agree on a truce to allow M23 to recover their dead and injured in the vicinity of the South African base.

It explained that this will also open the route for South African troops to access medical facilities. The SANDF said this is common practice in any war, and members of the public should not be alarmed by the video clip and its meaning.

The SANDF also reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to its peacekeeping mission under the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), and SAMIDRC.

It further emphasised that its troops continue to operate with resolve, courage, and discipline to bring peace and stability to the region.

South Africa has played a pivotal role in the DRC's peacekeeping efforts, with SANDF forces working tirelessly under challenging circumstances to support the mission's objectives. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA EXTENDS WELL WISHES TO CHINA ON LUNAR NEW YEAR

President Cyril Ramaphosa has conveyed messages of goodwill to the government and people of the People's Republic of China on the commencement of the Lunar New Year of the Snake and Annual Spring Festival on Wednesday, 29 January 2025.

The Lunar New Year is celebrated to usher in a New Year on the day of the first sighting of the new moon, in line with the traditional Chinese calendar.

This year has been declared the Year of the Snake. The snake is expected to bring about transformation and new beginnings.

"We extend our good wishes to the Chinese community in South Africa, including Chinese citizens who live in or are currently visiting our beautiful country.

"Similarly, we wish that the New Year will bring continued success to our Chinese trade and investment partners who are making an important contribution to our economy," President Ramaphosa said.

The President expressed his hope that the new year brings new prosperity in relations between the two countries.

"We are confident that, under the leadership of His Excellency President Xi Jinping, the Year of the Snake will sustain the People's Republic of China's standing as a formidable force for good and a source of wisdom and shared prosperity in the global family of nations.

"May the celebration of Spring and the rebirth of nature be a symbol of the blossoming of even closer relations between our two nations under our All-Round Strategic Cooperative Partnership in a New Era," President Ramaphosa concluded. – Source: SAnews.gov.za



STRONGER MEASURES TO PROTECT OCEANS FROM POLLUTION

President Cyril Ramaphosa has signed into law the Marine Pollution (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Amendment Bill, ushering in stronger measures to better protect South Africa's oceans from ship-related pollution.



In a statement, The Presidency highlighted the importance of the legislation, which is also a contribution to global efforts to protect the marine environment and sustainable economic exploitation.

"With a coastline stretching over 3 000 kilometres from Namibia on the Atlantic Ocean to Mozambique on the Indian Ocean, the new legislation is seen as vital to safeguarding the country's environmental and economic security," The Presidency said.

South Africa has a large exclusive economic zone at sea and a marine economy that, in 2022, supported about 400 000 jobs in areas across the existing marine economic sectors of shipping, associated construction, tourism and fisheries.

"The law signed by President Ramaphosa is born out of the recognition that ships can pollute our oceans in various ways, from oil spills to harmful chemical sewage and garbage," The Presidency said.

The law amends the Marine Pollution Act to incorporate Annex IV and Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

Annex IV regulates the activities for treatment and safe disposal of sewage from ships. Annex VI is the main global instrument that addresses ship energy-efficiency management and greenhouse gas emissions.

The amended legislation further broadens the powers of the Minister of Transport to make regulations relating to, among others, the prevention of air pollution from ships and the prevention of pollution by sewage from ships.

“The new law also increases fines from R500 000 to R10 million for any person convicted of serious offences under the Marine Pollution (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Act or the International Convention that forms part of South African law,” The Presidency said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

MINISTER LAMOLA URGES RWANDAN FORCES TO WITHDRAW FROM DRC

International Relations and Cooperation Minister Ronald Lamola has urged Rwanda to stop its support for the M23 group and to withdraw its forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“The unauthorised presence of the Rwanda Defence Forces in eastern DRC violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC,” the Minister said at the 1257th Meeting of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) on Tuesday, 28 January 2025.

Several soldiers serving with peacekeeping forces in the DRC were killed by the M23 rebel group in recent days following intense fighting, including 13 members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Deadly clashes have erupted in eastern DRC following Kinshasa’s withdrawal of its diplomats from Kigali, as rebels backed by Rwanda advance toward the key city of Goma, which is rich in minerals.



The soldiers of the SANDF are part of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC).

They have been deployed to support Africa’s second-largest country in its efforts to restore peace, security, and stability.

Meanwhile, Minister Lamola has described the current security situation in the eastern DRC as “utterly appalling and unacceptable”.

“South Africa strongly condemns the recent activities of the M23 rebel group in North Kivu province, which has now affected Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu, and surrounding areas.

“We would also like to condemn Rwanda for its support of the M23, as clearly proven by various United Nations reports of experts.”

Talks

He urged the Congolese and Rwandan governments to resuscitate talks in the context of the Luanda Peace Process, facilitated by Angolan President João Lourenço.

“In the meantime, we demand that M23 must immediately cease all its armed activities and withdraw from all territories that they occupy to prevent further loss of lives.

“We would like to reiterate that military action is not the only solution in Congo. Therefore, there must be a political dialogue that would address all concerns of the parties in conflict.

“It is evident that the current conflict in the eastern DRC will not stop without the concerns of both the DRC and Rwanda being addressed through mediation and negotiations,” Minister Lamola said.

Action needed

As the standing decision-making organ of the AU for prevention and management, Minister Lamola believes that the PSC must redouble its efforts to stop the carnage and the worsening humanitarian situation.

“Therefore, there must be practical efforts that should be urgently undertaken by the PSC to resolve the current situation.”

The Minister stated that South Africa is making every effort to promote much-needed peace and stability in the eastern DRC.

According to Minister Lamola, this is being achieved through the deployment of peacekeepers as part of both the United Nations (UN) Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the SAMIDRC.

“The unfortunate deaths of 13 of our patriots paid an ultimate sacrifice in our efforts to silence the guns in the eastern DRC to bring about peace and stability that the Congolese people have been yearning for over three decades.”

Support

He also requested additional support from the AU by allocating funds to the SAMIDRC, through the Crisis Reserve Fund of the Peace Fund.

“Currently, this mission requires urgent financial and material support to overcome the current situation in the DRC.

“We also wish to call upon the UN to provide more support to SAMIDRC in line with Resolutions 2719 and 2717.”

He believes that more efforts are needed to “Silence the Guns” in Africa.

“To achieve this noble goal, Africa must show zero tolerance to current and emerging conflicts and redouble efforts to resolve them.

“We also need to take decisive action for those who are fuelling these deadly conflicts. South Africa remains fully committed to its peacekeeping responsibilities under the auspices of MONUSCO and SAMIDRC.

“Our troops continue to operate with resolve, courage, and discipline in pursuit of peace and stability in the region but urgently need support from our partners, especially this august body.” – Source: SAnews.gov.za



STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION IN THE EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Republic of South Africa, through its Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), Ambassador Mathu Joyini, expressed gratitude to the members of the United Nations Security Council for convening a meeting to urgently address the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).



Ambassador Joyini thanked Under Secretary-General (SG) Jean Pierre Lacroix, Special Representative to the SG Binto Keita, and Assistant SG Joyce Msuya for their briefing and acknowledged the presence of Minister Therese Kayikwamba Wagner in the chamber.

Ambassador Joyini expressed profound regret that the meeting was taking place at a time when peacekeepers had lost their lives, with many others injured in the line of duty. She stated that nine of these fallen peacekeepers were South Africans, who showed immense bravery despite relentless attacks from the M23. These attacks, she noted, were in violation of the ceasefire brokered through the Luanda Process.

She condemned the attacks against the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) personnel, emphasising their role in promoting peace and stability not just in the eastern DRC but across the African continent. She conveyed South Africa's condolences to the families of the fallen peacekeepers and wished a speedy recovery to the injured. Ambassador Joyini stressed that the cost of being a UN peacekeeper should never be this high and that the Security Council must take decisive action against such violations.

The Ambassador highlighted the eroding and global violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity, including in the eastern DRC, where the presence of external forces was destabilising the country. She called for the Rwanda Defence Forces to cease supporting the M23 and for the M23 to immediately halt all hostile actions and withdraw from occupied areas.

She emphasised that the international community could no longer stand by as the conflict in the eastern DRC continued to harm innocent civilians and called for decisive action from the Security Council. She urged the use of the Council's tools to address those perpetuating the conflict, including their withdrawal from the DRC, and stressed the need for a resumption of both the Luanda and Nairobi Processes to find a lasting political solution.

Ambassador Joyini commended the President of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, for his tireless work on the Luanda Process and urged all relevant parties to engage in it, aiming for a negotiated settlement that would bring peace and stability to the Great Lakes region and the African continent.

She concluded by reaffirming South Africa's commitment to continue playing a constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the eastern DRC and the continent through its peacekeeping efforts. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za

SOUTH AFRICA SIGNS INTERNATIONAL TREATY TO BOOST FOOD SECURITY, BIODIVERSITY

South Africa has joined scores of countries worldwide that have formalised their commitment to ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) announced on Tuesday that South Africa has officially signed the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

The objectives of the ITPGRFA are the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and to promote the fair and equitable sharing of these benefits arising from their use, in agreement with the Convention on Biological Diversity for sustainable agriculture and food security.

The treaty also aims to, among others, recognise the contribution of farmers in enhancing the diversity of crops that feed the world; establish a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders, and scientists with access to plant genetic materials; and ensure that the recipients thereof share the benefits they derive from using these genetic materials.



Some of the countries that have ratified the treaty include Australia, Belgium, Egypt, the United States of America, and Argentina, to name a few.

South Africa submitted its instrument of accession with the Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) on 23 December 2024, making it the 154th Contracting Party to this international treaty.

By joining the ITPGRFA, the DALRRD said South Africa is reaffirming its commitment to global efforts to conserve and sustainably use plant genetic resources, which are essential for food security and agricultural biodiversity.

This is aligned with the recently approved White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity.

"South Africa's accession to the ITPGRFA brings new opportunities for collaboration within the treaty's framework, including participation in its multilateral system, which facilitates access to a global pool of genetic resources.

“The ITPGRFA’s national implementation will require close collaboration between the National Genebank, the relevant national departments, provincial Departments of Agriculture, community seed banks, farmers, civil society organisations, industry and research and academic institutions,” the department said.

More information on the ITPGRFA can be accessed on <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/en/>. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

SOUTH AFRICA CALLS ON USA TO RECONSIDER WITHDRAWAL FROM PARIS AGREEMENT

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George, has called on the United States of America (USA) to take its commitments under international law seriously and carefully consider the ramifications of its intended withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

This comes after reports indicate that President Donald Trump has started the process to withdraw the USA from the Paris Agreement again.



In a statement last week, Minister George expressed profound regret over the decision of the USA to withdraw from the Paris Agreement again.

“The Paris Agreement represents the most flexible and dynamic approach to addressing climate change. The USA played an important role in the negotiation of the Paris Agreement, and the withdrawal of the USA is not only an abdication of the global responsibility that we all have to humankind, but damaging to multilateralism, international law, and carefully built trust between nations,” the Minister said.

The Paris Agreement is aimed at strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C.

“The Paris Agreement is premised on a common and very strong understanding that we all have a common responsibility to act, whilst noting that nations over time have contributed to the problem differently and have varied capabilities to respond.

“Historically, the USA has contributed very significantly to global emissions, still having the highest cumulative historical emissions, and therefore to global warming and the climate crisis we all face.

“Therefore, Americans have a pressing moral obligation not only to lead in reducing emissions but also to support developing economies in contributing to the global effort and to provide support to poor countries experiencing the impacts of climate change,” the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment said.

The department said during the recent 29th United Nations (UN) Conference of the Parties (COP29), the USA committed to reduce emissions and its recently communicated mitigation target for 2035.

“It appears now that these commitments will not be upheld. We hope that this is not the case. The USA has been a leader in both the science of climate change and in technological innovation underpinning the global response to climate change.

“We recognise the outstanding contribution made to the fight against climate change in the USA by past administrations, states, cities, scientific organisations, civil society, business, and ordinary Americans.

“We applaud the continuing efforts of USA citizens and non-state actors to address the climate crisis with the diligence, creativity, and imagination we have come to expect,” the department said.

South Africa reiterated its unwavering commitment to the realisation of the goals set out in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement.

“We must, and we will, seize this moment to innovate and drive forward sustainable solutions. The global effort to curb climate change and address its impacts cannot be put on hold. There is an urgent need for action. We remain hopeful that the momentum of the collective effort to address climate change will only accelerate.

“The international community regards climate change as the single biggest threat to wellbeing, health and socio-economic development currently facing humanity. Its impact is widespread, unprecedented and places a disproportionate and unjust burden on the poorest and most vulnerable in our country, our continent, and globally.

“In 2024, the world breached for the first time the critical threshold of 1.5 °C of global warming, signalling the urgency of immediate and strong climate action to avoid increasingly dangerous climate change impacts,” the department said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

SOUTH AFRICA HOSTS GLOBAL CIRCULAR ECONOMY WORKSHOP

Efforts to ensure that South Africa has a clean and healthy environment are under the spotlight at the seventh Global Forum of Cities for Circular Economy (GFCCE) workshop.

The two-day workshop, which was being hosted by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in Johannesburg—in collaboration with the Centre for Science and Environment—was aimed at enhancing South-South cooperation for improving the solid waste management ecosystem in the global South and building the capacity of nominated officials from 18 African nations.

The workshop, which concluded on Wednesday, is being attended by delegates from Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Addressing the opening of the workshop, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Bernice Swarts, highlighted some of the measures government have adopted to bolster the circular economy, focusing on reusing and recycling materials to ensure a sustainable and secure supply of resources.

“South Africa has instituted various policy instruments and initiatives to advance sustainable development pathways, with circular economy principles firmly embedded in these strategies,” Swarts said on Tuesday.

These policy instruments include the National Waste Management Strategy, Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations (EPR) for priority waste streams and other economic instruments that include fees, levies and taxes to incentivise or disincentivise behaviour change.

“Extended Producer Responsibility became necessary to be included in South Africa's policy mix, given the increased generation of waste. EPR shifts seek to shift the responsibility for products from municipalities and consumers to producers.

“South Africa is under immense pressure and the host city [of the workshop]—the City of Joburg—together with others - does not have sufficient landfill airspace. It is, therefore, necessary to utilise a policy mix to address resource efficiency. It is also necessary that cities are enabled to monitor resource use,” Swarts said.

The Deputy Minister noted that for meaningful progress to be made across the board, strong partnerships are needed.

“Collaboration between government and the private sector is paramount in realising the goals of the waste management hierarchy and facilitating our transition to a circular economy.

“South Africa remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening these partnerships and advancing the shared objectives of the GFCCE. This collaboration benefits our governments through reduced spending and creates green opportunities,” she said.



Since its establishment in 2021, the GFCCE has expanded to a community of 22 Member States, with 18 countries from Africa. This platform is dedicated to advancing circular economy principles in alignment with national policies and priorities.

Cities account for 75% of natural resource consumption and 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Swarts said more people will continue to migrate to cities to seek better opportunities, and it is necessary that cities become resilient in resource efficiency and reduce their environmental footprint. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

G20 WORKING GROUP COMMITS TO TACKLING FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

The first 2025 Group of Twenty (G20) Development Working Group (DWG) meeting, which took place last week, was characterised by robust discussions aimed at tackling global development challenges.



This is according to the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

The meeting, which was held from 20 to 23 January, was officially opened by the Minister in The Presidency, Maropene Ramokgopa, who emphasised the importance of fostering global solidarity, equality, and sustainable development to create a future characterised by resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Over the three days, G20 DWG members emphasised the importance of investing in enabling the optimal provision of global public goods, universal social protection, financing for development, and the urgent need to address illicit financial flows (IFFs) in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

According to the department, the meeting reaffirmed that social protection was a critical tool in reducing poverty and inequality while fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

“The G20 DWG highlighted the importance of scaling up social protection systems, particularly in developing economies, to ensure universal access to essential services. Discussions emphasised the necessity of addressing the needs of marginalised groups, including those in the informal economy and small enterprises, with an emphasis on ensuring that no one is left behind,” said the department.

A key focus of the meeting was the growing financing gap for achieving the SDGs.

The DWG acknowledged the urgent need for additional, at-scale, and predictable financing to support sustainable development, particularly in Africa and other developing countries.

Several speakers emphasised the need for stronger regulatory frameworks and international cooperation to enhance national capacities for tackling illicit financial flows (IFFs), which continue to undermine development efforts.

Illicit financial flows, particularly through trade mis-invoicing, were highlighted as a significant barrier to achieving the SDGs.

“The G20 DWG also recognised the importance of partnerships between customs administrations, financial intelligence units, and law enforcement agencies in curbing these illicit flows. These efforts are crucial for creating fiscal space that enables countries to finance the SDGs and achieve long-term economic resilience.”

As part of its programme, the South African Presidency G20 DWG will host several meetings to develop key outputs and map out a programme of action to advance progress on the SDGs and other global development priorities.

The 2025 G20 DWG meeting concluded with a clear commitment to tackling the interconnected challenges of social protection, financing for development, and illicit financial flows.

“The discussions underscored the need for urgent action to close the development financing gap, mobilise resources effectively, and build resilient economies.

“As the world moves closer to the 2030 SDG deadline, many speakers in the G20 DWG emphasised the need to support developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable and inclusive development, with a focus on creating fiscal space, enhancing financial transparency, and ensuring that no one is left behind,” said the department. – Source: www.gov.za.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT CONVENES FIRST G20 HEALTH WORKING GROUP MEETING

The Department of Health convened the first virtual Group of Twenty (G20) Health Working Group meeting on Friday, 24 January 2025, as part of the country’s G20 Presidency activities planned for 2025.

“The objective of this meeting on health is for South Africa to present its G20 Health Working Group priorities to the Member States and other invited stakeholders to be informed about the country’s priorities and also to make inputs accordingly,” the department said in a statement.

The mandate of the Health Working Group is to improve global health by addressing health challenges, building resilient health systems, and promoting equitable access to health services.

This virtual meeting focused on the theme, Accelerate Health Equity, Solidarity, and Universal Coverage and included representatives from all G20 Member States, invited non-Member States and international organisations.

The health priorities identified within the broader South African G20 Presidency formed part of the deliberations on the day and included the strengthening of primary healthcare as a pathway towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the Pandemic Prevention Preparedness and Response, and the strengthening of the health and care workforce.

The leaders also focused on stemming the tide of non-communicable diseases and science and innovation for health and economic growth.

“This will be the first of the planned meetings, both in-person and virtual, scheduled to take place throughout the year across the country,” the department explained, adding that the outcomes of these technical working group meetings will inform part of the discussions at the meetings for G20 Health Ministers culminating in a G20 Health Working Group declaration. – Source: www.gov.za.



SOUTH AFRICAN FILM EARNS OSCAR NOMINATION

Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture Gayton McKenzie says he has received “with great pride and a sense of expectation” news of the Academy Award nomination for the South African film “The Last Ranger”.



WATCH THE VIDEO

Directed by Cindy Lee, the film has been nominated in the category of Best Live Action Short Film at the 97th Academy Awards, to be held in March 2025.

According to the department, this remarkable isiXhosa film, inspired by true events in South Africa’s Eastern Cape, tells the compelling story of Thandi, a rhino that miraculously survived a poaching attack at the Kariega Game Reserve, and the courageous woman who fought to protect these iconic animals against all odds.

“*The Last Ranger* is a powerful tribute to the resilience of our wildlife and the unwavering dedication of conservationists who work tirelessly to safeguard our natural heritage. Featuring stellar performances by Avumile Qongqo, Liyabona Mroqoza and Makhaola Ndebele, and written by David Lee, Darwin Shaw, and Will Hawks, this production stands as a testament to South Africa’s rich storytelling and cinematic excellence,” said the department.

The film's ongoing success, having already won Best Short Narrative at the 2024 Pan African Film Festival (PAFF), is a clear indication of its impact and brilliance.

The Minister said he was confident that it would continue to make an impact on the global stage, "and we eagerly await the Oscar ceremony on 2 March 2025, hopeful for yet another triumph".

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire cast and crew of *The Last Ranger*. Your hard work and dedication have helped to elevate South African cinema to new heights and kept our country in the eye of the world.

"Let us all rally behind this incredible production and showcase our support for local brilliance," – Source: www.gov.za

ANANT SINGH APPOINTED TO WEF GLOBAL ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL

South African film producer Anant Singh has been appointed to the Global Arts and Culture Council (GACC).

This, at the GACC's inaugural meeting held at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland.

The GACC was established in the context of the shifting world from an industrial era to a more intelligent and interconnected society, where the arts and culture sector is uniquely positioned to lead the way toward a unified and prosperous future.

In this moment of transformation, the GACC was launched with a distinguished group of visionary cultural leaders committed to harnessing creativity to shape the new age.

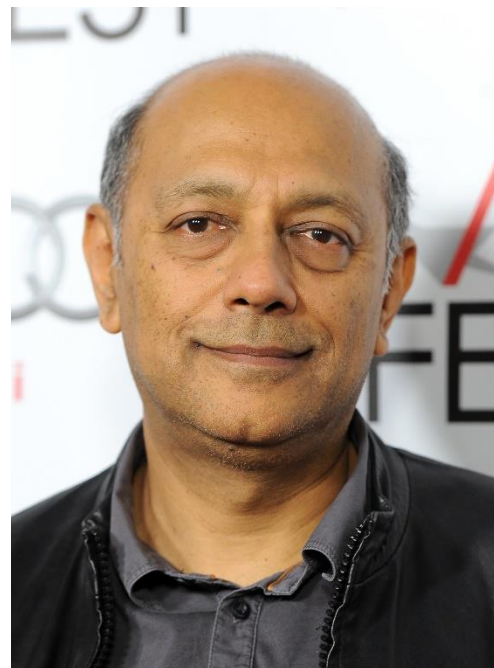
"Artists and the creative community around the world are the voice of the people and the custodians of humanity's storytelling. The Global Arts and Culture Council is vitally important in a fractious world where the voice and expressions of artists need to be heard in order to contribute to the dialogues of the journeys of millions of people.

"It was also a pleasure to attend the first plenary session of President Cyril Ramaphosa, where he addressed the delegates in advance of the G20 Summit in South Africa in November. The G20 Summit presents an exceptional opportunity for us to showcase our remarkable country and its people to the world," Videovision Entertainment said on Monday.

On 23 January, Singh participated in a panel entitled *An Artist's Path Out of Injustice*.

Singh is known for using the medium of film to speak out against the injustices of apartheid as well as significant social issues like HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence.

This year marks Singh's 25th consecutive attendance of the Annual Meeting since receiving the WEF's Crystal Award in 2001. – Source: SAnews.gov.za



CAPE TOWN STEAKHOUSE NAMED ONE OF THE BEST IN THE WORLD

Cape Town is a city known for its incredible food scene, particularly when it comes to fresh seafood. But beyond the beaches and fish markets, the Mother City also boasts some of the finest steakhouses in the world.

From the iconic Hussar Grill to the modern Butcher Shop & Grill, there's no shortage of exceptional places for steak lovers to indulge. Among the many contenders, *TimeOut* has awarded IRON Steak and Bar on Bree Street as an emerging global favourite.

Known for its expertly cooked steaks and a menu that combines tradition with innovation, IRON has set the bar high. The restaurant's standout feature is its Spanish Vulcano Grez grill, which imparts a perfect smoky flavour and sear to each cut of meat. It is designed to take advantage of the embers of a BBQ or oven, so the grill can be taken to the table, where it can be used to either maintain grilled meats or vegetables hot or to finish off pieces of meat that have been previously sealed.



TimeOut notes that the Summer Special offers a complete meal that starts with beef dripping popcorn, followed by a 200g grass-fed flat-iron steak with a fresh salad, and ends off with indulgent salted caramel ice cream.

For a more extravagant experience, *TimeOut* recommends the Tomahawk—a bone-in ribeye that’s perfect for those looking to splurge. Side dishes like truffled leek mac-and-cheese and chips cooked in Wagyu drippings are contemporary takes on classic steakhouse fare that elevate the experience to new heights.

The restaurant was thrilled to be named the sixth-best steakhouse restaurant in the world and commented on their achievement, “We’re thrilled to announce that IRON Steak and Bar has ranked 6th in the world in Timeout Travel’s The 10 Best Steaks in the World list!” – Source: www.capetownetc.com

NEW PODCAST TELLS THE STORIES OF INCREDIBLE AFRICAN LEADERS

A new podcast launched by the Mandela Rhodes Foundation is telling the stories of incredible African leaders, taking listeners behind the scenes and into the lives of remarkable trailblazers.

The podcast is set to take listeners into the lives and behind-the-scenes of remarkable trailblazers with a uniquely African perspective. Through the unfolding of these conversations, the podcast hopes to inspire those tuned in. While the public space is crowded with inspirational content, the Mandela Rhodes podcast series stands out in its offering of authentic and personal African narratives.

Under the auspices of Nelson Mandela’s dream to build exceptional leadership in our continent, the series kicks off with the life story of the Mandela Rhodes Foundation’s CEO, Judy Sikuza, who was appointed to the role at just 33.



Sikuza became the youngest CEO across all three official Nelson Mandela legacy organisations, embodying the spirit of leadership, resilience, and excellence that Madiba envisioned for the whole continent. She is also a 2024 Young Global Leader as selected by the World Economic Forum, a mother, and a sought-after speaker at institutions like Cambridge University, Oxford University, the Obama Foundation, and the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, among many other achievements.

Episode one takes us from her formative years all the way into her remarkable leadership, not shying away from the challenges that paved her path. Future episodes will include other important conversations on the Foundation’s founding principles of reconciliation, entrepreneurship, education, and leadership. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

DEAR EVAN HANSEN THE BROADWAY MUSICAL IS COMING TO SOUTH AFRICA

For those who love musicals, they will be excited to hear that “Dear Evan Hansen”, the multi-award-winning Broadway musical, is coming to South Africa next month. This “drama musical” delves into those universal themes of acceptance

and the complexities of growing up, navigating the highs and lows, challenges, and temptations of adolescence and adulthood. The message translates to every age.

WATCH THE VIDEO



The musical follows the story of high schooler Evan Hansen, who suffers from social anxiety. All his life, he has felt invisible. But when a tragic event shocks him and his community, this socially anxious, awkward high school student becomes the centre of a rapidly evolving controversy and resulting spiralling complex situation. Presented with the opportunity of a lifetime to finally “belong”, Evan inadvertently grabs the chance to create an important role for himself by not telling the whole truth. He transforms from a “nobody” to the central figure in a heartbreaking drama that explores adult themes of mental health, loneliness, and the human need for connection. As the truth evolves, Evan faces his web of lies and how everyone around him has been affected.

The all-South African cast features a mix of exciting new talent and established stars, ready to share a story and songs so beautiful that they have earned major awards such as Tony’s, Grammy’s, and more.

The winner of six Tony Awards (including Best Musical), the Grammy Award for Best Musical Theatre Album, and an Olivier Award for Best Musical, *Dear Evan Hansen* features a book by Tony Award-winner Steven Levenson and a score by Grammy, Tony, and Academy Award winners Benj Pasek and Justin Paul of *The Greatest Showman* fame.

All of this is coming to two of South Africa’s most popular stages. Showtime Management and How Now Brown Cow Productions are proud to present the South African premiere production of *Dear Evan Hansen* at Artscape in Cape Town and then at Montecasino’s Teatro in Johannesburg. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

PROTEAS' ANNERIE DERCKSEN WINS ICC EMERGING WOMEN'S CRICKETER OF THE YEAR

International Cricket Council (ICC) Emerging Women: Promising South Africa star Annerie Dercksen has been named the ICC Emerging Women's Cricketer of the Year for 2024, beating a tough field to win the prestigious honour.

Dercksen wore the green and gold for the first-ever time in January 2023 during the T20I triangular series featuring India and West Indies and has never looked back.

While the 23-year-old featured in five T20Is in her initial year, the all-rounder established herself in international cricket in 2024, in a year in which she also made her Test and ODI debuts.

If 2023 was the year of testing the waters, the all-rounder opened up in full flow in 2024, making a big impact in the international arena.

Dercksen demonstrated composure with the willow, showcasing an ability to both reconstruct an innings and guide a chase should the situation demand. Among her contributions was a stabilising 27 in South Africa’s only victory of the limited-overs leg of the series against England late in 2024.

With the ball, the medium pacer picked up 11 scalps, underlining her potential as a true all-rounder.

Dercksen was part of South Africa’s stellar campaign in the ICC Women’s T20 World Cup 2024, during which the Proteas managed to reach the final before falling short against New Zealand.



Dercksen maintained a healthy average of 32.2 in T20Is and salvaged South Africa from several difficult situations while also showing the ability to pick up pace despite floating in lower-order positions at the start of the year before being drafted into the middle-order towards the end.

She also picked up five wickets in the format, including a career-best 2-5 against Sri Lanka during South Africa's comprehensive win at home in March.

Dercksen's bowling shone further in the longer white-ball format, where she delivered a career-best 3-16 during South Africa's win against England in the first ODI.

A similar story continued in Tests, during tough contests against India and England. Dercksen's best was 41 in Bloemfontein, during which she helped rebuild the innings with a 92-run stand for the second wicket.

In the leadup to the Women's T20 World Cup 2024, Dercksen had only one batting opportunity in the T20I series against Pakistan, but the youngster made the most of it.

In the series decider, South Africa faced a challenging chase of 154. After losing Tazmin Brits early and seeing Anneke Bosch retire hurt at a critical moment, Dercksen was thrust into the spotlight. She rose to the occasion brilliantly, smashing an unbeaten 44 off just 23 balls, featuring six fours and two towering sixes, which came against the experienced Nida Dar and Sadia Iqbal.

In the leadup to the Women's T20 World Cup 2024, Dercksen had only one batting opportunity in the T20I series against Pakistan, but the youngster made the most of it. – Source: www.crickethnmore.com

BAFANA BAFANA TO FACE EGYPT AND MOHAMED SALAH AT AFCON 2025 IN MOROCCO

While Bafana Bafana's group will have a distinct Southern African feel, they will come up against the giants of African football, Egypt and their Liverpool superstar, Mohamed Salah, at the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) in Morocco.



Bafana, who entered the draw in Pot 2, were also drawn with neighbours Zimbabwe and Angola in Monday evening's draw in Rabat. They will certainly fancy their chances against their Southern African Development Community (SADC) partners before going up against the Egyptians for the right to possibly top the group.

It's not an impossible task, as Bafana beat hosts Egypt in Egypt 1-0 in the 2019 Afcon quarter-finals thanks to a goal by Thembinkosi Lorch. Later that year, Bafana also beat Egypt in Egypt in a 2021 Afcon qualifier when Lyle Foster scored the game's only goal.

Coach Hugo Broos' Bafana finished the 2023 Afcon in the Ivory Coast in third place after beating DR Congo 6-5 on penalties after the match ended goalless. The victory over DR Congo also ensured that South Africa earned the bronze medal for the first time since 2000.

The 2025 Afcon draw

Bafana went through their 2025 qualifying campaign unbeaten, topping their group with 14 points from six matches, scoring 16 goals, and conceding just five. This will give them a lot of confidence heading into the tournament, which will be played between 21 December 2025 and 18 January 2026. – Source: www.iol.co.za



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