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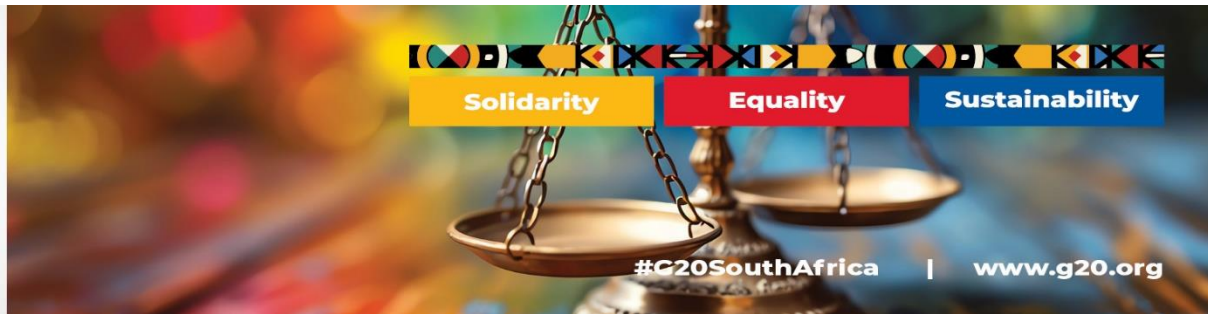
WEEKLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

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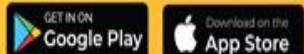
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HISTORIC SUMMIT BRINGS HOPE FOR PEACE IN THE DRC

President Cyril Ramaphosa has reiterated South Africa's commitment to a diplomatic solution that ensures stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and its neighbours, while also protecting the well-being of the Congolese people.

In his weekly newsletter to the nation, President Ramaphosa said South Africa supports the right of the Congolese people to live free from forces that violate their human rights, plunder their natural resources, and terrorise their communities.

"South Africa stands in solidarity with the Congolese people and their aspiration to live in peace and security.

"We reaffirm our commitment to a diplomatic and political solution that prioritises the stability of the DRC and neighbouring countries and safeguards the peace and well-being of the Congolese people," the President said on Monday.

This, as the President returns from a Heads of State summit in Tanzania on the conflict in the eastern DRC. He said the outcomes of the summit provide a beacon of hope for the troubled eastern DRC.

Heads of State and Government from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and East Africa Community (EAC) have issued a clarion call for “political and diplomatic engagement” by all parties, including M23 rebels, in the eastern DRC.

Leaders from the two regional blocs, including President Ramaphosa, attended an urgent joint SADC-EAC Heads of State and Government Summit at the weekend as tensions and casualties in the DRC conflict continue to escalate. The historic joint summit brought together the EAC and SADC to consider the deteriorating security situation in the eastern DRC and to find a sustainable political solution.



As a member of SADC and the African Union (AU), the President said the country has a responsibility to support all efforts to bring peace and stability to its fellow African nation, which has been racked by war for more than three decades.

Loss of lives

South Africa contributes troops to the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC).

Recently, 14 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) troops paid the ultimate price for their efforts to restore peace to the region. The deaths of the soldiers alongside troops from other African nations signalled an alarming escalation in the conflict.

The strategic city of Goma in the eastern DRC is now under the control of the M23 rebel group fighting the Congolese army, with the M23 having made advances in other towns.

Diplomacy

“As South Africa we have steadfastly maintained that diplomacy is the most sustainable solution to this conflict. While we are involved in peacekeeping missions, South Africa actively participates in the various diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in the eastern DRC,” he said.

These include the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Great Lakes Region, the Luanda Peace Process led by the President of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, and the EAC-led Nairobi Process facilitated by former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta.

“As South Africa, we have always believed that the best way to resolve a conflict is to ensure that all parties to the conflict are involved in the negotiations that lead to the resolution of the conflict, whether they are state actors or non-state actors.

“We are pleased that this approach was adopted and reconfirmed at the SADC extraordinary summit held in Harare, Zimbabwe, two weeks ago,” the President said.

He highlighted that several of the countries in the EAC bloc, such as Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Rwanda, share borders with the DRC and are directly impacted by the ongoing conflict. It was therefore significant that the heads of state of these countries and the President of the DRC were at the joint summit.

Way forward

“Having considered a report on the security situation in the eastern DRC, the summit reiterated the call for an immediate ceasefire and a cessation of hostilities between the warring parties. A ceasefire will allow humanitarian aid corridors to operate and bring much-needed supplies to the civilians caught in the crossfire,” he said.

The summit further directed that the EAC and SADC Chiefs of Defence Forces meet within five days to develop a securitisation plan for Goma and the surrounding area, the reopening of Goma airport, the evacuation of civilians, and the repatriation of the deceased.

One of the most significant outcomes was that the joint summit agreed that direct negotiations and dialogue resume between all state and non-state parties, including the M23. This will take place under the framework of the Luanda and Nairobi processes.

“We are pleased that this inclusive approach was endorsed and adopted at the historic joint EAC-SADC summit under the leadership of President William Ruto of Kenya and President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe.

“This is a major step forward. Unless all parties to the conflict are brought around the negotiating table, all diplomatic solutions will lack credibility and be unsustainable in the long term,” President Ramaphosa said.

The joint summit also affirmed the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the DRC, meaning that a process must be developed for uninvited foreign armed forces to withdraw from the DRC.

President Ramaphosa said the outcomes from the joint summit are, in essence, confidence-building measures towards a sustainable peace.

“These confidence-building measures will finally lead to the drawdown of the SAMIDRC troops. This historic summit of the EAC and SADC paves the way for a lasting peace in the eastern DRC.”

The President concluded by quoting Congolese revolutionary and statesman, Patrice Lumumba, who once said, “We are not alone. Africa, the free peoples and the peoples fighting for their freedom in all corners of the world will always be side by side with the millions of Congolese who will not give up the struggle.” – Source: SAnews.gov.za

PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA MOURNS PASSING OF PRESIDENT SAM NUJOMA OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

On behalf of the Government and people of South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa offers his deep condolences to the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia on the passing of Founding President His Excellency Dr Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, aged 95.

President Ramaphosa extends his sympathies to the founding First Lady of the Republic of Namibia, Her Excellency Kovambo Nujoma, and the broader Nujoma and Kondombolo family.

President Ramaphosa’s thoughts are with Namibian President His Excellency Dr Nangolo Mbumba and the government of our northwestern neighbour, who are experiencing this loss 12 months following the passing of President Hage Geingob.

President Ramaphosa said, “As neighbours and compatriots, South Africa is united in grief with Namibians who have lost the leader of the Namibian revolution, who is inseparable from our own history of struggle and liberation.



“Dr Sam Nujoma was an extraordinary freedom fighter who divided his revolutionary programme between Namibia’s own struggle against South African colonialism and the liberation of South Africa from apartheid.

“In exile and on home soil, he led the Ovambo People’s Organisation, the South West Africa People’s Organisation, and the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia against the seemingly unshakeable might of colonial and apartheid authorities and forces.

“Sam Nujoma inspired the Namibian people to pride and resistance that belied the size of the population.

“Namibia’s attainment of independence from South Africa in 1990 ignited in us the inevitability of our own liberation.

“President Nujoma’s leadership of a free Namibia laid the foundation for the solidarity and partnership our two countries share today—a partnership we will continue to deepen as neighbours and friends.

“We are grateful for the extended lifetime with which Dr Sam Nujoma was blessed, and we are grateful for the manner in which he dedicated the many decades of his life to serving his nation.

“May his soul rest in peace, and may our neighbours find healing in his legacy.” – Source: www.thepresidency.gov.za

CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD FOR SOUTH AFRICA

President Cyril Ramaphosa has used his State of the Nation Address (SONA) to reaffirm to the nation the country’s resilience and determination to overcome its challenges.



“We are a resilient people. We will not be bullied. We will stand together as a united nation. We will speak with one voice in defence of our national interest, our sovereignty, and our constitutional democracy,” the President said on Thursday night, 6 February 2025.

Delivering the first SONA in the seventh administration at the City Hall in Cape Town, the President emphasised the importance of unity and economic growth. This also includes the urgent need for a capable government to drive meaningful change.

The SONA evening commenced with a grand display of national pride, which included a ceremonial guard, the singing of the national anthem, a 21-gun salute, an aircraft exhibition, and a full military band.

The President was ushered into the National Assembly by 19-year-old praise poet Inako Mateza, setting the tone for a speech that resonated deeply with South Africans.

South Africa’s position in the world

Acknowledging the complex global environment in which South Africa finds itself, the President spoke about the rise of nationalism, geopolitical tensions, rapid technological advancements, and the effects of climate change.

He highlighted South Africa’s position in this evolving world order, stressing that the country will not be deterred by external pressures.

“By staying true to our values, by harnessing our unique strengths and endowments, and by forging a common purpose, we can turn these trying circumstances to our advantage and propel our country forward,” he said.

South Africa, he affirmed, stands for peace, justice, equality, and human rights. He emphasised that the nation remains committed to democracy, tolerance, and non-racialism, and will continue advocating for the rights of women, persons with disabilities, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) community.

Collective effort

The President underscored the importance of collective effort in building a prosperous and unified South Africa. He emphasised that progress can only be achieved through collaboration rather than discord.

“We will work together to build the nation that we want. We will only be able to do it by working together and not by shouting together.

“We will only be able to do it by ensuring that we as leaders ensure that those who will come after us—our children and grandchildren—inherit a country that we have helped to build and not to destroy,” he said.

While acknowledging differences on various issues, President Ramaphosa emphasised that South Africans share a common goal—building a better country and improving people’s well-being. He called for renewed determination, empathy, and national pride, drawing on the same spirit that brought the country its democracy.

“While we may differ on many issues, we agree on one thing: that we need to build a better South Africa and improve the well-being of our people. And so, as we enter a new era in the world and in our own country, let us speak of the empathy and compassion that we have for one another,” he explained.

President Ramaphosa called on all South Africans to work together to build the nation they envision. He urged citizens to remain steadfast in their values, harness their strengths, and forge a common purpose to propel the country forward.

“We stand for our shared humanity, not for the survival of the fittest. So, this evening, let us speak of the nation we want,” he said.

President Ramaphosa’s address set the stage for renewed commitment to economic growth, public service excellence, and national unity, reaffirming South Africa’s resilience in the face of global and domestic challenges.

Government that works for the people

President Ramaphosa underscored the critical task of growing the economy to create jobs, reduce poverty, and improve the lives of citizens. A key part of his address focused on strengthening the public service, ensuring that it is professional, ethical, and capable.

“Our most urgent task is to grow our economy so that we can create jobs, reduce poverty, and improve the lives of all South Africans. To undertake this task, we need a government that works for the people.

“We need a state that is capable and competent, underpinned by a professional public service. South Africans want a state that treats all people with dignity, humility and respect.”

To achieve this, the President announced plans to enhance the role of the Public Service Commission in key appointments, ensuring that Directors-General, Deputy Directors-General, state-owned entities’ executives, and senior officials are chosen based on merit and integrity.

A graduate recruitment scheme will also be introduced to attract the best and the brightest into public service.

Honouring the Freedom Charter

This year’s SONA took place during the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter, a foundational document of South Africa’s democracy. The President paid tribute to its vision of a united, non-racial, and democratic society, emphasising that the Charter remains a guiding force for the nation’s future.

“The Freedom Charter is the cornerstone of our democratic Constitution. It sets out a vision of a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa. It sets out a vision of a country in which government is founded on the will of the people.

“Where the land is shared among those who work it, where the people share in the country’s wealth, and all are equal before the law. It is this vision that continues to guide us as we work to build the nation we all want,” he said.

National Dialogue

The President also announced plans for a National Dialogue, in which South Africans will come together to shape a new path for the country, inspired by the spirit of the Congress of the People. He called on all South Africans to unite behind a shared vision for the country’s future, emphasising the power of cooperation in overcoming challenges and driving progress.

The President said the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) presents an opportunity for the country to demonstrate what can be achieved through collective effort.

“All of these things that we speak of are possible. As South Africans, we know the power of cooperation, of what is possible when people of different backgrounds, races, cultures, languages, ethnic groups, and religions come together behind a shared objective,” he said.

The President announced plans for a National Dialogue, urging citizens to participate in defining South Africa's vision for the next 30 years.

"The National Dialogue must be a place where everyone has a voice. It must be a place to find solutions that make a real difference in people's lives. The National Dialogue must reaffirm that each and every one of us has a role to play in building the nation we want," he said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

DEPUTY PRESIDENT APPLAUDS SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING CITIZENS AT UBUNTU AWARDS

Deputy President Paul Mashatile has praised the winners of the annual Ubuntu Awards as a source of inspiration for active citizenry.



The Deputy President delivered the keynote address at the annual Ubuntu Awards held on Saturday evening, 8 February 2025, at the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

The awards—hosted by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation—recognise South Africans and companies that proudly fly the country's flag high on global platforms.

"As has become custom, we have gathered in this fashion again during the week of Parliament's opening to give due recognition to our patriots who fly the South African flag high on the world's great stages. These patriots represent our country positively in various disciplines through their good deeds, talent, hard work, and determination towards excellence.

"The Ubuntu Awards represent a gesture through which our government aims to encourage and promote active citizenry. We do so because we believe the world views South Africa through the deeds of its people," he said.

The 2025 recipients of the awards are:

- Ubuntu Sports Diplomacy Award: Wheelchair tennis star Kgothatso Montjane
- Ubuntu Youth Diplomacy Award: Global youth empowerment activist, Tara Roos
- Ubuntu Arts and Cultural Diplomacy Award (Veteran): World-renowned artist, Lebohang "Lebo M" Morake
- OR Tambo Lifetime Achievement Award: Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso
- Ubuntu Economic Diplomacy Award: Airlink
- Commendable Recognition Ubuntu Economic Award (Africa): Bernika Health
- Ubuntu Economic Diplomacy (Global): Sanlam
- Ubuntu Social Responsibility Award: Nkosinathi Foundation

"These are individuals who have selflessly dedicated their time and resources to promote South African interests and values on the global stage. They have elevated South Africa's stature worldwide through their participation in various disciplines, ranging from sports, music and performing arts, philanthropy, and good business practice.

"In addition to creating opportunities for growth and prosperity through their various efforts, these individuals' vision, leadership, and entrepreneurial spirit inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

"In other words, the individuals we will be honouring tonight, regardless of their field of expertise, serve as cultural ambassadors who represent a diverse tapestry of South African heritage and identity," Deputy President Mashatile said.

This year's Ubuntu Awards ceremony was held under the theme, *South Africa G20 Presidency: Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability*, aligning with South Africa's G20 Presidency this year.

Deputy President Mashatile said South Africa's G20 Presidency offered an opportunity to "further the interests of poorer countries".

"Our goals include promoting more equality in international governance and elevating Africa's development agenda in ways that are more meaningful. These values are the pillars upon which we can build a brighter, more inclusive future for all, not just in South Africa or Africa but across the world.

"Our goal at the G20 Summit is to increase the focus on strengthening unity and ensuring no nation or individual is left behind in the global growth race. Mindful of the centrality of the United Nations agenda, South Africa is certain that the G20 has a critical role to play in expediting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals," he said.

The Deputy President acknowledged that global challenges continue to mount for all nations.

"These issues include geopolitical tension, economic inequality, climate change, humanitarian disasters, underdevelopment, inequality, poverty, hunger, and unemployment.

"South Africa will work with G20 countries and build partnerships in all sectors of society to harness the global community's desire and capacity to solve these issues," he committed.

Turning back to the awards nominees and recipients, the Deputy President described them as a source of inspiration.

"While we only recognise a few individuals today, we are aware that thousands of people around the country have represented South Africa in a range of activities over the last year, including research, education and training, sports, arts and culture, business, and corporate affairs.

"Together, we can amplify the voice of South Africa on the global stage, promoting a message of inclusivity, diversity, and progress.

"Let us commit ourselves to the ideals of Ubuntu—not just in words, but in action. Let us strive to build a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it, black and white," Mashatile said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

SADC-EAC LEADERS CALL FOR DIALOGUE IN DRC CONFLICT

Heads of State and Government from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and East Africa Community (EAC) have issued a clarion call for "political and diplomatic engagement" by all parties, including M23 rebels, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Leaders from the two regional blocs, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, attended an urgent joint SADC-EAC Heads of State and Government Summit as tensions, and casualties in the DRC conflict continue to escalate.

A communiqué was released following the conclusion of the Joint Summit held at Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania on Saturday, 8 February 2025.

"The Joint Summit directed resumption of direct negotiations and dialogue with all state and non-state parties [military and non-military], including the M23, under the framework of the Luanda/Nairobi process," the communiqué said.



The conflict has claimed the lives of 14 South African National Defence Force members in addition to soldiers from other SADC countries who were part of a peacekeeping mission in the DRC. Furthermore, the United Nations reports that the crisis has also killed 3000 people and injured at least 2800 others since 26 January 2025.

“The Joint Summit expressed concern about the deteriorating security situation in Eastern DRC, which has resulted in the loss of lives, creating a humanitarian crisis as well as suffering of people, in particular women and children.

“The Joint Summit also expressed concern about the escalating crisis manifesting in attacks on diplomatic missions, embassies and staff based in Kinshasa and urged the Government of DRC to protect lives and property, as well as upholding long lasting legal and moral principles of respecting peace missions in DRC such as MONUSCO and the others.

“The Joint Summit also expressed condolences for the loss of lives in the recent attacks and also wished a speedy recovery to the injured,” the communiqué read.

The Joint Summit was preceded by meetings of foreign ministers and senior officials from both regional blocs.

“The Joint Summit considered the report of the joint Meeting of Ministers of EAC and SADC on the security situation in Eastern DRC and emphasised that political and diplomatic engagement is the most sustainable solution to the conflict in the eastern DRC,” the communiqué continued.

Way forward

The EAC-SADC Chiefs of Defence Forces (CDFs) have been directed to meet within five days to “provide technical direction” on:

- immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of hostilities;
 - provision of humanitarian assistance, including repatriation of the deceased and evacuation of the injured;
 - develop a securitisation plan for Goma and surrounding areas;
 - immediate re-opening of Goma Airport; and
 - advise on other related facilitative interventions.
- “The Joint Summit reaffirmed the critical role of both the Luanda and Nairobi processes and directed that the two be merged into a Luanda/Nairobi Process.

“The Joint Summit further resolved to strengthen the two processes to enhance complementarity and mandated the co-chairs, in consultation with the African Union, to consider and appoint additional facilitators, including from other regions of Africa to support the merged process.

“The Joint Summit called for the implementation of the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) of the harmonised plan for neutralisation of FDLR and the lifting of Rwanda's defensive measures or disengagement of forces from the DRC as agreed in the Luanda process,” read the communiqué.

A joint meeting of EAC and SADC ministers is expected to be held within 30 days to discuss:

- the Report of the Joint Meeting of CDFs on the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities;
- establishment of a secretariat level technical coordination mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Joint Summit Decisions
- an elaborate roadmap detailing immediate, medium and long-term implementation measures including financing modalities
- address all other residual issues relating to the attainment of sustainable peace and security in eastern DRC and make appropriate recommendations to the next Joint Meeting of the EAC-SADC Summit.

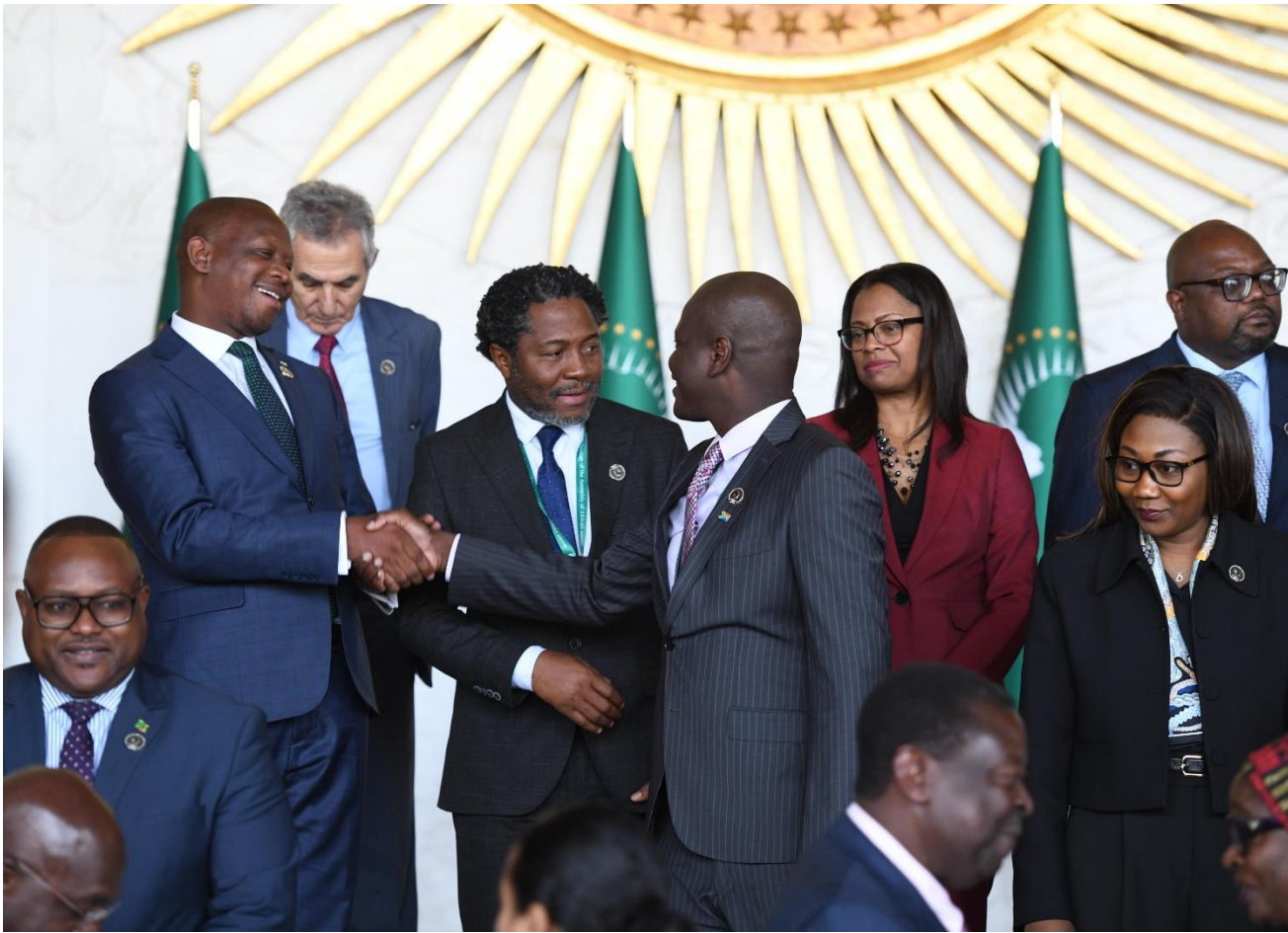
“The Joint Summit directed that modalities for withdrawal of uninvited foreign armed forces from the territory of the DRC be developed and implemented.

“The Joint Summit reaffirmed solidarity and unwavering commitment to continue supporting the DRC in its pursuit of safeguarding its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as sustainable peace, security, and development,” the communiqué concluded. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

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MINISTER LAMOLA ATTENDS THE 46TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Minister Ronald Lamola, has arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, leading the South African delegation to the 46th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) on 12 and 13 February 2025.



The council will convene under the agreed AU theme for 2025, *Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations*, which will be officially launched by the Assembly. Throughout 2025, all AU Member States will review and assess the achievements made by the continent towards the attainment of long-overdue justice and reparations following decades of colonialism, apartheid, slavery, the slave trade, and the transatlantic slave trade.

One of the most highly anticipated responsibilities and key features of the forthcoming Executive Council is the election of six commissioners for the AU Commission. The six commissioners to be elected will oversee the following portfolios: agriculture, rural development, blue economy, and sustainable environment (ARBE); economic development, trade, tourism, industry, and minerals (ETTİM); education, science, technology, and innovation (ESTI); infrastructure and energy (I&E); health, humanitarian affairs, and social development (HHS); and political affairs, peace and security (PAPS).

South Africa, for its part, has put forward two candidates, Dr Molapo Qhobela and Lerato Mataboge, for the roles of Commissioner for ESTI and Commissioner for I&E, respectively. After a thorough interview, both candidates were shortlisted for the next stage of the elections. The council is anticipated to conduct elections on 12 February 2025.

Furthermore, the forthcoming Executive Council will take place within a few months since South Africa assumed its presidency of the G20 in December 2024. The council will inevitably have to reflect on what South Africa's G20 Presidency presents in terms of the opportunity to place the interests of the continent right at the centre of the G20 agenda. In this regard, Minister Lamola will brief the council on some of the key priorities of South Africa's Presidency of the G20 and how they align with Agenda 2063.

The Executive Council is expected to consider the reports on the organisation's financial state in terms of implementing its key priorities, including maintaining peace and security on the continent, implementing Agenda 2063, improving Africa's socio-economic status, addressing the devastating impact of climate change in Africa, and advocating for human rights and good governance across the continent.

In addition, the Executive Council will receive a briefing on the progress made in implementing the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) of Agenda 2063, the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the annual activities of the various AU organs and agencies.

The 46th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council takes place against the backdrop of an African continent that is facing a myriad of challenges, including threats to democratic governance, peace and security through unconstitutional changes of government and post-election violence. Of key concern to South Africa is the ongoing raging war in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which led to the recent attacks where 14 South African soldiers lost their lives.

The council meets amid a continent that is bedevilled by inter and intra-state conflicts, terrorism and violent extremism, poverty, food and energy insecurity, the impact of climate change, inadequate infrastructure, low productivity, trade barriers, and continued dependence on external aid and markets. The ongoing debt crisis by African countries and the consequent default on their debt repayments remain an issue of serious concern for the continent. According to the World Bank Report, as of July 2024, 22 African countries were either in or at a high risk of debt distress that required debt restructuring.

Most African countries are unable to meet citizens' basic needs, such as health, education, and employment, due to their debt burden. As one of the leading Member States of the AU, South Africa's participation in the Executive Council will be critical to advancing the organisation's agenda and priorities. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za

MINISTER LAMOLA SPEAKS ON DEPLOYMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS TO THE DRC

International Relations and Cooperation Minister Ronald Lamola has dismissed the proposal to withdraw South African soldiers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), stating that this action would be worse than surrender.

Minister Lamola addressed Parliament during an urgent debate regarding the deployment of South African troops to the DRC.

This special session was called following the deaths of 14 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) soldiers in the eastern part of the DRC, as families await the repatriation of their loved ones.

“Abrupt withdrawal as called upon by some in the House is not even a tactical retreat; it is even worse than a surrender, as with the number [of] armed groups in the area, there lies ambush,” he said.

Minister Lamola stated that the South African government welcomes comments from the leaders of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the East Africa Community (EAC), who called for a ceasefire and dialogue in the DRC over the weekend.



This follows a SADC–EAC Heads of State and Government Summit on the security situation in the eastern DRC, in which President Cyril Ramaphosa also took part.

The Minister believes that the recent summit of SADC and the EAC has clarified the way forward regarding the conflict in the eastern DRC.

“Recognising that a peaceful Africa is crucial for the economic and social development of the continent, we participated in a lot of peace missions in the continent—in Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Sudan, and so on, to silence the guns in line with Vision 2063.

“Our 2001 peace efforts with the Sun City Talks led to a new constitutional order and almost two decades of peace in the DRC. We have been involved in State-building and peace-building efforts,” he told Members of Parliament (MPs).

The SANDF soldiers are part of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC), which aims to help restore peace, security, and stability in Africa's second-largest country.

According to Minister Lamola, the DRC is more peaceful now than before, and the conflict is in an isolated region.

“To suggest that we should not resolve conflicts in Africa, regardless of their origin, is simplistic and profoundly naïve. Such a stance reflects a disturbing ignorance of the complexities and implications of neglecting these critical situations.

“A failure to act is not merely a passive choice; it actively undermines our peace and security and economic prosperity as no country is an island. Our nation will not be at peace if our regional community suffers in turmoil. We are also one of the leading countries in the continent in receiving refugees fleeing conflict zones.”

He emphasised the importance of South Africa's role in maintaining peace and economic stability, not only for its benefit but also for the prosperity of neighbouring countries on the continent. The Minister also took time to honour the country's fallen heroes, as well as members of the Malawian, Tanzanian, and Uruguayan defence forces.

"It is not a tragedy that has only befallen our defence force; it has befallen both the United Nations mission and the SADC mission," he added. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za

GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO FINDING DIPLOMATIC SOLUTIONS AMID PRESIDENT TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDER

The South African Government says it remains committed to finding diplomatic solutions to any misunderstandings or disputes arising from the recently promulgated Expropriation Act 13 of 2024 and other policies.

This as United States (US) President Donald Trump issued an Executive Order, titled *Addressing Egregious Actions of the Republic of South Africa* ordering, in the main, that as a result of the Act:

- The United States shall not provide aid or assistance to South Africa
- The United States shall promote the resettlement of Afrikaner refugees escaping government-sponsored race-based discrimination, including racially discriminatory property confiscation
- All executive departments and agencies, including the United States Agency for International Development, shall, to the maximum extent allowed by law, halt foreign aid or assistance delivered or provided to South Africa, and shall promptly exercise all available authorities and discretion to halt such aid or assistance.
- The head of each agency may permit the provision of any such foreign aid or assistance that, in the discretion of the relevant agency head, is necessary or appropriate.



International Relations and Cooperation Minister Ronald Lamola said government had noted the order.

"It is of great concern that the foundational premise of this order lacks factual accuracy and fails to recognise South Africa's profound and painful history of colonialism and apartheid.

"We reiterate that South Africa remains committed to finding diplomatic solutions to any misunderstandings or disputes," he said.

Furthermore, Minister Lamola said government expresses concern over "what seems to be a campaign of misinformation and propaganda aimed at misrepresenting our great nation".

"It is disappointing to observe that such narratives seem to have found favour among decision-makers in the United States of America.

"It is ironic that the executive order makes provision for refugee status in the US for a group in South Africa that remains amongst the most economically privileged, while vulnerable people in the US from other parts of the world are being deported and denied asylum despite real hardship," Lamola said.

The Expropriation Act

The Expropriation Act states that property may not be expropriated arbitrarily or for a purpose other than a public purpose or in the public interest. The Expropriation Act, which underwent a five-year public consultation process, was deliberated in Parliament, and is in line with the South African Constitution.

The Act repeals the Expropriation Act of 1975 and allows for the State to expropriate land in the public interest—subject to just and equitable compensation.

On Monday, President Cyril Ramaphosa, in a media statement emphasised that the Act is “not a confiscation instrument, but a constitutionally mandated legal process that ensures public access to land in an equitable and just manner as guided by the Constitution”.

“South Africa, like the United States of America and other countries, has always had expropriation laws that balance the need for public usage of land and the protection of rights of property owners.

“We look forward to engaging with the Trump administration over our land reform policy and issues of bilateral interest. We are certain that out of those engagements, we will share a better and common understanding over these matters,” the statement said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

MINISTER WELCOMES SIU HEAD’S RE-ELECTION TO GLOBAL ANTI-CORRUPTION ASSOCIATION

Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mmamoloko Kubayi, has congratulated the Head of the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), Advocate (Adv.) Andy Mothibi, on his re-election to the executive committee of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA).



Mothibi was re-elected to serve as Vice President: African Regional Coordinator for the term 2025 to 2027.

“The Minister said that this achievement is a testament to Adv. Mothibi’s tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to combating corruption globally.

“Minister Kubayi notes that Adv. Mothibi’s re-election reflects the confidence that other nations have in South Africa’s dedication to the global fight against corruption. The Minister wishes Adv. Mothibi success in his renewed role, as he continues to contribute to a corruption-free world,” the department said.

In a statement, the SIU described IAACA as an international and non-political anti-corruption organisation, which plays a role in fostering collaboration and sharing best practices.

“Advocate Mothibi’s reappointment reflects the SIU’s unwavering commitment to combatting corruption and strengthening good governance. Adv. Mothibi’s leadership continues to position South Africa and the wider African region at the forefront of the global anti-corruption agenda,” it said. It further called on stakeholders and the public to support the Advocate in this role.

“The SIU called on its stakeholders and the public to support Adv. Mothibi and the SIU in this important role. Together, we can continue to build a corruption-free society and uphold the highest standards of integrity and transparency as envisioned in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy,” the SIU said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

LONDON SAFFA NETWORKING BREAKFAST INDABA

The SAFFA Networking Breakfast Indaba is a networking event bringing together South African professionals and entrepreneurs in London.



The event is held at the Vivat Bacchus South African restaurant and wine bar, which is situated at 4 Hays Lane, London Bridge, London, SE1 2HB, bimonthly. The next event will be hosted on Thursday, 27 February 2025, starting at 08h00.

The SAFFA Networking Breakfast Indaba is a dynamic and engaging networking event that brings together South African professionals and entrepreneurs for a morning of meaningful connections, insightful discussions, and collaborative opportunities.

Every attendee will be given the opportunity to present their business to the group for 45 seconds.

The event includes interactive sessions, expert speakers, and a delicious breakfast, creating a conducive environment for building valuable relationships within the South African business community.

Whether you're seeking new business prospects, professional growth, or simply a chance to connect with like-minded individuals, the SAFFA Networking Breakfast Indaba is the ideal forum to kickstart your day and your network. – Source: www.sapeople.com

ONE OF THE MOST ROMANTIC HOTELS IN THE WORLD IS IN THE KRUGER!

With the month of love in full swing, those who find nothing more romantic than heading off to a lodge will be delighted to know that one of the world's best is right here in South Africa, as spotlighted by the 50 Most Romantic Hotels in the World ranking.



While Cape Town has basked in the spotlight of multiple World's Best lists recently, this romantic destination ranking hails from another part of South Africa.

The Outpost Lodge in the Kruger National Park has been listed as one of the most romantic hotels in the world, per a recent report by *Big 7 Travel* as the sole South African spot listed.

Praised for its boutique bungalow-style accommodation, views of a valley of baobabs and the Luvuhu River, as well as the opportunity to enjoy wildlife like elephants playing from the comfort of your balcony, it's no wonder that this is a honeymooner's favourite.

With ample chances to relax, reconnect with nature, and even enjoy a leopard sighting, romance is said to be well and alive in this pocket of the Kruger.

The Outpost Lodge shares the list with numerous other hotspot romantic hotels from around the world, ranging from glamping pods in Iceland that give visitors a front-row seat to the Northern Lights to breathtaking Jamaican gems surrounded by white Caribbean sands and sea. – Source: www.goodthinsuy.com

SOUTH AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHER WINS GLOBAL ACCLAIM WITH BREATHTAKING PENGUIN SHOT

South Africa's Werner De Kock has just been named the National Award winner for the Sony World Photography Awards 2025, an incredible achievement that places him among the world's best photographers.

His winning image, *Crash Landing*, entered in the Motion category and was selected anonymously by judges from over 419 000 images submitted from more than 200 countries and territories.

For De Kock, photography is a passion woven into his adventurous spirit. His love for capturing landscapes and wildlife has taken him across the globe, but he remains particularly drawn to African and Antarctic animals—both for their beauty and undeniable personality.

The winning shot was taken at Baily Head, Antarctica, home to around 100 000 pairs of chinstrap penguins. De Kock described watching a steady flow of penguins moving back and forth from the beach. Instead of chasing the moment, he found the perfect spot, focused, and patiently waited for the right bird to return just as the surf broke. The result? A breathtaking action shot capturing nature's rhythm in motion.



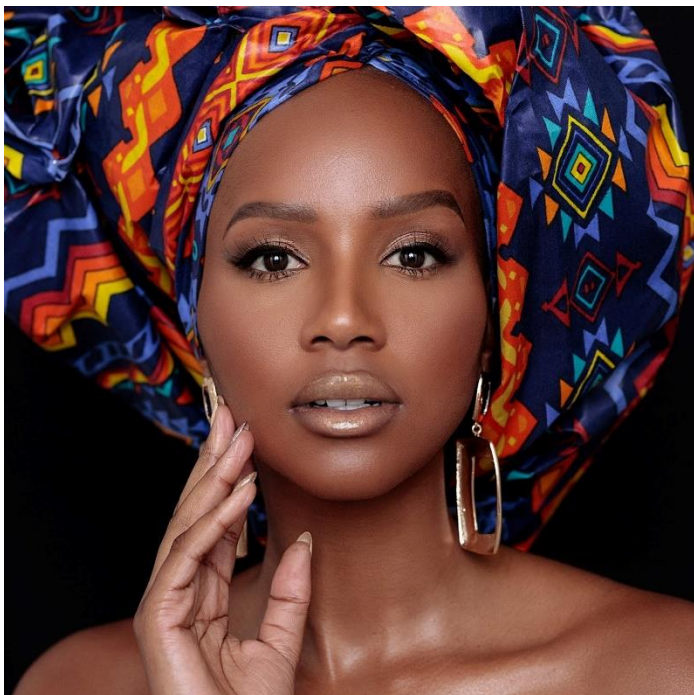
“It is my great honour to represent my country and be able to show off the beauty and comedy of penguins,” said De Kock.

“I have never thought of entering a photo competition but thought, why not give it a try? Thanks to my friends and family who support me and put up with my passion as a photographer.”

Born in Cape Town, De Kock grew up surrounded by some of the world's most spectacular landscapes. The city's diverse beaches, majestic mountains, and, of course, its renowned wine and food scene have played a significant role in shaping his artistic perspective.

Now, as South Africa's National Award winner, De Kock will receive Sony digital imaging equipment and have his work included in the Sony World Photography Awards exhibition and book. His photograph will be showcased alongside other winners at the prestigious Somerset House in London from 17 April to 5 May 2025. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

FORMER MISS SA SHUDU MUSIDA NAMED UNFPA GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



After reigning as Miss South Africa 2020, Shudufhadzo Musida has become a beacon of hope and inspiration for young women everywhere. Now, she takes her advocacy to new heights as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)'s Global Champion for Women and Girls.

Since her reign as Miss South Africa in 2020, Limpopo-born Shudufhadzo Musida, popularly known as Shudu, has inspired many young women to dream big, be a force in a world that seeks to undermine them, and stand for what truly matters.

Her first act in this role is to help observe the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation by launching a UNFPA campaign entitled Patterns of Hope—inside the movement to end female genital mutilation, which focuses on ending the harmful practice endured by more than 200 million women and girls worldwide.

Shudu previously served as UNFPA's first-ever Regional Champion for East and Southern Africa, where she advocated for women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health.

Since winning the Miss South Africa pageant, Shudu has leveraged her platform to mobilise awareness and action on gender equity and mental health, notably via her *Mindful Mondays* programme, which reached over one million weekly viewers. Her unwavering commitment and impact have been invaluable to UNFPA.

“I am incredibly honoured to continue advancing UNFPA’s mandate, especially as it faces concerted opposition around the world,” said Shudu.

“I’m committed to raising awareness and advocating for the rights of women and girls everywhere.”

Hailing from a village in Limpopo Province, South Africa, Shudu’s upbringing instilled a deep understanding of the injustices faced by women and girls worldwide.

She is currently bringing these experiences to the Ivy League through her enrolment in Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, where she is pursuing a master’s degree.

As UNFPA’s Global Champion, she will continue advocating for an intersectional approach to well-being, addressing mental health, improving sexual and reproductive health, and ending gender-based violence.

“We are thrilled to welcome Shudu to the UNFPA global team,” said Ian McFarlane, Director of UNFPA’s Division for External Relations.

“Her energy, passion and commitment are inspiring. Working through partnerships, we can achieve so much more than we would by working alone.”

Her two-year appointment will contribute to UNFPA’s mission to achieve sexual and reproductive health and rights for all by 2030. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

RICK ROSS TEAMS UP WITH PICK N PAY FOR CAPE TOWN SMART SHOPPER CAMPAIGN

In January 2025, global hip-hop icon and entrepreneur Rick Ross made headlines during his visit to Cape Town, where he praised the city and hinted at a major project in the works. It has now been confirmed that his visit was in collaboration with Pick n Pay.



Cultural Impact

Ross is the face of Pick n Pay’s latest Smart Shopper campaign, which leverages the cultural impact of DJ Khaled’s hit *All I Do Is Win*, in which Ross features alongside Ludacris, T-Pain, and Snoop Dogg. The campaign strategically aligns Pick n Pay’s rewards programme with the song’s winning theme, reinforcing the value of Smart Shopper benefits for customers.

Adding a touch of local, Ross is joined by South African comedian Schalk Bezuidenhout, who brings his signature humour to the reimagined music video-esque TV commercial.



Pick n Pay claims it gives customers over R7 billion in savings every year, and that its new Smart Shopper Price Palooza is its boldest savings event yet, which includes cash prizes totalling R2.8 million, and it needed a big name to match. “Who better to deliver the message than the biggest boss himself?,” says Vincent Viviers, co-head: Omnichannel at Pick n Pay, speaking about the decision to work with Ross.

“From his chart-topping hits to his larger-than-life empire, Ross knows hustling smart means getting the best value. And that’s exactly what Smart Shopper Price Palooza is about—a chance to win, win, win with crazy deals, double Smart Shopper points, and life-enhancing cash prizes. All customers must do is swipe their registered Smart Shopper card when purchasing a participating product,” says Viviers.

Easy pitch

Given how effusive Ross has been about beautiful South Africa on his social media, he loves any excuse to spend time here, so it was an easy pitch, he added.

“Success is about making power moves. And with Pick n Pay Smart Shopper, every shopper is making boss moves. Winning isn’t just a mindset—it’s a lifestyle. And it starts with smart decisions, like using a rewards card to win more from every shop,” says Ross.

Ross added that his recent visit showed the biggest boss nothing but love. “The energy, the culture, the people—next level. Much respect; can’t wait to be back.”

Filmed in a Cape Town Pick n Pay store, the commercial video features Ross alongside Bezuidenhout, blending hip-hop swagger with local humour. Behind-the-scenes footage captures Ross and his team admiring South Africa’s impressive retail scene while walking through the store.

“We think customers will really resonate with the remixed song,” concludes Viviers. – Source: www.bizcommunity.com

SOUTH AFRICAN SINGER CINDY-LOUISE STEALS THE SHOW AT INTERNATIONAL TALENT COMPETITION

South African vocals have made us proud once again thanks to singer Cindy-Louise and her rendition of “Mr Sandman” that stole the show at the “Lift You Up” international talent show.

WATCH THE VIDEO 

Taking a theatrical spin on the 1950s smash hit, Cindy-Louise offered the judges a version of the song led by a suspenseful build-up musically and literally as she lifted up to the stage surface from below. As the song progressed, so too did the singer’s vocal range and capacity, taking an opportunity to belt out a few beautiful notes and then a controlled revert back to the fever dream. Eventually, she found herself above the stage, taking in breaths and the moment as the audience applauded her.



To no one’s surprise, Cindy-Lee has made it to the second round of *Lift You Up* and stands a flight closer to her dreams. With guidance from four of Belgium’s biggest music stars, her chances of recording a hit and touring the country are higher than ever.

An artist who has earned critical acclaim for her music before, Cindy-Lee’s music has explored everything from identity to vulnerability. If you’ve watched *Devil’s Peak*, you might recognise her anthem *Woman of My Own Damn Mind*, and if you’re into theatrical rock, you’ll love her 2024 EP *What You Made Me*. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

SOUTH AFRICAN TEAM “AMAGOMBINYONI” RETURNS WITH TOP HONOURS FROM INTERNATIONAL BLIND FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

South Africa’s national team for men’s visually impaired football, “Amagombinyoni”, received a warm heroes’ welcome when they arrived at OR Tambo International Airport recently. The celebratory homecoming came after completing an action-packed and inspiring five-day trip to an International Blind Football Friendly Tournament held in Russia.



Despite limited resources and being the youngest and least experienced team, averaging just 19 years old, the team exceeded all expectations on the global football arena.

Amagombinyoni secured a hard-fought win against Belarus and earned top honours, including Team of the Tournament, Breakthrough Coach of the Tournament for Mlungisi Jack Msibi, and Player of the Tournament for defender Koketso Titus.

These accolades are well deserved as Team South Africa played their hearts out against Zvezda, one of the teams from the host nation, and Kairat, the team representing Kazakhstan. These performances earned applause and respect from the spectators to the extent that a goal scored by the team against the hosts was met with resounding cheers from the crowd.

Their success has opened doors to future international tournaments, promising an even brighter future for these remarkable athletes.

“We were newcomers who trained for three days before jetting off, going toe-to-toe with seasoned professionals with established leagues in their home countries, who had been preparing for this competition for months.

“Even though we didn’t win, we walked away as the most memorable group to ever play International Blind Football,” said the *Amagombinyoni* team, which hopes to achieve even more success at upcoming tournaments. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

DRICUS DU PLESSIS DEFENDS HIS THRONE—STILL THE UFC CHAMPION

Dricus du Plessis has done it again—the South African warrior has cemented his name in history by defending his UFC Middleweight Championship against Sean Strickland in an electrifying five-round battle.

It was a war, a fight that had fans on the edge of their seats, but in the end, it was Du Plessis who had his hand raised, proving once again why he is the best in the world.

A year after toppling the controversial American to claim the title, Du Plessis stepped back into the Octagon with the same determination, the same grit, and the same unshakeable belief that saw him rise to the top. And this time, he wasn’t just fighting for a title—he was fighting to show the world that he belongs at the top.

With this win, he solidifies his reign as one of the greatest. His journey has been nothing short of spectacular, defeating former champion Israel Adesanya in August before stepping into the Octagon once again to face Strickland.

Five rounds of relentless action, five rounds of heart, five rounds that showcased the kind of champion he truly is.

And in the end, it was Du Plessis who stood victorious. With sweat, blood, and pure South African determination, he made sure the belt stayed exactly where it belongs—around his waist.



This is more than just a victory—it's a moment that will inspire generations. A moment that reminds us that dreams are worth fighting for, that hard work pays off, and that South Africa produces champions. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com



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