

CHAPTER 7:

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, TRADE AND SECURITY

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how the South African government has used its engagement with global and regional organisations, forums and other external actors in the economic, security and health areas to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. It gives a brief overview of the pandemic's impact on the country's international economic relations and then reviews South Africa's engagement with the rest of the world. This is followed by a discussion of its interactions with its key international interlocutors during the pandemic and the outcome of these interactions.

The final section draws five conclusions, which are still preliminary and will be refined based on stakeholder consultations and feedback from readers:

1. South Africa has made effective use of its international relations in dealing with the pandemic.
2. It was able to benefit from its international relations during the pandemic because it has invested time in building and sustaining these relations and building credibility with its interlocutors over a number of years.
3. A country's credibility and effectiveness in international affairs are enhanced if it takes a strategic and realistic approach to foreign policymaking and implementation.
4. It is important for the country to have a clear strategy for communicating with all domestic and international stakeholders about government's international actions. Much of the groundwork for international relations takes place behind the scenes and is not obvious to either domestic stakeholders or international audiences; the risk of misinterpretation is therefore not insignificant.
5. South Africa should have a means for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of its international relations strategy.

DISCLAIMER

This Country Report on the measures implemented by the South African government to combat the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa (including individual research reports that may be enclosed as annexures) were prepared by various professional experts in their personal capacity. The opinions expressed in these reports are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of their affiliated institutions or the official policy or position of the South African government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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How to cite this report:

Bradlow, D., Kapueja, L., Qobo, M. & Sidiropoulos, E., 2021. International cooperation, trade and security. South Africa Covid-19 Country Report [Interim draft]. DPME (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation), GTAC (Government Technical Advisory Centre) & NRF (National Research Foundation), Pretoria: April.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
Afreximbank	African Export–Import Bank
AMSP	Africa Medical Supplies Platform
AVATT	African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team
BELN	Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CDC	[Africa] Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DTIC	Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
FDI	foreign direct investment
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PPE	personal protective equipment
REC	Regional Economic Community
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARB	South African Reserve Bank
TFTA	Tripartite Free Trade Area
TRIPS	[Agreement on] Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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INTRODUCTION

The disruption brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic is unprecedented in the contemporary era. Aside from its health impact, the pandemic has caused rising global unemployment, poverty and hunger, and it has badly affected the international economy. For example, global trade declined by 21% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2020 and by another 5% in the third. Although economic activity has largely resumed in many countries, preliminary data suggests that global trade fell by about 8% in 2020 (UNCTAD, 2021).

This disruption in global trade can be attributed to measures states implemented to curb the spread of the pandemic, along with restrictions they placed on exports of goods such as medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment (e.g. ventilators) and other products (e.g. foodstuffs and toilet paper). As of 18 February 2021, 98 countries had introduced temporary export restrictions (up from 80 in April 2020), whereas only two had liberalised export controls (WTO, 2020; ITC, 2021).

Trade restrictions are just one indication that foreign and trade policies have been a factor in how countries managed the pandemic. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how South Africa used its international relations in the economic, security and health areas to deal with the pandemic. It focuses on the scope and outcome of government's engagement with global and regional organisations, forums and other external actors, rather than on the impact of these engagements on the domestic situation. Such impacts are discussed in other chapters of this Country Report.

This analysis is based on a desk review of the relevant data and literature. In addition interviews were held with officials from the National Treasury, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), and the South African Reserve Bank (SARB), as well as an official at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) office in Pretoria.

The key questions this chapter seeks to answer are:

1. Did government make optimal use of its relationships with external actors and institutions in dealing with Covid-19?
2. What lessons can be learned from South Africa's engagement with international actors and institutions in its management of the pandemic?

To this end, the chapter will address the following issues:

1. How did South Africa use its relations with *countries* in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Africa, the Global South and the Global North to gather information and learn about possible responses to the virus and its impacts?
2. How did South Africa use its membership in *regional and international organisations* and forums to advocate for support for itself and other African countries, gather information, and learn about possible responses to the virus and its impacts?
3. How did South Africa use its relations with *non-state actors* to gather information and learn about possible responses to the virus and its impact?

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides a brief overview of how the pandemic has affected South Africa's international economic relations. The second section places these issues in context by providing some information on the country's engagement with the rest of the world. This is followed by a discussion of how South Africa interacted with its key international interlocutors during the Covid-19 pandemic and the outcome of these interactions. The final section draws some conclusions from these interactions. Note that these conclusions on the strengths and limitations of the Covid-19 response are still preliminary and will be refined based on stakeholder consultations and feedback from readers. Also, this chapter focuses on the first and second waves of Covid-19. International cooperation, trade and security during the further progression of the pandemic will be discussed in the second edition of the Country Report.

COVID-19 AND SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FINANCIAL FLOWS

The global economic slowdown caused by the pandemic has adversely affected South Africa's trade relations (TIPS, 2020). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) Global Trade Update shows that South Africa's *exports* declined by 61% from March to August 2020 relative to the March 2019 figures (UNCTAD, 2020a).

The implications of this decline can be seen in the case of the *Southern African Customs Union* (SACU), which comprises South Africa and the BELN (Botswana, Eswatini [Swaziland], Lesotho and Namibia) countries. SACU is the world's oldest surviving trade bloc. It is also South Africa's most important trade partnership (Grant-Makokera & Makokera, 2020). Exports to the BELN countries declined by 63,3% month-on-month in April 2020. This decline in trade also adversely affected the region's finances. SACU, whose members participate in both a common customs area and a shared revenue pool, provides much-needed revenue for its member countries. In 2017/18 SACU transfers comprised at least 40% of government revenue for Eswatini and Lesotho, and almost a third for Namibia and Botswana (Stats SA, 2020). This significantly raised the macroeconomic risks facing South Africa's neighbours.

Export activity found some respite with the easing of the lockdown. By May 2020 overall exports had recovered almost to the levels seen in March, although they were still 8% below the level of March 2019 (Viljoen, 2020). As the lockdown restrictions were eased further, merchandise exports increased in value and eventually surpassed pre-lockdown levels in July 2020. The same cannot be said about *imports*. South Africa's imports had started a downward trend in 2019, weakened further in March 2020 and then recorded a sharp fall in April. The severe decline in import activity in 2020 can be attributed to a lack of domestic demand, as both household income and domestic investment slowed (see Chapter 6.1 on the economy).

More recent (unaudited) data from the DTIC suggest that South Africa's exports increased by 7,9% year-on-year in nominal terms in 2020, while its imports decreased by 11,4%. Its global trade balance

improved from R31,8 billion in 2019 to R280,3 billion in 2020. Exchange rate movements in 2020 meant that the US dollar value of exports decreased by 4,8% and that of imports by 21,8%.

During the pandemic, revenue due to the BELN countries from the SACU pool was affected by both the reduction in export volumes and the fall in excise duties. For example, in the first month of the lockdown, South Africa's exports of vehicles and components declined by about 89%. The country's restrictions on the sale of tobacco and alcohol products also drastically affected excise duties (Grant-Makokera & Makokera, 2020).¹ Furthermore, the closure of borders at the beginning of the lockdown reduced trade in some BELN countries to a mere 1% of their normal flows; this led to SACU member countries losing an estimated R7 billion a month from customs revenues (Ngatane, 2020). Overall, South Africa's expected transfers to other SACU members were revised downwards by R14.5 billion in 2021/22 and R31.9 billion in 2022/23 (the 2020 Budget Estimates had anticipated declines of only R2,4 billion and R3,2 billion, respectively, for the two years). Such large declines in revenue would have severe macroeconomic implications for these countries.

It is worth noting that SACU members have longstanding, unresolved disagreements about the revenue-sharing formula and the tariff-setting framework. For example, the South African government holds that the current revenue-sharing formula is unfair to the country, as it generates about 98% of the revenue pool (Stats SA, 2020). However, much of their attention now is on managing the long-term impact of the pandemic on the common revenue pool. At the fourth joint Finance and Trade Ministers' virtual ministerial retreat on 21 September 2020, the countries agreed to focus on long-term development priorities. These included dealing with the impact of Covid-19, working jointly on the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), and emphasising an industrialisation path anchored in regional value chains.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

The economic shock triggered by the pandemic is set to aggravate the trend of declining foreign direct investment (FDI) into Africa (UNCTAD, 2020b). *FDI flows into Africa* are forecast to fall by between 25% and 40% in 2020. These flows had already declined by 10% in 2019 because of subdued commodity demand and moderate economic growth (UNCTAD, 2020c).

FDI into South Africa had likewise been declining before the pandemic, falling by 15% year-on-year to US\$4,6 billion in 2019. (This was still above the average of US\$2 billion per year in 2015–17.) FDI inflows into South Africa are largely for mining, manufacturing (automobiles and consumer goods) and services (finance and banking). Most of South Africa's traditional investor partners are members of the European Union, but China is gradually expanding its investments in the country (UNCTAD, 2020c). South Africa's credit rating has been deteriorating – all three major credit rating agencies allocated it

¹ See Chapter 6.2 for a discussion of the effect of the restrictions on the wine industry and Chapter 6.5 for the effect on the tobacco industry.

a junk rating (i.e. sub-investment grade with an elevated default risk). There is a concern that these downgrades could trigger investment outflows worth billions of dollars (Cook, 2020).

South Africa's direct investment liabilities (due to foreign parent companies providing debt funding to local subsidiaries) increased by R17,4 billion in the second quarter of 2020. Overall, the first quarter of 2020 saw a net outflow of R97,6 billion from local financial markets (SARB, 2020a), mainly because of non-residents' net sales of domestic debt securities and, to a lesser extent, equities. Outflows reached R24 billion in the second quarter and R38,6 billion in the third. Despite these outflows, the country's net international investment position improved in the second quarter of 2020, because the value of its foreign assets increased substantially more than that of its foreign liabilities (SARB, 2020b).

SOUTH AFRICA'S EXTERNAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

As the Covid-19 pandemic emerged locally in February 2020, South Africa was assuming the chairmanship of the African Union and serving its second year as an elected member of the UN Security Council. Early on, it mobilised its diplomatic engagements, focusing on three elements:

- To help it deal with the pandemic at home
- To mobilise global support to help Africa deal with the health and economic consequences of the pandemic
- To advocate for a non-discriminatory approach to countries under sanctions during the pandemic.

This took the form of both bilateral and multilateral engagements. The rest of this section highlights some of the key formal and informal multilateral groupings in which South Africa participates and its engagements with them, along with some of the bilateral assistance the country received.

FORMAL MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

South Africa is a member of the *United Nations*, which stands at the apex of the global multilateral system and to which all states belong. All UN member states sit in the General Assembly. In 2020 South Africa was serving the second year of a two-year term as one of ten elected members of the Security Council. It is one of three African members of the Security Council, which in 2020 included Niger and Tunisia. The African members form an informal caucus, the so-called A3, in the council.

South Africa is also a member of the *African Union*, the African continental equivalent of the United Nations. The African Union, which has 55 member states, was launched as the successor to the Organisation of African Unity in 2002. Its principal organs are the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Executive Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee, Specialised Technical Committees, the Peace and Security Council, and the AU Commission. Related bodies include the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. South Africa assumed the chair of the African Union for a year in February 2020; its term ended after the AU summit in February 2021.

Other memberships are in more specialised global and regional organisations and forums. In the economic area, the most significant of these are the *IMF*, the *World Bank*, the *African Development Bank*, and the *New Development Bank*. Under normal circumstances, all these institutions (except the IMF) provide financing for specific projects or programmes. The financing is in the form of loans and are therefore subject to the borrower meeting certain legal, financial and programme or project-related conditions. The IMF, on the other hand, normally provides general financing to help countries deal with deficits on their balance of payments. Its support is usually subject to policy conditions designed to ensure that the country corrects the external imbalance and can repay the IMF on the agreed terms. However, during the pandemic all these institutions offered more flexible financing to help countries deal with the crisis.

Two committees provide guidance to the IMF and the World Bank boards. The IMF's *International Monetary and Finance Committee* reports to the IMF Board of Governors on the supervision and management of the international monetary and financial system. Its membership is structured along the same lines as the Fund's 24-member Board of Executive Directors – it comprises the relevant member states' Governors of the IMF. The SARB Governor, Lesetja Kganyago, chaired the committee until January 2021. The second committee, the Joint Ministerial Committee of the Boards of Governors of the Bank and Fund on the Transfer of Real Resources to Developing Countries, is better known as the *Development Committee*. It advises the Boards of Governors of the IMF and the World Bank on development issues and the flow of funds to developing countries (IMF, 2020a).

In the international trade arena, South Africa is a member of the *World Trade Organization (WTO)*, the only global organisation with a mandate to organise international trade negotiations, monitor international trade relations, and help resolve disputes. It is also a member of regional economic organisations, such as the SADC and SACU. The SADC seeks to promote more intensive economic interactions between its member states, including in trade and investment, while SACU promotes both free trade among its member states and a common external trade policy towards the rest of the world.

Among the numerous specialised UN agencies of which South Africa is a member, the most relevant for current purposes is the *World Health Organization (WHO)*, which deals with international health issues. The WHO has been responsible for coordinating the international response to Covid-19. Its activities include collecting and coordinating information on international health emergencies and providing technical support to countries dealing with such emergencies. It is also responsible for informing the world when there is a pandemic; this triggers a specific set of international rules.

INFORMAL INTERNATIONAL BODIES

South Africa participates in the *G20*, which has designated itself as the primary forum for global economic governance. It is divided into two tracks, the Sherpa track and the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors track. The former deals with such issues as development policy, climate change, and public health. The latter provides a space in which officials from the G20 countries address

matters as the coordination of macroeconomic policy, sovereign debt issues, taxation, financing for infrastructure, and illicit financial flows.

The *BRICS* is an informal grouping, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which held its first summit in 2009. South Africa joined in 2011. For 2021, the BRICS is chaired by India; Russia chaired in 2020. It also operates along two tracks – the Sherpa and the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors track, which deal with similar issues as their G20 counterparts.

African finance ministers and their officials meet periodically to exchange views and coordinate positions on issues of mutual interest. Southern African finance ministry and central bank officials meet under the auspices of SADC and the Southern African Common Monetary Area to discuss issues of common concern.

South Africa belongs to the *G77 plus China*, a coalition of 134 developing countries at the United Nations that aims to promote its members' collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity. While China is not a member, it supports the grouping and contributes financially, and all the G77 statements include China. In 2020 the chair of the G77 was Guyana; Guinea is chairing the body in 2021.

In addition, South Africa participates in the *G24*, a grouping of developing countries that functions as an advocacy group for such countries in the IMF, similar to the G77 in the UN system. South Africa is also a member of the *Non-Aligned Movement*, which was established in 1961. This grouping comprises 120 developing countries that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.

Finally, South Africa participates in international entities focused on public *health*, including the *Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunization*. The WHO, the Global Alliance and other actors in global health (e.g. the Gates Foundation) established the Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator, which in turn established the COVAX initiative to promote more equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS DURING COVID-19

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

On the economic front, South Africa's international engagements during the Covid-19 pandemic took various forms. It engaged with the international financial institutions to raise finance, helped coordinate African economic responses, and advocated for African interests in other forums. It also used its bilateral relations to obtain additional support for Covid-19-related expenses.

South Africa raised US\$4,2 billion from the *IMF's Rapid Financing Instrument* at an interest rate of 50 basis points, with repayments to be made 3,25–5 years after disbursement. This facility, which provides finance to help IMF member states deal with the pandemic, has very few non-payment-related conditionalities. Thus, it is significantly less restrictive than other IMF facilities. However, as part of this transaction, South Africa provided the IMF (2020b) with a letter of intent setting out the

policies it plans to implement over the next few years. These policies were essentially those the finance minister had set out in his speech to Parliament in July 2020 (National Treasury, 2020). Government officials note that their engagements with IMF officials have been useful because they could learn from them about approaches to dealing with the pandemic-induced crisis.

The South African government borrowed US\$1 billion from the *New Development Bank* (NDB, 2020b)² and US\$288 million from the African Development Bank's Covid-19 Response Support Programme (AfDB, 2020). It is also negotiating a loan(s) with the World Bank. The size of the financing from the World Bank could be as high as US\$2 billion (WBG, 2020a). The funds from the IMF, the New Development Bank and the African Development Bank have been disbursed.

The New Development Bank allocated US\$10 billion to a new facility, the Emergency Assistance Program in Combatting COVID-19 (NDB, 2020a). The purpose of this facility is to provide emergency support to member states for dealing with anthropogenic disasters, epidemics or pandemics. Since each member is entitled to an equal share of the facility, South Africa could potentially access another US\$1 billion from the New Development Bank. It is in discussions with the Bank about this possibility.

The *BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement* (BRICS Ministry of External Relations, 2014) is an inter-central bank arrangement that allows South Africa's central bank to access up to US\$10 billion in short-term swap arrangements with its BRICS counterparts. The funding is available for three months and can be renewed. Such arrangements carry a charge of 150 basis points, which increases with each renewal. South Africa could access the first US\$3 billion without needing to enter into an IMF programme. The remaining US\$7 billion would only be made available when linked to an IMF programme. The rapid financing that South Africa received from the IMF in 2020, with its light conditions, may not satisfy this requirement. To date, neither South Africa nor any of the other member states has used the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement.

South Africa has been an active and leading participant in *coordinating African economic responses* to the pandemic. For example, in March 2020, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni co-chaired a virtual meeting of African finance ministers organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). This meeting resulted in a call to the international financial institutions to provide US\$100 billion in additional financing to help Africa deal with the pandemic (UNECA, 2020). In September 2021 the minister hosted a virtual summit of Finance Ministers and Trade Ministers in SACU to formulate long-term perspectives on dealing with Covid-19 and chart a new development course for the subregion.

President Ramaphosa, in his capacity as chair of the African Union, appointed four envoys to help raise funds for African efforts to deal with the pandemic and another to help coordinate the logistics challenge. The four envoys include three former finance ministers, Donald Kaberuka, Trevor Manuel

² In June 2020 the New Development Bank priced its inaugural benchmark US\$1,5 billion 3-year COVID-19 Response Bond in the international capital markets.

and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, as well as Thiam Tidjane, a prominent African businessman. South Africa's National Treasury provided technical support to former Minister Manuel. The Democratic Republic of Congo assumed the chair of the African Union in February 2021, and it is not clear whether the envoys will continue playing this role. It is likewise unclear whether a new envoy will be appointed now that Dr Okonjo-Iweala has become the Director-General of the WTO.

While it is hard to attribute specific outcomes to these activities, they may have contributed to the following initiatives:

- The *IMF* doubled access to the Rapid Credit Facility and Rapid Financing Instrument, from 50% to 100% of a country's annual IMF quota. By January 2021, 85 countries had received emergency support from the IMF; 29 low-income countries, including many in sub-Saharan Africa, received debt service relief until April 2021. In sub-Saharan Africa, 31 countries received a total of US\$16,3 billion in IMF support in 2020 through these emergency facilities or the augmentation of access under existing programme arrangements (IMF, 2021).
- The *World Bank Group* announced that it would deploy up to US\$160 billion over 15 months to help more than 100 countries protect poor and vulnerable people, support businesses, and bolster economic recovery. This includes up to US\$50 billion for African countries. By mid-October 2020, it had approved nearly US\$1,5 billion towards responding to the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa, through a combination of new operations and the redeployment of existing resources. Together, these interventions have reached 43 countries in the region; they include emergency health projects totalling US\$757 million in 34 African countries and US\$316 million in redeployed funds in 16 countries. Another US\$200 million is being leveraged through restructured projects (WBG, 2020b).

South Africa *advocated for African interests* in other forums, such as the G20. At the first virtual extraordinary G20 summit in late March 2020, President Ramaphosa participated in two capacities – he represented South Africa as a full member of the G20 and, in his role as chair, the African Union as an observer. He called on the international community to:

- Encourage open trade corridors, especially for pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies.
- Provide financial support for Africa's urgent humanitarian needs and help chart a recovery path.
- Waive all interest and payments on bilateral and multilateral loans.
- Support the African Coronavirus Fund (The Presidency, 2020b).

In April the G20 promoted a *Debt Service Suspension Initiative* under which participating countries offered to suspend payments due on their official credits from May to December 2020; 73 low-income countries plus Angola would be eligible. The IMF and World Bank reported that by end-September 2020, 44 countries had deferred official debt service worth US\$5,0 billion from May to December 2020. In October, this period was extended until the end of June 2021. By early March 2021, 46 countries have joined the initiative, of which 31 are African (WBG, 2021). The amount of deferred debt service is about half of what was expected – several states have not requested a deferral to avoid affecting their credit ratings and, hence, their access to international financial markets. At its November summit, the G20 endorsed the 'Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the

[Debt Service Suspension Initiative]' (G20 Riyadh Summit, 2020). This framework, which is also endorsed by the Paris Club, aims to encourage a common approach among all categories of creditors to each debtor country.

South Africa has authorised its representatives at the Board of Executive Directors of the *World Bank* to advocate for additional support for vulnerable countries affected by the Covid-19 crisis. This support includes calling on the Bank to be responsive to Africa's health and financing needs. Government officials are also working with the African Union and UNECA on a push for the restructuring of African debt (Vandome, 2020; Songwe, 2021).

At the *IMF*, South Africa supports a new general allocation of Special Drawing Rights to the value of US\$500 billion and the call for rich countries to redirect their unused share of Special Drawing Rights to help developing countries. Vera Songwe of UNECA, for example, pointed out that if the Special Drawing Rights allocation were undertaken today, Africa would only receive US\$25 billion of the US\$500 billion, with the lion's share going to G7 countries. She proposed that the G7 could voluntarily reallocate their Special Drawing Rights to an interest-bearing facility to support low-income countries.

South Africa used its participation in the *G24* to advocate for a coordinated global response to Covid-19 that includes unrestricted provision of the necessary medical supplies, assistance for all countries in need, and more financing for these countries.

In a similar vein, it has used its position as chair of the *African Union* to advocate for multilateral support for African countries on issues other than finance:

- In his capacity as chair, President Ramaphosa appointed Zimbabwean businessman Strive Masiyiwa as special envoy for the mobilisation of test kits and personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical workers. Several African countries, particularly small ones, felt that the global supply of test kits and PPE was so limited and depended on so few manufacturers that they could not compete on price. They reached out to the African Union chair to explore options to address this concern (Milken Institute, 2020). The Africa Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP) was the outcome of this initiative. In this regard, the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) helps guarantee payment for suppliers, while the Africa CDC ensures that the countries with the highest disease burdens are prioritised for supplies.
- In January 2021 President Ramaphosa announced that the African Union had secured a provisional 270 million doses of vaccine through the Covid-19 African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT). The pre-order programme for AU member states began in January. The Afreximbank is to facilitate payments by providing advance procurement commitment guarantees of up to US\$2 billion to the manufacturers on behalf of African countries (APO Group, 2021). The platform seems to be working well from a negotiating perspective. However, the success of any vaccine roll-out depends on factors such as the delivery date of vaccines to each country, the availability of the necessary infrastructure and (cold) storage capacity, the logistics of transporting and administering the vaccine, and the resilience of the healthcare system (since healthcare workers also have to care

for Covid-19 patients). Another important concern is whether vaccine manufacturers will be able to deliver orders within the agreed time frames.³

On a bilateral basis, South Africa received €1,5 million as a top-up of existing programmes from the European Union and could potentially access some of the €1,5 billion the bloc promised to provide to non-EU countries.⁴ The country also received about €20 million from the German government and private sources (including Volkswagen and BMW)⁵ for procuring PPE and through top-ups to existing programmes. A number of German engineers and technicians came to South Africa in three waves in July and August, invited by German companies operating in the country, to provide essential skills in upgrading the production capacity of German-owned companies and to assist Eskom, among others, as part of efforts to kick-start the economy (Patel, 2020).

Some donors have granted South Africa greater flexibility in how it may use their funds, including Switzerland (Sw F1,2 million), the United States (US\$6 million), and the Global Fund for Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and Malaria. The Global Fund also provided R66 million in new funds for Covid-19-related purposes. Furthermore, South Africa received new funds from Canada (Can\$6 million) and the United Kingdom (R36 million).

Chinese company Huawei Technologies donated R1 million to the Department of Health, and the South Africa–China Economic and Trade Association donated R2 million (Tshwawe, 2020). The Chinese government donated R1 million to the Department of Basic Education for water tanks for primary and secondary schools in the Northern Cape, along with 50 000 surgical masks and 400 forehead thermometers (XinhuaNet, 2020). Finally, South African multinational companies (such as MTN) donated US\$25 million to support the African Union’s Covid-19 vaccination programme; this is credit to the active role played by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his time as chair of the African Union.

REGIONAL EFFORTS

South Africa’s most significant regional effort resulted from its chairing the African Union in the year to February 2021. This allowed it to play a leadership role in coordinating an African response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There seems to be wide acknowledgement in the African Union that President Ramaphosa played an effective leadership role in that regard (Louw-Vaudran, 2020). Before South

³ These concerns were first raised when Pfizer indicated to the European Union that it was likely to miss its agreed delivery date and had to adjust the estimated volumes of vaccine deliveries.

⁴ The European Union’s support included: (a) emergency response provisions, such as 100 tonnes of supplies regularly flown to South Africa, the conversion of the Volkswagen plant in Nelson Mandela Bay to a 3300-bed field hospital (see footnote 5), and R88,75 million in food vouchers to Khayelitsha; (b) strengthened health, water and research systems, including through R71 million to hospitals and clinics in northern provinces, and R127,75 million in awareness raising at district level via the Asivikelane project to monitor sanitation infrastructure spending by municipalities; and (c) economic and social support, including R497 million to the National Treasury to alleviate fiscal constraints.

⁵ Volkswagen South Africa converted a vacant plant in Port Elizabeth into the Rev. Dr Elizabeth Manusa Chabula-Nxiweni Field Hospital with funding provided by the German embassy (see footnote 4). In Gauteng the German government and BMW established temporary screening and testing facilities in Soshanguve.

Africa assumed the chair of the African Union, DIRCO established a steering committee that brought together all relevant departments. Thus, when the focus suddenly had to shift to a pandemic response, a coordinating forum was already operational.

During the pandemic, the *AU Bureau*, where each region is represented at a head-of-government level, held several meetings. These meetings became the forum for bringing all relevant stakeholders together and coordinating action. The Bureau included the troika – the then chair, South Africa, and the two vice-chairs: President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo (future chair), President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt (immediate past chair). Other members were President Uhuru Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya and President Ibrahim Keita of the Republic of Mali, as well as the chairperson of the African Union Commission. The special envoys reported to the Bureau, and the director of the Africa CDC participated in all its meetings. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were also brought into the meetings to report on issues in their regions, including the impact of conflicts, for example in the Sahel. At the third meeting of the Bureau, President Ramaphosa invited several other African business leaders and used the occasion to ask their support for the AU strategy on Covid-19 (The Presidency, 2020a).

Apart from these engagements, in early February and March several meetings of *health ministers and finance ministers* were held, respectively to develop strategies for countering the health and economic dimensions of the pandemic. Specialised technical committees were also established at AU level to coordinate on matters such as transport and health.

South Africa played an important role in the coordination among *SADC member states*, where it engaged via the SADC Secretariat. (SADC had been chaired by Tanzania until Mozambique assumed the chair in August 2020.) South Africa participated in a number of SADC meetings of Ministers and Senior Officials, called by the Secretariat. These meetings resulted in joint decisions on managing the pandemic, including guidelines on facilitating and harmonising cross-border transportation, the validity of testing periods, payment for tests, information sharing, and impact monitoring (Muchopa, 2020). The regional response borrowed much from South Africa's domestic regulation and response to the pandemic. For example, President Ramaphosa took the initiative to call a meeting of neighbouring countries to adopt a set of minimum requirements and to offer bilateral support. South Africa also pushed for the harmonisation of the standards for determining the validity of testing results. The Department of Health provided technical support in the development of these guidelines. There were also initiatives to harmonise standards in the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA),⁶ driven by the Executive Secretary of SADC, who chairs the tripartite technical group.

South Africa's initial response to the pandemic, like that of the region, was motivated primarily by the need to save lives. Less consideration was given to the impact of closing borders on trade and access to essential supplies. Predictably, landlocked countries were most affected by these restrictions. A

⁶ These included the Tripartite Guidelines for Safe, Efficient and Cost-Effective Movement of Goods and Services during Covid and the Tripartite Guidelines on Trade and Transport Facilitation.

SADC (2020b) report on food security and vulnerability noted that the lockdown measures taken by various member states to contain the spread of the virus reduced people's access to food. Specifically, 'markets that are dependent on South Africa, including those in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, were affected by border restrictions. As supplies in these markets declined, prices increased' (SADC 2020b, 19). In the case of Lesotho, the report noted that the impact of 'restricted movement for individuals and entrepreneurs, especially to and from South Africa to access some commodities' (SADC, 2020b, 27) was among the major problems facing the country. In addition, the decision to not grant any medical visas during the lockdown ignored the fact that many countries in the region depend on South Africa for health services.

The South African government participated in the following *global and regional initiatives* to deal with Covid-19 and its impacts:

- It collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020) to implement its guidance document on child nutrition responses in lockdown; this guidance includes ensuring continued access to essential healthcare. UNICEF is assisting the Department of Health in developing district responses to the possible increase in acute malnutrition cases after the lockdown.
- The African Union established a Covid-19 Response Fund to raise resources to strengthen the continental response (AU, 2020a). The Response Fund was President Ramaphosa's initiative to strengthen the capacity of the Africa CDC to execute the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak (AU, 2020b), by securing additional resources. By 19 February 2021, the Fund had received 56% of US\$42,4 million pledged, and the Africa CDC had received 75% of the US\$254,8 million pledged.⁷ As noted, measures include the pooled procurement of PPE, diagnostics and other medical commodities by the Africa CDC for distribution to the member states.
- The Western Cape provincial health department, using data from its Provincial Health Data Centre, published a study on the interactions between Covid-19, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases as an information-sharing mechanism with SADC member states (SADC, 2020a).
- At a virtual meeting on 6 April 2020, South Africa and its SADC counterparts agreed to adopt guidelines on the movement of essential goods and services to ease delays during lockdowns (Louw-Vaudran & Diata, 2020).

ADVOCACY OF AFRICAN CONCERNS

South Africa has played a leading role in promoting the interests of the continent in *international forums*, largely because of President Ramaphosa's chairpersonship of the African Union in 2020. Very soon after assuming the chair, as the pandemic was breaking, he held discussions with world leaders, including the UN Secretary-General, the president of the World Bank, the managing director of the IMF, the president of the EU Commission, and the director-general of the WHO. He also sent a number of letters to world leaders, asking for international assistance from multilateral and bilateral partners.

⁷ Email communication from the AU desk, DIRCO, 24 February 2021. It is interesting to note that 69% of the contributions received by the Fund was from African member states.

In April he addressed the joint meeting of the World Bank and the IMF on the pandemic and Africa (The Presidency, 2020a).

The president advocated for *debt suspension and affordable vaccine access* on international platforms:

- On 14 May, President Ramaphosa was one of three African leaders and some 50 former world leaders who published an open letter calling for vaccines, when available, to be ‘produced rapidly at scale and made available for all people, in all countries, free of charge. The same applies for all treatments, diagnostics, and other technologies for Covid-19’ (Khan et al., 2020). The letter was also aimed at the World Health Assembly meeting later that month.
- At the 75th session of the UN General Assembly in September, he called for a comprehensive stimulus package for African countries and the freezing of interest payments on their external and public debt (CGNT, 2020).
- On 29 September 2020, he urged developed countries at the high-level UN meeting on ‘Financing the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond’ to consider debt service suspension and the cancellation of debt in certain instances (Gerber, 2020).
- South Africa and India petitioned the WTO in October 2020 to temporarily waive all patents, trade secrets, industrial design and copyright on Covid-19-related drugs, vaccines, diagnostics and other medical technologies during the pandemic (Baker, 2020). They argued at the WTO and in the G20 that this was necessary to ensure that all countries could gain affordable access to critical medical supplies. They maintained that the provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (the TRIPS Agreement) should not be a barrier to sharing the technology (without royalties) to produce the vaccines, medicines and medical equipment needed to address the pandemic (WTO, 1994; DTIC, 2020). As of February 2021, seven countries have joined the petition. Another 100, acting through the African Union and the low-income country group in the WTO, have expressed support for the petition. However, to date, the countries that are home to the world’s major pharmaceutical companies have opposed the petition ([Carim, 2021](#); Beattie, 2021).

South Africa supported the UN Secretary-General’s call on 23 March 2020 for a global ceasefire in order to focus on fighting the pandemic and allow humanitarian access to those living in conflict zones. Furthermore, on 15 April, the Secretary-General pledged that the United Nations would stand in solidarity with Africa in the face of the pandemic and its economic and social impact (UN News, 2020). South Africa supported several resolutions by the *UN General Assembly* on the pandemic:

- The first, on 2 April 2020 (A/RES/74/270) on ‘Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)’, reaffirmed the General Assembly’s commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism and expressed ‘strong support for the central role of the United Nations system’. It called on the United Nations to ‘work with all relevant actors in order to mobilise a coordinated global response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic and financial impact on all societies’.

- The second, on 20 April 2020 (A/RES/74/274) on 'International cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19', urged international cooperation on equitable global access to medical equipment, treatment and vaccines.
- Two resolutions were adopted on 11 September 2020: (A/RES/74/306) 'Comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic' and (A/RES/74/307) 'United response against global health threats: Combating COVID-19'. In these resolutions, the General Assembly called for intensified international cooperation and multilateral efforts in handling disease outbreaks, including by sharing timely, accurate and transparent information, exchanging epidemiological and clinical data, and sharing materials necessary for research and development.

The *UN Security Council* was unable to reach agreement on a resolution dealing with the pandemic until 1 July when it adopted Security Council Resolution 2532. South Africa had from the outset supported the Security Council's call for a global ceasefire, as well as for easing economic restrictions (sanctions) to help the target countries (Sudan, Cuba, Iran, Venezuela and Zimbabwe) deal with the pandemic. However, the United States opposed this, wanted no mention of the WHO in the resolution, and insisted on referring to the coronavirus as 'the China virus'. Other Western countries were willing to endorse the Secretary-General's ceasefire call (with exclusions) but not the lifting of economic sanctions. South Africa's position was that the Security Council should not select which elements of the UN Secretary-General's call to endorse or not. It maintained that the WHO should be mentioned in the resolution, and that it had to make the link between health and peace and security. However, South Africa maintained that notwithstanding these points, it would vote for a resolution even with the exclusions.⁸ South Africa voted in favour of the resolution of 1 July 2020, which resolved some of the disputed elements by referring to the UN General Assembly resolution of April that mentions the WHO, although the resolution itself does not directly mention the WHO. There was also no mention of the lifting of economic sanctions, and there was an exemption from the global ceasefire call, as it pertained to ISIL, al-Qaeda and related franchises.

During the course of the pandemic, the *G77 plus China* issued three statements:

- The first, on 3 April 2020, expressed support for the efforts of the UN Secretary-General and the WHO and called on international partners to assist developing countries in combating the pandemic (G77, 2020a). The statement also warned that any unilateral coercive measures by countries would have a negative impact on the capacity of states to respond to the pandemic.
- The second, on 19 April 2020, expressed support for the WHO, calling on the global community 'to maintain and, where possible, increase their support for the WHO, which, by the mandate given to it by Member States, has a critical and central role to play in supporting developing countries to confront a crisis of epic scale that threatens to erase the gains made over the past decades' (G77, 2020b).
- The third, on 22 July 2020, focused on the pandemic and debt, calling on the international financial institutions, multilateral banks, bilateral creditors and other commercial and private creditors 'to

⁸ Interview with DIRCO official, 18 August 2020.

provide immediate and substantial debt relief, as well as other support measures to developing countries, to make available necessary fiscal space and liquidity and help them manage the unfolding crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic while achieving sustainable development' (G77, 2020c). The G77 also urged donor countries to meet their official development assistance commitments.

The *Non-Aligned Movement* held an online summit of its Contact Group (some 30 heads of state) on 4 May 2020. President Ramaphosa, who attended as chair of the African Union, highlighted South Africa's and the African response to Covid-19 and called on countries to strengthen solidarity and cooperation to fight the pandemic. The summit agreed to establish the Non-Aligned Movement Task Force to develop a database of the basic humanitarian and medical needs of its members. This would be submitted to all donor countries, international humanitarian organisations, international financial institutions, transnational private entities implementing social responsibility projects, and others for possible support and assistance (Cuba MinRex, 2020). The summit also condemned the 'promulgation and application of unilateral coercive measures' against its members. On 20 May 2020 an online meeting of health ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement Contact Group was held to discuss health-related challenges posed by the pandemic. A meeting of foreign ministers was held on 9 October; its statement reiterated the points made by the summit in May, while also emphasising that essential goods such as food and medicine should not be used as tools 'for political coercion' (MoFA, 2020).

The 2018 Johannesburg Declaration of the *BRICS* calls for the establishment of a BRICS Vaccine Development and Research Centre. South Africa has since called for this initiative to be accelerated. The communique issued at the end of the BRICS Moscow summit on 17 November 2020 reiterates support for the idea but does not mention when it would be established (Kremlin, 2020). The tenth meeting of health ministers took place on 11 November 2020. Russia proposed the creation of a comprehensive early warning system for the risks of widespread infectious diseases within the BRICS and to publish a review of the measures taken by BRICS countries to counter the spread of Covid-19.

INTERACTION WITH NON-STATE ACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

South Africa has collaborated with non-state actors to support efforts to combat Covid-19 and accelerate economic recovery. For example, on 28 October 2020, the chief executive officer of Naspers South Africa represented the country at the BRICS Business Forum 2020, which focused on the role of digital technologies in helping BRICS countries with the post-Covid-19 recovery (News24, 2020). Also, as noted, African businesspeople have played a role as envoys of the African Union in mobilising resources to help the continent deal with the pandemic.

GLOBAL HEALTH

South Africa has garnered multilateral and bilateral support for its public health initiatives. The WHO has considerable expertise in dealing with medical emergencies. Its Health Emergencies Programme was developed in 2016 to provide countries, especially in Africa, with the appropriate expertise to

respond to health emergencies like Covid-19. It brings speed and predictability to the WHO emergency work by using a single-incident management system, adopting an all-hazards approach (i.e. all hazards that create health emergencies, including natural or human-made disasters, disease outbreaks and conflicts), promoting collective action, and encompassing all stages of the emergency cycle from preparedness to recovery.

A WHO team of health experts, locally dubbed the Surge Team, has been deployed to support South Africa's Covid-19 response management. In August 2020, the Regional Director of the WHO for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti, introduced the first phase of this initiative. The team deployed 17 of its 43 experts to the Eastern Cape, the Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, which have the highest potential for a Covid-19 resurgence (Nair, 2020). The team was to work closely with the Department of Health at national level and with senior staff of provincial departments of health. The assignment of the WHO Surge Team has been criticised by some members of the ministerial advisory committee advising the health department (Child, 2020). They have questioned the need for a team of experts who lack local understanding and have asked what expertise the WHO team could provide that local scientists and epidemiologists on the committee did not have (see also [Kapueja, 2020a](#) and Chapter 5.1 on health).

At the bilateral level, South Africa received support from the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialised in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics (also known as the Cuban Medical Brigade) in terms of the South Africa–Cuba Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Public Health and Medical Sciences. In April 2020 Cuba sent 217 health specialists (including epidemiologists, biostatisticians, family physicians, and healthcare technology engineers) to South Africa following a request from President Ramaphosa (DoH, 2020a). It is unclear how the impact of their activities will be evaluated. Although the Minister of Health, Dr Zwelini Mkhize, has only provided vague reports on their activities (see also [Kapueja, 2020a](#)), South Africa recently nominated the Cuban Medical Brigade for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. This suggests their impact on the South African health system during the pandemic has been both positive and significant (Pandor, 2021).

COOPERATION ON BORDER MANAGEMENT AND REPATRIATION⁹

Migration is a potentially significant channel for Covid-19 infections worldwide. This is a particular concern in the SADC area, where borders are porous. South Africa and Botswana attract the largest numbers of migrants in the region. South Africa is also an important transit point for people from outside the region visiting SADC countries. The WHO Regional Office for Africa classified South Africa as a 'priority one country' based on three factors: (a) traffic between South Africa and China, (b) its capacity to implement the International Health Regulations (WHO, 2016), and (c) the fact that it has reported the highest number of Covid-19 cases in Africa, which increases the risk of the virus spreading to its SADC neighbours (DoH, 2020b).

⁹ See [Kapueja, 2020b](#)

In response to these risks, SADC adopted guidelines for all member states that are intended to:

- Limit the spread of Covid-19 through transport across borders.
- Facilitate the implementation of national Covid-19 measures in cross-border transportation.
- Facilitate the interstate flow of essential goods (e.g. fuel, food, medicines and agricultural inputs).
- Limit unnecessary and mass movement of passengers across borders.
- Balance, align, harmonise and coordinate Covid-19 response measures with the requirements for trade and transport facilitation.

During the early phases of the lockdown, the South African government communicated its intent to build a 40 km *fence*, at a cost of R37 million, on its border with Zimbabwe (eNCA, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020) to help curtail the spread of the virus. This was seen as a waste of resources because of the already permeable nature of the previous fence in this area (Dodson, 2000; Jones, 2016).

DIRCO (2020b) has facilitated, at an estimated cost of R10 million, the *repatriation* of South Africans stranded in various countries. By mid-August 2020, an estimated 19 400 citizens had been repatriated by land and air (DIRCO, 2020c). By early October 2020, the number had grown to almost 30 000 (DIRCO, 2020d). As government had not budgeted for such missions, repatriation efforts were focused on people who already had return tickets to South Africa, students studying abroad who had to vacate their places of residence, and elderly and sick people (DIRCO, 2020a).

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions can be drawn about South Africa's international engagements during the Covid-19 pandemic. First, *it has made effective use of its international relations* in dealing with the pandemic. It has received significant funds from the international financial institutions; the only substantial sources it has not yet tapped are the World Bank and the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement. (It is currently in negotiations with the World Bank and can be expected to obtain funding from it in due course.) The lack of utilisation of the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement may be due to its relatively high cost and the fact that it provides short-term liquidity support and not the longer-term financing offered by other sources. South Africa has also received technical support from the WHO, along with financial, technical and human resource support from other countries.

Second, South Africa could benefit from its international relations during the pandemic because it has *invested time in building and sustaining these relations* over the years. This has allowed the country to build credibility with the various international and regional organisations and forums and with its bilateral partners. As a result, they have been willing to show solidarity with South Africa and provide it with useful resources at relatively short notice. This can be seen, for example, in the relative speed with which Cuba and the European Union responded to the country's request for assistance and the relatively rapid responses of the New Development Bank and the African Development Bank to its requests for funding. The relatively slower response of the IMF can be attributed to the size of the facility and the need to coordinate this agreement with the finance minister's Budget Statement.

Finally, the relatively slow response of the World Bank can partly be attributed to the fact that the country's relationship with the Bank is not uncomplicated, and South African stakeholders disagree about the desirability of this funding.

Related to this point is the importance of *credibility* in international relations. Credibility in this context refers to states that (a) are viewed by their interlocutors as offering constructive contributions to international discussions at the bilateral and multilateral levels, (b) when they disagree with their interlocutors provide principled and understandable reasons for their disagreement, and (c) can be relied upon to deliver on their promises. States that have such credibility are both more likely to be given support when they request it and to be listened to when they advocate for certain responses. Credibility is also enhanced when a state can demonstrate that it is speaking for groups of states in the positions it adopts in these discussions. This can be seen, for example, in the voice that South Africa has in the International Monetary and Finance Committee and in the willingness of the international community to listen to the African envoys appointed by President Ramaphosa in his capacity as chair of the African Union. Finally, it can be seen in the attention given in the WTO to the initiative led by South Africa and India on Covid-19-related medicines and intellectual property rights.

The third conclusion, which draws on the above points, is the importance of a *strategic and realistic approach to foreign policymaking and implementation*. Countries that have clear plans for using their international relations to support their crisis management strategies are much more likely to succeed than those that are purely reactive. Such an approach enables a developing country like South Africa to balance the inevitable tensions between the positions it wants to advocate in its international negotiations with its need for support from these same multilateral and bilateral interactions. For example, the likelihood of success on both counts increases when a country has integrated its strategy for advocating for reforms in organisations like the IMF or the WTO with its potential need to draw on their resources. An effective strategy not only increases its chances of garnering support from others for its positions but also wins it respect for its contributions to the functioning of these organisations and forums and allows it to get a closer hearing for its requests for assistance. This can be seen, for example, in the respect with which Africa's envoys on resource mobilisation have been received and their ability to get the attention of other actors in these areas.

Fourth, it is important to have *a clear strategy for communicating with all domestic and international stakeholders about government's international actions* relating to the crisis. Much of the groundwork for international relations takes place behind the scenes and is not obvious to domestic stakeholders. Also, the domestic debates and interactions that shape a country's international relations are not entirely transparent to international audiences. Consequently, neither group may be fully able to understand the rationale for the positions taken by the state in its international relations. It is similarly hard for them to identify and assess the benefits the state hopes to gain from these engagements. The risk of misinterpretation is therefore not insignificant. An effective communications strategy can help mitigate this risk and build support for the positions being taken. In this way it can also help increase the chances of success for the strategy.

The fifth lesson is *the importance of having an intergovernmental mechanism for ensuring coherence and consistency* in policymaking and implementation across all relevant government departments. The advantages of such coordination could be seen, for example, in how South Africa could rapidly adapt its priorities for its year as chair of the African Union in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Coordination is critical for issues such as South Africa's advocacy in the WTO for waivers of intellectual property rights on Covid-19 vaccines; these issues affect the responsibilities of multiple government departments, both national and provincial. Effective cross-government coordinating mechanisms are particularly vital when many international engagements take place across multiple virtual and interpersonal platforms and formats.

Lastly, it is important that states have *a means for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of an international relations strategy*. This offers a number of benefits:

- It enables policymakers and implementers to understand in real time if their strategy is achieving the intended results and, if not, to make mid-course corrections.
- It enables them, where appropriate, to share information with their international interlocutors about their approach to the crisis and thereby benefit from the latter's insights and information.
- It enables the relevant officials to adjust their communications strategy to ensure that they can sustain the support of domestic stakeholders.
- It allows them to learn lessons about managing such crises and so develop the institutional memory that will lead to more effective responses to any future crisis.

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