

"Covid-19 Country Report 2nd Edition: Chapter 1 – International Cooperation and Trade"

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GTAC weekly webinar series

Prof. Suzy Graham, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Johannesburg

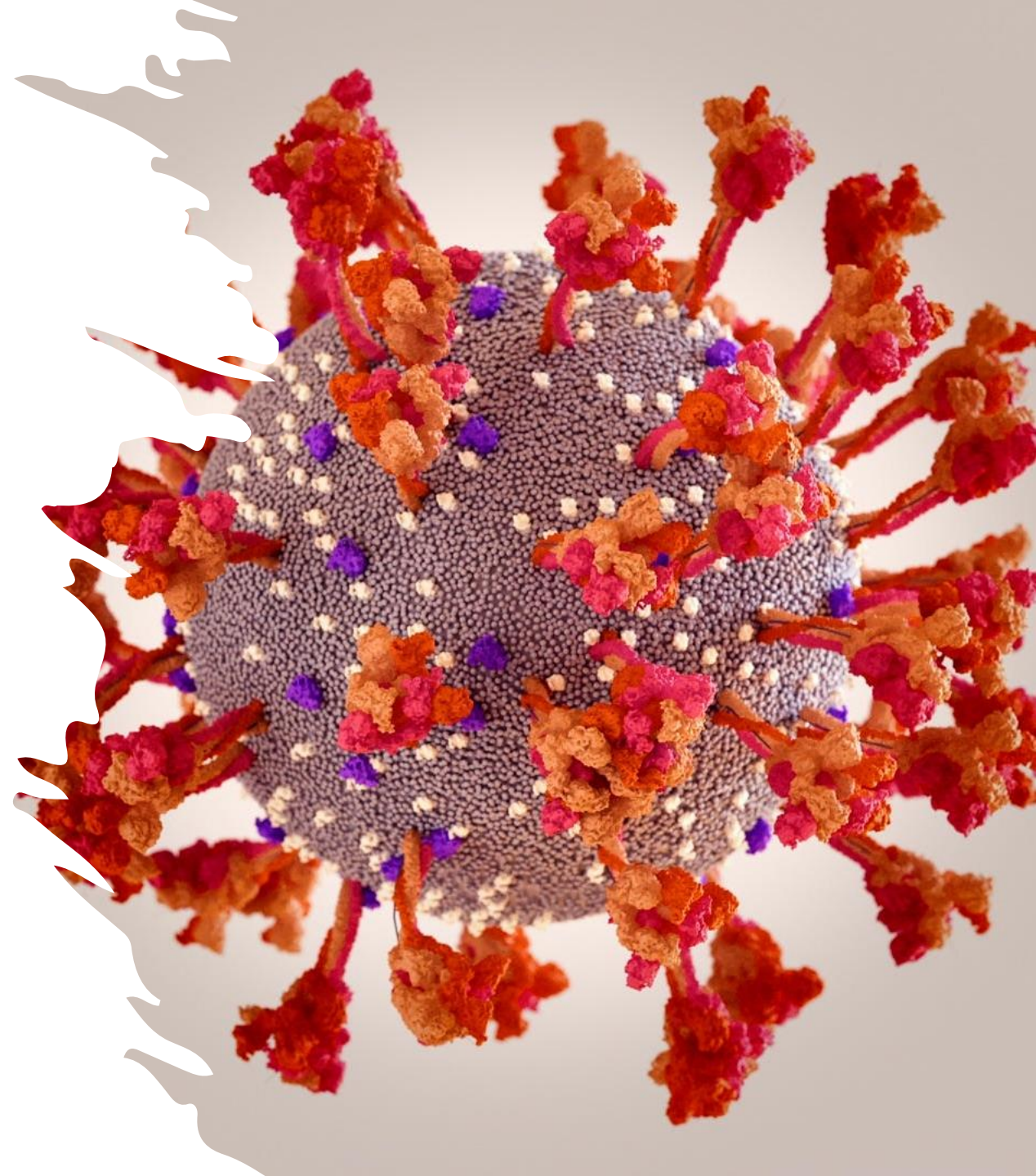
Prof. Victoria Graham, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria

Mr Mancha Johannes Sekgololo, Doctoral candidate in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg.

Dr Marcel Nagar, Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow at University of Johannesburg.

Outline

- **Section 1: Importance of international cooperation**
- **Section 2: Omicron and the 'politics' of covid variants**
- **Section 3: Vaccine diplomacy and South Africa's advocacy role**
- **Section 4: SA's global economic engagement**
- **Section 5: Lessons learnt**
- **Section 6: Recommendations**



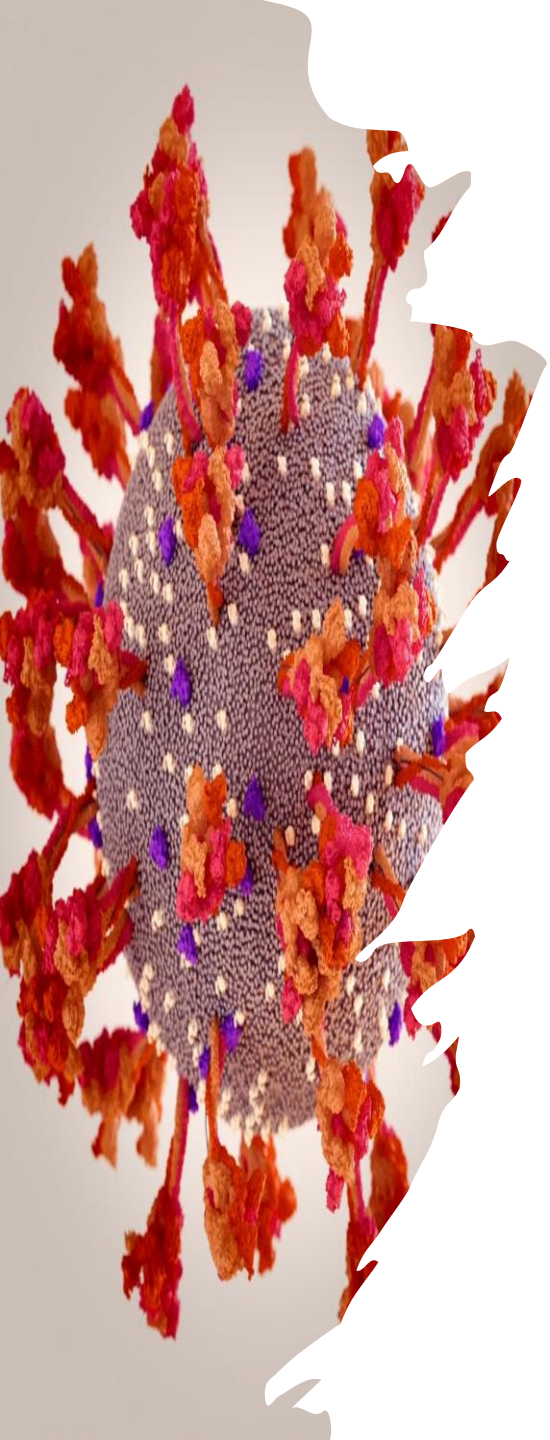


Introduction

- In this Chapter we sought to ascertain the status of South Africa's international cooperation efforts, and trade statistics, since March 2021, in response to the continued presence of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic.
- International observation of SA: “a standout in the region”
- President Cyril Ramaphosa's frank and effective communication with his public
- In the first year of the pandemic, initiatives spearheaded by the South African Government and its partners were successful in bringing global attention, and solidarity, to certain pandemic-related issues

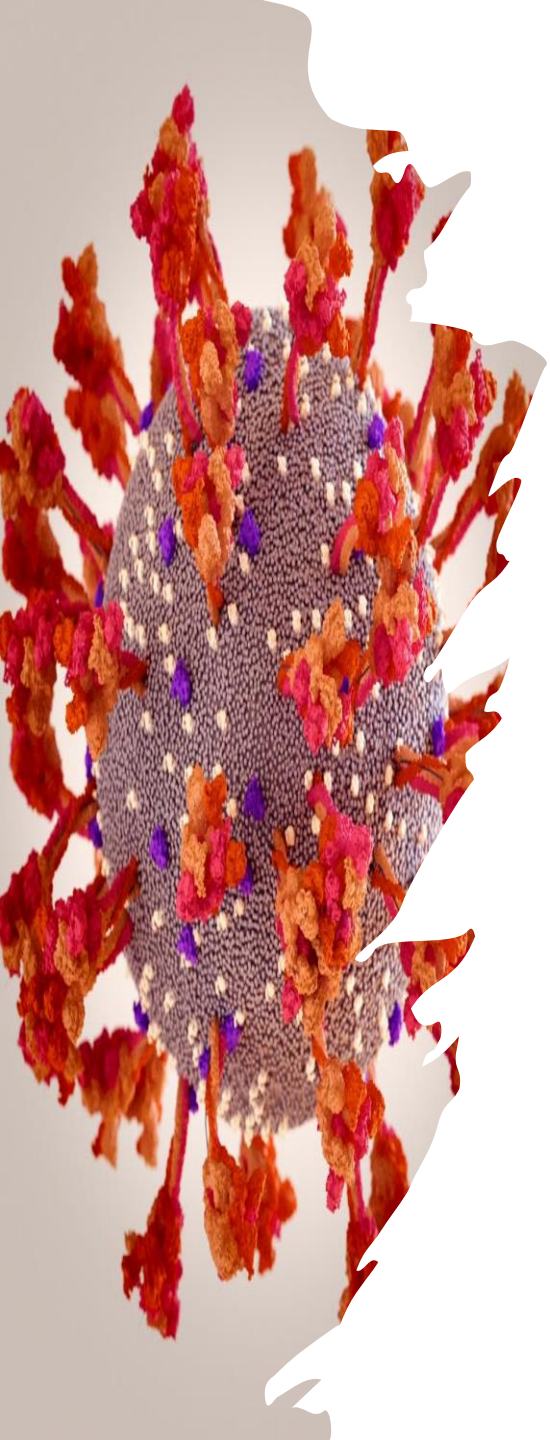
Key questions

1. To what extent has South Africa contributed to the continued global response to the pandemic? What factors have hindered this contribution, if any?
2. Has South Africa been able to learn from the initial year of the pandemic and as such been able to leverage its international cooperative efforts and responses more effectively?



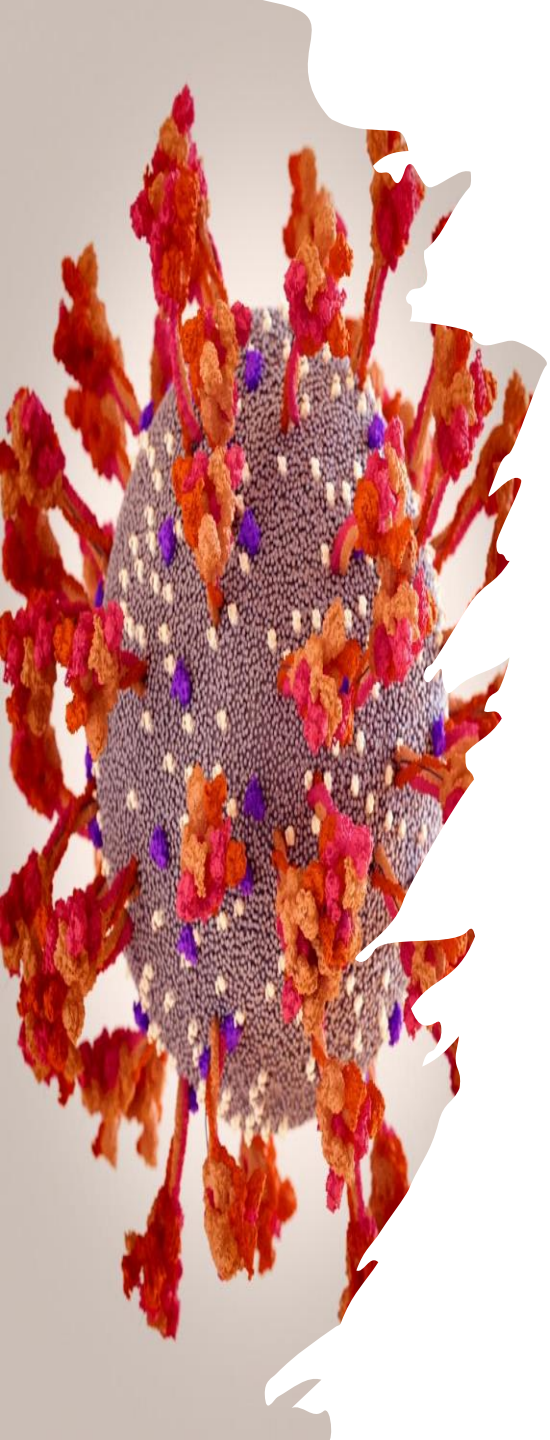
The importance of IR and Omicron 'politics'

- Why is international cooperation so crucial for states?
- Discovering Omicron and the ping-pong politics that ensued
 - Debate around international inequalities
 - Idea of respect
 - Transparency



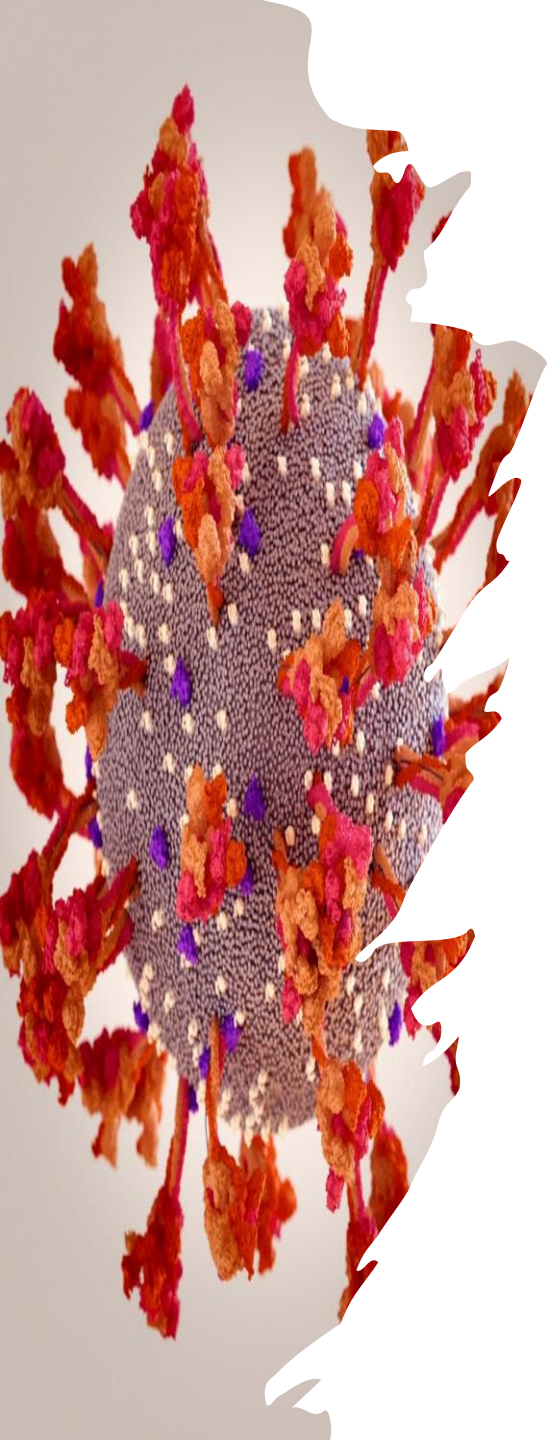
Vaccine diplomacy and SA's Advocacy role

- Fifteen years ago, South Africa was one of seven countries that officially linked foreign policy and global health through the Oslo Ministerial Declaration
- +ve and -ve?
- SA's vaccine diplomacy actions – altruistic?
- Lack of access to vaccinations in SADC - failed coordination?
- BRICS and the Vaccination Centre; CDCs and mRNA hubs
- Travel bans, Pres. Ramaphosa and the West's "selfish" behaviour
- "African-produced vaccines and economic recovery"



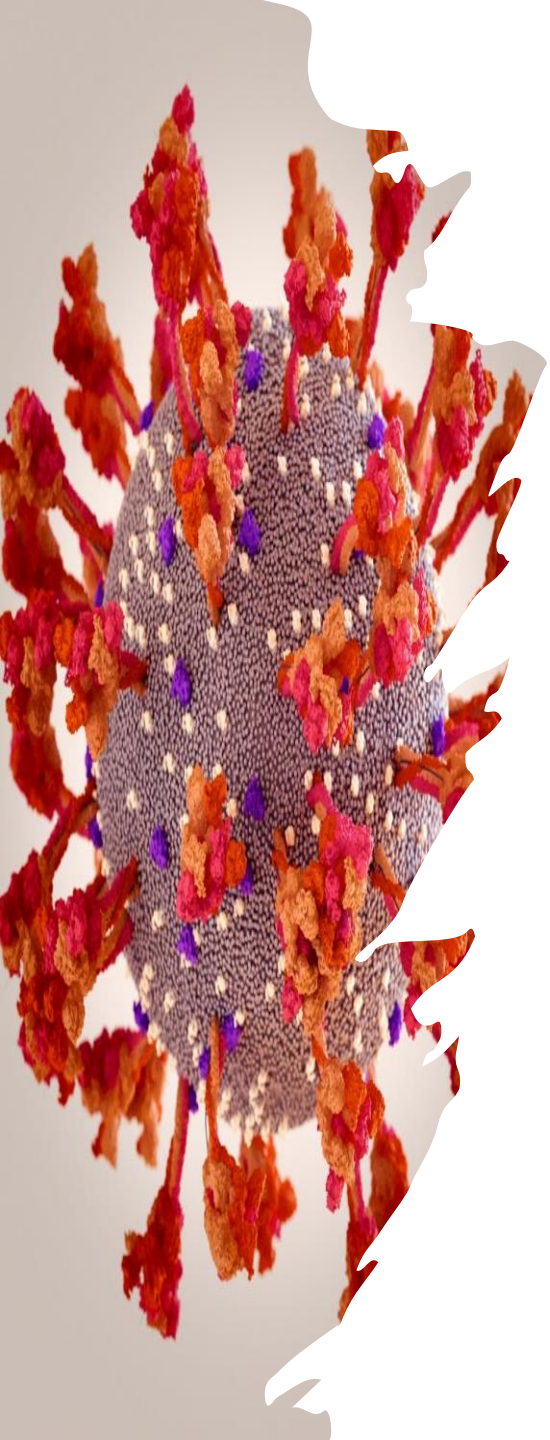
Global Economic Engagement

- Covid caused disruptions to global supply chains, which impacted South Africa's exports and imports.
- The country's manufacturing sector was affected, with factories closed or operating at reduced capacity due to lockdowns and restrictions.
- The pandemic also led to decreased demand for many of South Africa's exports, including commodities such as gold, platinum, and coal, and a reduction in foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Africa, as investors became more risk-averse and focused on protecting their existing investments. The country's mining and energy sectors have been particularly affected by reduced investment.



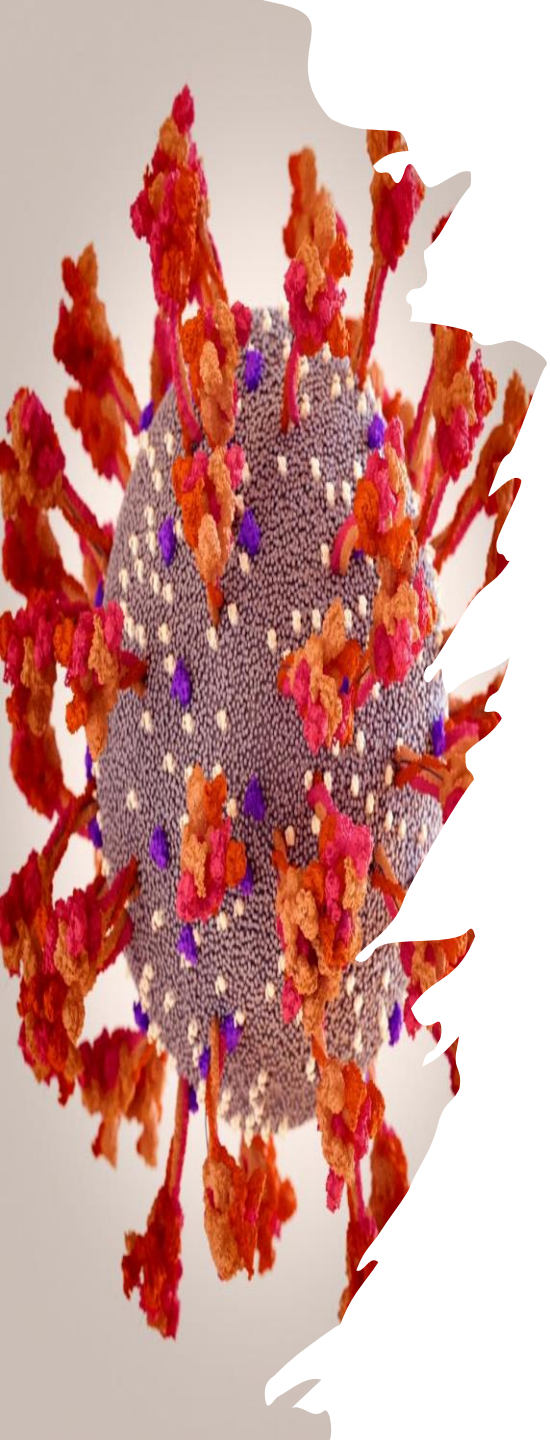
Global Economic Engagement

- The pandemic caused a global economic recession, which has had a significant impact on South Africa's economy. In response the South African government implemented a range of measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the economy, including stimulus packages, loan guarantees, and tax relief.
- However, the effectiveness of these measures had been limited by high levels of corruption and mismanagement.
- Some good news, however, when the drive by President Ramaphosa in SAIC received overall approval from multiple investors and South Africa's trade growth was evident in the first quarter of 2022 (2022 Global Trade report published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2022)).



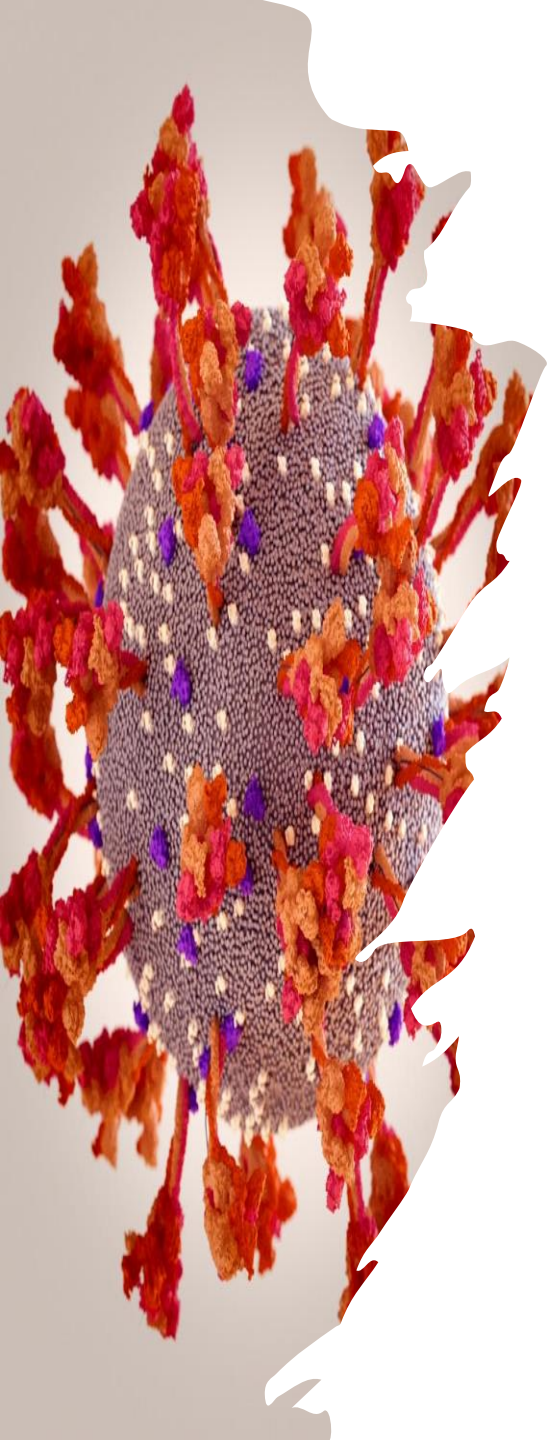
Some lessons and recommendations

- South Africa continued to make effective use of its international relations in dealing with the pandemic in the second year. (A shift towards a greater emphasis on **vaccine diplomacy** emerged)
- International politics is **ALL ABOUT PERCEPTION** and so:
- SA should continue to play a **leadership role** in Africa and the global south despite the pandemic-related challenges (President commended in Aug 2022 at the 42nd Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC): outgoing chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation).
- South Africa must persist in its **advocacy** for greater inclusivity in bilateral and multilateral platforms around vaccine access and production (health apartheid).



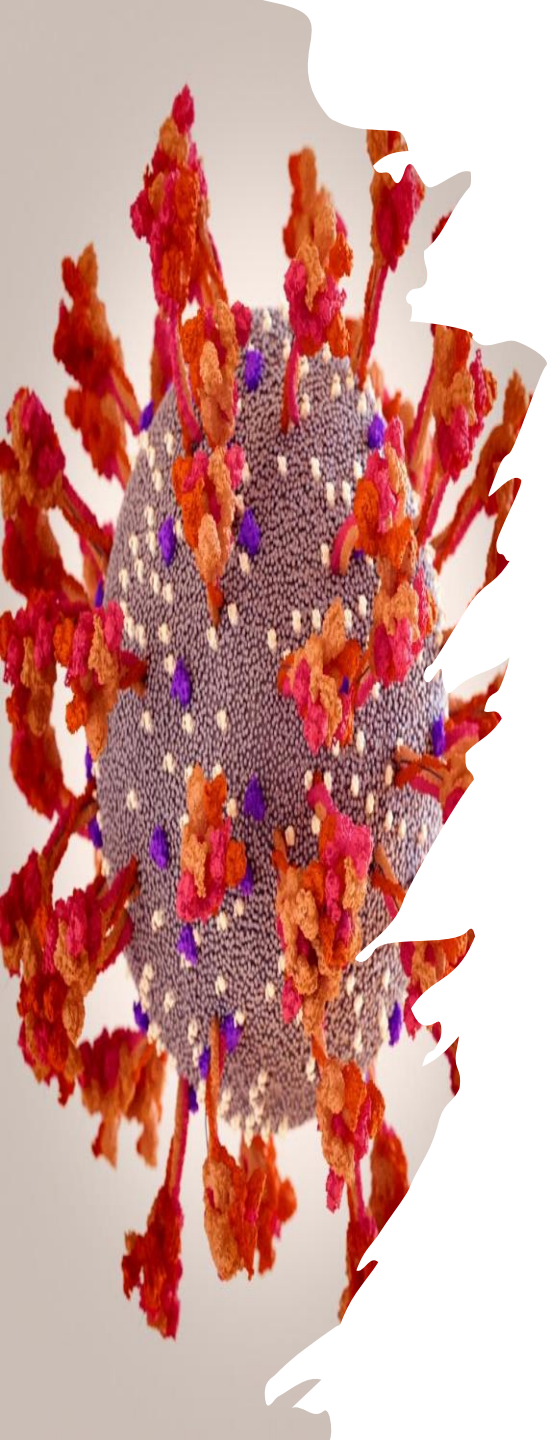
Lessons and recommendations cont'd

- The North-South disparities and unequal power structures in global health especially remain a challenge and this raises the question about how to confront this **unequal system** going forward in the face of future pandemics and other global challenges.
- The changing nature of the rules of the game (balancing interests and needs).
- The President **clearly communicated** to domestic and global audiences South Africa's status and position on the pandemic and vaccine access in the second year. Transparency and effective communication assists in mitigating risk and both are important domestic and diplomatic tools.
- **Consistency** in approach and position is all important.
- SA was **transparent** about its scientific findings related to Omicron and alerted the necessary world bodies timeously (actively engaging, through data sharing, with international media, public health institutions in countries, WHO etc assisted other countries with their own responses to this variant). This contributed to the **rules-based system** that South Africa espouses to uphold in its foreign policy and so the recommendation would be to continue in this fashion.



Lessons and recommendations cont'd

- The pandemic has exacerbated SA's economic challenges (poverty, unemployment, inequality)
- Tourism as income for South Africa as a **soft power** tool (struggle, then optimism until omicron and another blow) (R1 billion in cancelled bookings - Nov/Dec 2021)
- South Africa continues to work with global formal and informal bodies (CSOs), most recently **to dispel vaccine myths**
- Should harness voices of African youth - play a vital role in the diffusion of information amongst their social networks
- The COVID-19 pandemic reveals that **states' solidarity** and support for each other is extremely important
- Continue to monitor South Africa's **foreign policy principles in action**, especially in regional and continental bodies, in upholding multilateralism; promoting integration on pandemic responses, and promoting peace



Thank you

