

SA seeks permanent seats for Africa in UNSC

International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane has called for the United Nations to give Africa a minimum of two permanent seats in the body's Security Council.



(Image: GCIS)

She has also called on developed countries to honour the promises they made to developing countries in relation to economic support to environmental and environmental sustainability, amongst others.

Nkoana-Mashabane said this when briefing journalists after hosting Vuk Jeremic, the President of the 67th session of the General Assembly (UNGA), for bilateral discussions in Pretoria on Monday.

"Our position as South Africa and Africans in particular is that as we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the OAU/AU. We think the world body - the United Nations - and in particular, the ... most relevant way that the UN Security Council can sustain itself is to give dignity to itself that by the time it celebrates its 70th anniversary ... things should look a bit different.

"...We agree with all member states that change ... cannot be if it continues to ignore and exclude the 54 member states that form a very critical region - the African Union.

"We have taken a very clear position, we said that there will be no change without us because 70% of the issues taken to the UN Security Council and are tabled for discussion are about us."

Nkoana-Mashabane's call for change comes amid an on-going debate that Africa be given a seat in the council. This also comes as the UN's 193 member states are working towards ensuring that the body adopts reforms that will be accommodating to all members and organisations aligned to the organisation's agenda.

Nigeria, SA, possibly well placed

While it is not known which countries would be front-runners to occupy the two seats, Nigeria and South Africa can be, if media reports are anything to go by, well placed due to their big economies.

Jeremic, whose one-year presidential term of the 67th session ends in September, agreed that there was a need for change and said a fair representation of African states in the council was needed.

"If the institution does not keep up with the times and the environment, then the Security Council will become slowly, but surely, irrelevant.

"In the future, if we are going to have a Security Council, and if we are going to have a United Nations ... we will have to encompass African interests through a permanent seat at the Security Council," he said.

In 2000, the United Nations member states met at a Millennium Summit to discuss and adopt millennium development goals which included, amongst others, eradicating poverty and hunger, eradicating HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases, environmental sustainability and development through global partnerships.

Member states agreed at the time that they would work towards achieving the goals in 15 years.

With the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015, Nkoana-Mashabane called on developed countries to remember the commitments they made.

"The one commitment that the developed states [made was to] contribute 0.7% of their national budgets to developmental goals to the developing world. The last time we checked, we don't know how many countries have [lived up to their promises].

"Secondly, it was that they would continue on that principle of equal but differentiated responsibility [on] issues that come with greenhouse gas emissions because they have had 100 years of uninterrupted pollution ... and we woke up one morning and we were all affected," she said.

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