



international policy UPDATE

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SAIIA ACTIVITIES, 1996-98

This outline of current and planned SAIIA programmes is based on a presentation made to corporate members in Durban on 30 October 1997 by Dr Greg Mills, SAIIA National Director

BACKGROUND TO THE SAIIA

I would like to outline and clarify the SAIIA's purpose as well as its benefits for its wide range of stakeholders, focusing on its current and future mission. The Institute is positioned today to serve three roles:

First: the SAIIA performs a social responsibility function, by exposing South Africans to international affairs. This occurs through its outreach programmes; such as, for example: the activities of its six branches countrywide, its schools programme, interaction with the universities, its recently established internship trainee scheme, and its publications and media activities.

Highlights among our recent programmes have included:

- The public addresses by the Foreign Minister of Germany, Dr Klaus Kinkel, in June 1996; the former US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, in October, the President of Brazil, Dr Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in November, Mr Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, in March 1997; and, President Ernesto Samper Pizano of Columbia in May 1997. Other high-profile speakers this year include: the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, Mr Ato Mesfin (15 May 1997); The South African Justice Minister, Dr Dullah Omar (5 June 1997); the South African Foreign Minister, Mr Alfred Nzo (25 August 1997); the Foreign Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr Amre Moussa (26 August 1997); and the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr Kamal Kharazzi (3 November 1997).
- A conference focusing on *South Africa in the Global Economy*, which was staged in Johannesburg from 11-12 July last year and involved a number of prominent international and local speakers including the Governor of the South African Reserve Bank Dr Chris Stals, Kim Jaycox of the World Bank, and Dr Chester Crocker.
- The international workshop on *War and Peace in Southern Africa* held at the SAIIA in August 1996 brought the former New York Police Commissioner, William Bratton, to South Africa for the first time, as a result of which he has returned several times to advise the South African Police Services.
- In 1997, the Institute has staged a number of major events, including one with its Indian counterpart, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in March. We plan to repeat this exercise, with a South African delegation travelling to New Delhi in 1998. The SAIIA also hosted an international conference in June 1997 on *'The Illegal Drug Trade in Southern Africa'* (which was opened by Minister Dullah Omar), and in July, on *'South Africa and Southern Africa: Lessons from Emerging Markets'*.

- On 11-12 November 1997, the Institute will be hosting an international event entitled *Looking Sideways: The Specifics of South-South Co-operation* involving institutions from Chile, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay as well as South Africa. Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin will give the keynote address at the event. The Minister of Public Works and Transport of Uruguay, Mr Lucio Caceres, will also address the conference.
- Institute staff also write regularly for local and international newspapers and other publications, and frequently provide commentary on international affairs in the print media, on radio and television. The staff conduct around an average of 20 media interviews per week, and write over 50 newspaper articles annually for local and international consumption on issues of South African and global relevance.

We would thus argue that without the SAIIA, the exposure of South Africa to international affairs would be limited, something that we can ill-afford in today's globalised age.

Second: the SAIIA has expanded its functions as a policy-research think-tank. Through its publications and other activities, the SAIIA is able to provide expert research input to the government and the corporate sector. Its unique independence of status (which is assured through its diverse corporate funding base) and recognised impartiality afford a special relationship with government, where the SAIIA is able to exert influence because of this constructive neutrality.

- SAIIA staff are regularly consulted by government (especially the Department of Foreign Affairs) and by parliamentarians. For example, the Institute not only provided a substantial comment on the *South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document* that the government released in June last year, but submitted an alternative draft White Paper as part of the process, which was later published. In March 1997, the SAIIA jointly staged a policy-workshop at Jan Smuts House with the DFA on SA-US relations and the so-called 'pariah' states. Institute staff closely interact also with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the outgoing Chairperson of that Committee, Raymond Suttner, regularly writes for SAIIA publications. SAIIA also hosts the Foreign Minister's Annual Address. We plan to stage at least two policy-relevant workshops in 1998, on the issues of UN reform and the future of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- SAIIA staff also conduct commissioned research for the corporate sector. Over 80% of the work commissioned in 1996-97 was on African issues.
- To strengthen its research role, the Institute has greatly increased its research component. Research programmes have been set up to focus on: Latin America; Illegal Narcotics Trafficking in Southern Africa; (with Lancaster University) Landmines and De-mining Strategies in Southern Africa; and (with Princeton University) Alternatives to Dysfunctional African States. In addition, the SAIIA is running a project examining the European Union's relationship with South Africa in the light of the EU-SA Free Trade Agreement. *These research positions have all been established with project funding assistance from foreign governments, foundations and local corporations over-and-above the SAIIA's regular operating budget of R1.5 million annually.* Of the SAIIA's twenty staff members, over half are involved in research.
- With regard to its publications, the SAIIA released five new titles in 1997: the *International Policy Update* series, the *SAIIA Review*, the *Directory of Expertise*, the *SAIIA Facts*, and the *SAIIA Reports* which provide succinct details and findings of international and local SAIIA conference and projects. At the same time, publication of the flagship *South African Yearbook of International Affairs* which received very favourable reviews throughout South Africa after its release last year, and the *South African Journal of International Affairs*, the only dedicated international relations journal in Southern Africa, will continue. For 1998, we have commissioned a set of policy-relevant *Reports* on South African foreign policy both by area (South Africa's relations with the UK, US, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, and so on) and issue (such as the foreign relations of the provinces, human rights and foreign policy, and so on).

Third: the SAIIA is the Southern African hub of a research network of similar and associated institutions worldwide such as the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, and the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House in London. With the end of South Africa's international isolation, these ties have been expanded to institutions from Australia to Brazil, India and Indonesia. These are used for the exchange of publications and services, to establish and maintain personal contact with professional expertise, and to assist each other in learning about the host country of these institutions. Considerable contact is maintained with Southern African institutions and this has recently been strengthened through the SAIIA projects on *Small Arms Proliferation and Control in Southern Africa* (which was completed in 1997) as well as the ongoing work on *Landmines and De-mining in Southern Africa* and *Illegal Narcotics Trafficking in Southern Africa*. In addition to these and the aforementioned programme with Princeton University, in 1998, projects that the SAIIA plans to run in conjunction with overseas institutions, include those on: *Personnel Strategies for the SANDF* (with Royal Military Academy Sandhurst); and conferences on *SA and the US in Africa* (with the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies); *SA-German Relations* (with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung); and *SA-Brazilian Relations*.

SAIIA's FUTURE VISION

The SAIIA's vision for the future is thus: *To be an independent, meaningful player in the formulation of foreign policy to the benefit of members and other stakeholders. It will also continue to provide a wider and more informed understanding of international issues among all South Africans.*

The SAIIA's longevity, its independence from government since its inception, and its impressive research record give it an opportunity to play a unique role in South Africa. The success of this role hinges on its reputation; its local and international network; and its expertise. The unique nature of the Institute lies in the combination of activities it pursues. There are a number of organisations in South Africa which are involved in foreign relations in one way or another, but no single one has the status nor can offer the package that the Institute does. If there is one single attribute that places the SAIIA apart from the other organisations, it is the ability to interface between the academic, general public, policy-making and corporate sectors.

This capacity is enhanced:

- Through a close relationship between the SAIIA and the South African as well as foreign governments. In this, the Institute is respected for its impartiality, academic excellence and independence.
- Through the expertise that the SAIIA can provide on demand. It can bring people together (where its network and reputation is invaluable) in research matters and through its public meetings where people can meet with influential figures; and can also provide information and insight through this network and its own research base, free from outside influence.
- Through grassroots social outreach. Here the SAIIA's research internship and schools programmes are of obvious relevance.
- Through its independent funding base, which does not tie the SAIIA to any South African or foreign political party or institution.

In order to refine these strengths, the Institute is well aware of the ongoing need to develop strategies to extract maximum value from our existing activities and refocus away from those that bring limited reward. The Institute will continue to position itself to service or provide for all four partners in this interface:

- For the academic sector (through providing high-quality research staff);
- For the government (by providing high-quality research input);

- For the corporate sector (by performing a social responsibility, and providing top-class research both for corporate members and for the policy-making community);
- For the general public (by providing information on international relations and opportunities).

In doing so, the Institute will make every effort to continue to improve the quality and relevance of meetings and conferences, to make its publications easier to read and well-focused with full use being made of electronic techniques, to look at its staffing structure to see where we can improve our functions and make savings, and finally, to make its research as accessible and relevant as possible.

Priority areas of SAIIA research will reflect the needs of the corporate and external funding community. We will continue to search for strategic alliances and partnerships with organisations which share our values and commitment. In terms of our research focus, in-depth research on Africa, particularly on issues of African economies and governance, is increasingly imperative. The present shortfall is exacerbated by the virtual absence of specialist Africanists in South Africa. Hence the SAIIA will be establishing two Africa-focused positions in 1998: one looking at SADC issues, the other more generally at African issues. We also plan to set up research programmes in 1998 looking at *Dimensions of International Crime in Southern Africa*; *The Privatisation of Security and Armies in Africa*; and, *South Africa and the Middle East*.

Corporate members' subscriptions remain the basic source of income for the SAIIA's running costs. This funding has, up until now, ensured the SAIIA's unique status and operating role. Although a number of current corporate supporters have increased their annual subscriptions to cover inflationary increases, against the backdrop of many other demands for funding by the corporate sector, it is clear that the SAIIA has to continue to search for a means of supplementing this income. *It is in the interest of a better understanding of South Africa's international relations that the SAIIA's financial position be improved so that it can strive for research excellence and improved contact with all sectors of South Africa's population.*

The SAIIA will continue to strive for improved relevance in its activities as it works towards a better understanding of South Africa's international relations. In doing so, we are exceptionally grateful for the assistance of many valued friends and colleagues, and support from the corporate sector.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The South African Institute of International Affairs is an independent organisation which aims to promote a wider and more informed understanding of international issues among South Africans.

It seeks also to educate, inform and facilitate contact between people concerned with South Africa's place in an interdependent world, and to contribute to the public debate on foreign policy.