

Embassy of Sweden in cooperation with SALO

Sweden and South Africa

Looking Back and Moving Forward: Together for Tomorrow

“Can old fashioned solidarity still play a role in foreign policy?”

Examples from history and today



27 November 2014, Pretoria

Executive summary

Embassy of Sweden in cooperation with the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) hosted a workshop on Sweden - South Africa relations, titled: *Looking back and moving forward- Together for tomorrow*; “*Can old fashioned solidarity still play a role in foreign policy?*” - *Examples from history and today*. The aim of the workshop was to reflect on the relationship between Sweden and South Africa in the pre-1994 era, and to explore ideas of how that relationship can be strengthened going forward. The workshop was conducted in the form of a panel discussion, in-which panellists shared their perspectives on the formation and nature of the Sweden- South Africa relationship.

The panel consisted of: Amb Anders Hagelberg, the Swedish Ambassador to South Africa; Amb Bengt Säv- Söderbergh, former Swedish State Secretary for Development Cooperation; Amb Birgitta Karlström-Dorph,

who served as a Swedish Diplomat in South Africa from 1981-88, channelling financial resources to the democracy movement; Amb Aziz Pahad, former South African Minister for Foreign Affairs; and Mr Khulekani Skhosana, the Gauteng Provincial Secretary of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS).

Amb Anders Hagelberg gave introductory remarks, followed by a presentation from Amb S  ve-S  derbergh on, "Looking back – Swedish foreign policy based on solidarity and on liberating a country". Amb S  ve-S  derbergh expressed that there is need for international exchange as part of building a society based on solidarity. Amb Karlstr  m-Dorph shared her personal story of practical diplomacy in Apartheid South Africa during 1981-88, and Amb Pahad gave commentary on the South African perspective of the relationship during the anti-Apartheid struggle era. Lastly, Mr. Skhosana spoke to the role of young people in building a society based on solidarity.

Ambassador Billy Modise, Former Director Horst Kleinschmidt and Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo who is the Ambassador of South Africa in the USA also gave a special input from the floor.

Ambassador Anders Hagelberg



Ambassador Hagelberg began by expressing his gratitude to SALO for co-hosting the event, and introduced the Swedish guests as Ambassador Bengt S  ve-S  derbergh and Ambassador Birgitta Karlstr  m-Dorph, who have been at the forefront of the Swedish engagement against Apartheid, and have played an instrumental role in the formation of Swedish policy and relationship building with Post-Apartheid democratic South Africa. Ambassador Hagelberg broadly outlined the historical relations between South Africa and Sweden, highlighting that Sweden was the first western country to give governmental, political and financial support to South Africa during Apartheid, indicating that in the 1980s, 62% of the non-military financial resources in the ANC came from Sweden. He concluded by stating that with the Sweden-South Africa Bi-national Commission

and the reinstatement of the Social Democratic Party, the relations between the two countries will be strengthened going forward.

Ambassador Bengt S  ve-S  derbergh

Ambassador **S  ve-S  derbergh** reflected on how his passion for working towards ending Apartheid began, and gave his account of the historical relationship between South Africa and Sweden. He explained that he was motivated to be an activist against Apartheid in 1960, when he first visited South Africa at the age of 24 while working on ships in Cape Town. He was horrified at the treatment and restriction of black people to certain areas.

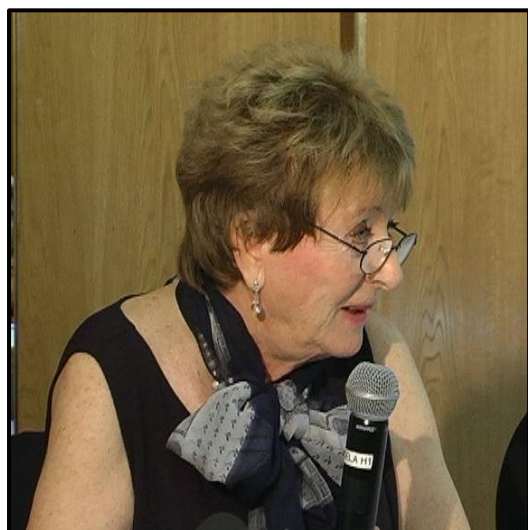
According to Ambassador **S  ve-S  derbergh**, the relationship between Oliver Tambo and Olof Palme also played an



important role in the establishment of relations between Sweden and South Africa. The Swedish government decided to start supporting the liberation movements in Southern Africa in 1968; at that point many leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) were in exile or imprisoned. For twenty years the Swedish government provided the ANC with resources to strengthen the organisation. The ANC was treated as a government-in-waiting, as that was the vision, and it eventually had representation in more than 30 countries. The Swedish support was effective in South Africa, because it was holistic- supporting civil society organisations and faith-based organisations in addition to the ANC. However, literature often fails to recognise the vital role played by civil society and the faith-based community in the build-up to South Africa's liberation he argued.

Ambassador **Säve-Söderbergh** further elaborated that the relationship between South Africa and Sweden was based on honesty, which in turn built trust and allowed the two countries to learn a lot from each other. There was often cynicism around Sweden's intention in supporting South Africa, however the Ambassador stated that Sweden's sole reason for supporting the anti-Apartheid movement was that it believed in the people's right to "decide for themselves". He then stated that going forward, the relationship between the two countries will be mutually beneficial, expressing that South Africa can learn from Sweden's rich experience of how to develop a general welfare policy, and Sweden can learn from South Africa in terms of how to adapt to becoming a multi-cultural society.

Ambassador Birgitta Karlström-Dorph



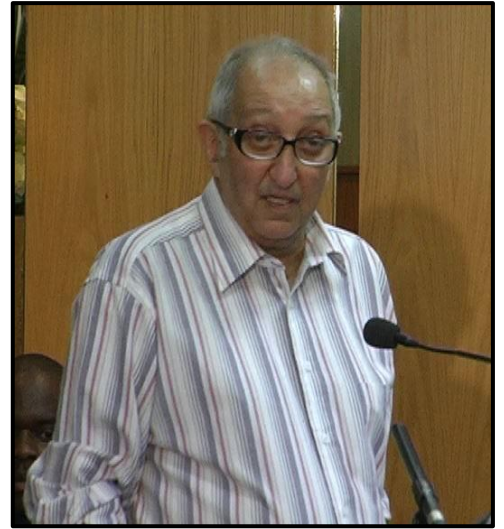
Ambassador Karlström-Dorph began with a narration of how she became an activist against the Apartheid regime. Her passion began when she first visited South Africa and took a walk in Burgers Park in Pretoria, where she saw a bench with a sign '*For whites only*'. From then on she vowed to make sure that that bench was removed, which took the form of becoming actively involved in the struggle against Apartheid.

According to Ambassador Karlström-Dorph, the Sharpeville Massacre was an eye-opener for the international community, regarding the situation in South Africa during the 1970s. In light of the political injustices, Swedish academics, civil society activists and civilians boycotted South African products and imposed sanctions on South Africa, which in turn limited the inflow of information to Sweden regarding South Africa's political situation. Ambassador Karlström-Dorph was then deployed to South Africa as part of the Swedish delegation in the early 1980s. During a time when the resistance to Apartheid was increasing; and the police were getting harsher, with tortures and killings on the rise.

She was responsible for covertly gaining insight on "what South Africans wanted", and identifying relevant organisations for Sweden to support to ensure a fundamental change in South Africa. According to Ambassador Karlström-Dorph, upon her arrival in South Africa Mr Per Lindström introduced her to two very important contacts; Max Sisulu and Beyers Naude. Mr Naude later became her mentor; he helped her to understand the dynamics and complexities of Apartheid, and played an instrumental role in getting her accepted into the various communities she needed information from, and helped to develop a larger network of such contacts she expressed.

Former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad

Mr Pahad began his speech by thanking SALO and the Swedish Embassy for coordinating the event, and acknowledged the presence of the youth. He stated that as previously outlined, the Swedish and Nordics played an instrumental role in the fight against Apartheid; through their monetary support provided by the International Defence and Aid Fund, governmental support, civic involvement through boycott and awareness-raising campaigns, and generally ensuring that South Africa remained on the Swedish agenda. He further highlighted the significance of the relationship between Oliver Reginald Tambo and Olof Palmer, as it laid the foundation for a better understanding between the Swedish government, and the Swedish people, and the Southern African liberation movements.



“I believe that OR Tambo’s meeting with Olof Palmer when he was still an MP, and Olof Palme inviting him to the family home, was an historic moment in our relationship, because like it or not, that period was the hottest period of the Cold War and the vision of liberation movements controlled by the respective Communist Parties controlled by Moscow was very strong.”

According to Mr Pahad, Sweden also provided liberation movements with venues for their meetings, and as a result a number of the ANC’s historic moments occurred in Sweden. For instance, when OR Tambo was ill he was treated in Sweden, and the reunion of Mandela and the other Robben Island Treason Trialists and the ANC leadership-in-exile took place in Sweden he stated.

Ambassador Billy Modise

Ambassador Modise raised his concern about the indolence of the youth of today and encouraged youth to be proactive in defining their vision and goals, and for them to articulate that vision to the international community so that they are understood and engaged with according to their own vision going forward. Additionally, he stated that in 1961 he had the privilege to meet the prime minister of Sweden, Mr Tage Erlander. He asked him why Sweden had not posed sanctions against South Africa, considering the political situation in South Africa. His response resonated with him as he said that posing sanctions on South Africa would be illegal, because the two countries were not formally at war, however, if South Africans wanted to be heard they had to mobilize every Swede to campaign against the Apartheid regime and to push for South Africa to be on Sweden’s agenda. Essentially, it is important to proactively create personal contacts, as they have the ability to change the political environment he argued.

Mr Khulekani Skhosana

Mr Skhosana began by expressing his gratitude for being invited to represent the youth. He then expressed his concern regarding the youth’s “*skewed priorities*”, giving the example that they often brag about how much alcohol they consume instead of what they aspired to achieve, or have achieved in terms of education levels; or their aspirations of changing the world into a better place. He then encouraged South Africa to invest more in education, the eradication of violence in schools and the development of school infrastructures to ensure that youth have a conducive and motivating environment that can enable them to reach their highest potentials.

He also acknowledged and emphasised the important role of the youth through a historical reflection of youth's contribution to iconic moments in South Africa, namely the role of COSAS in the banning of corporal punishment in schools, and the role of youth in the banishing of the Bantu education system in South Africa. Additionally, he applauded Sweden for their good health services, educational systems and contribution to gender equality, and expressed his hope that going forward South Africa can learn more from Sweden in this regard.

Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo



Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo began his speech with a reflection of his early days within foreign relations. He expressed his gratitude to Ambassador Pahad for being his mentor at the early stages of his career. Additionally, he acknowledged the critical contribution and support that Sweden gave the ANC during the struggle for democracy. According to Ambassador Mamabolo, going forward Sweden and South Africa should stand together and be committed to fighting anything, anywhere in the world, that is unjust and inhuman.

Moreover, Ambassador Mamabolo emphasised the importance of the right to development, highlighting that the popularity of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) made countries proactive in terms of contributing towards development. The eradication of poverty however, still remains an important factor in South Africa that needs strategic intervention. He concluded by applauding the youth for participating on current affairs, and emphasised to them the importance of being organised and planning ahead to ensure effectiveness of their contribution.

Conclusion

Inequality is an effect of Apartheid and a predominant feature in Post-Apartheid South Africa. It is important that the state intervenes and has reliable government institutions to bridge the gap. Going forward, South Africa can learn from Sweden with regards to how to strengthen its government institutions. The relationship between Sweden and South Africa can be mutually beneficial; South Africa can learn from Sweden's rich experience on how to develop a general welfare policy and Sweden can learn from South Africa with regards to how to adapt to becoming a multi-cultural society. The two countries should stand together and be committed to fighting anything, anywhere in the world, that is unjust and inhumane.

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Dialogue Report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

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