



Media Statement

10 May 2020

MAPUNGUBWE INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC REFLECTION (MISTRA) CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

The year 2020 marks the 10th anniversary of the founding of the **Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)**. In May 2010, after much consultation, a group of researchers, academics, policy-makers and former policy practitioners created a platform to conduct strategic and transdisciplinary research aimed at understanding long-term issues facing South Africa, the rest of the African continent and the globe.

At the core of MISTRA's undertakings, since its inception, has been the effort to interrogate two key questions: *Why do nations succeed? How do civilisations sustain themselves?*

The inspiration behind these endeavours was to look beyond the horizon to identify major drivers in the evolution of human society, through core research in the areas of political economy, humanities and the application of natural sciences.

The establishment of MISTRA was evidently timely and necessary for a maturing democracy oscillating between promise and betrayal, hope and despair. In a world characterised by new potent technologies as well as challenges of global warming and geopolitical tensions, it was necessary also to interrogate issues pertaining to the trajectory of human civilisation.

One of the attributes of successful nations is the critical role of the 'think industry'; and the Mapungubwe Institute has sought to occupy a niche area in the research landscape. Besides the transdisciplinarity of its undertakings, it has consciously eschewed short-termism dictated to by electoral cycles or quarterly returns – a culture that is much in evidence in both the public and private sectors.

In this context, MISTRA identified a variety of core research themes, more than forty in all, which not only lend themselves to strategic interrogation; but also possess the capacity to help lift South Africa's growth and development trajectory to a higher level. The list has evolved over time, with experience.

Research organisations such as the Mapungubwe Institute (MISTRA) provide social and intellectual platforms to introduce new ideas and provoke public debate. But, as MISTRA has sought to do over the past decade, think tanks are also duty-bound to catalyse future action by decision-makers within both the public and private sectors. In this way, they contribute to the strengthening of democracy.

Working with a wide network of research partners from across the 'think industry' and among policy practitioners, MISTRA has completed many core research projects and published more than 26 books on a variety of strategic issues. These have ranged from the evolution of civilisations, political economy of mining and future role of Platinum Group Metals, pedagogy of mathematics, the green economy, patronage politics, post-colonial class formation in relation to black entrepreneurship, Africa's development paths, geopolitics and many other themes. In addition to enriching the understanding of objective reality, these research undertakings have also served to catalyse discourse and policy action during and after the research projects.

Currently, MISTRA is undertaking comprehensive research on the fourth industrial revolution, the social psychological dimensions of the land question, the arts and national development, as well as political coalitions. Further research work is being initiated on such issues as youth and national development, a just transition to a low carbon future, and the evolution of the South African economy.

In the midst of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is worthy of note that the Mapungubwe Institute:

- only last year published a book on epidemics and the health of African nations arguing for a transdisciplinary (syndemics) approach to health issues
- serves as the primary research partner in the Indlulamithi scenario planning project encouraging creative long-term planning specifically around the issue of social cohesion
- has facilitated many social compacting initiatives, including the social compact convention held earlier this year.

In addition, MISTRA undertakes many commissioned research projects for a variety of clients in the private sector, government and civil society. These projects, as well as advisory services, are primarily informed by MISTRA's core research work.

On this occasion of its tenth anniversary, MISTRA wishes to express its profound gratitude to the multitude of researchers and academics who have contributed to, and helped enrich, its offerings. We extend our appreciation to local, continental and global institutes and individuals who have traversed this exciting journey with us. This includes the distinguished scholars and leaders who have delivered our annual and occasional lectures.

As we enter the second decade of MISTRA's existence, we are convinced more than ever that the Institute has been and will continue to be a unique and valuable partner in pursuit of knowledge that promotes social justice and equitable global relations.

The Mapungubwe Institute is also profoundly indebted to the generous funders in both the public and private sectors – all of whom have embraced the MISTRA proposition and supported its independent pursuit knowledge that benefits South African society and humanity at large.

For more information, please visit our website on <https://mistra.org.za/>.

Media Enquiries:

Siphokazi Sigenu

Communications Officer

Tel: 011 518 0260

Cell: 072 233 1341

Email: siphokazis@mistra.org.za

Issued by: **Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)**

