

■ OPINION / EDITORIALS

EDITORIAL: Marrying foreign and economic policy

Intention by Lamola's department to align with imperative to attract foreign direct investment is welcome

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Ronald Lamola. File picture: FREDDY MAVUNDA.

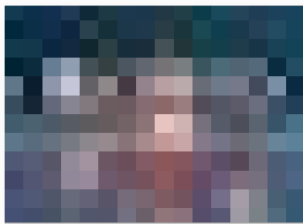
SA's new international relations & co-operation minister, Ronald Lamola, told a media briefing on Monday that when he speaks in New York, he should be singing exactly the same song as his colleague Parks Tau, the new trade, industry & competition minister.

This is an encouraging start. Foreign policy should be economic policy. Foreign ministers and their departments should have a clear focus on promoting trade and investment to support economic growth. Countries such as Australia have a single ministry of foreign affairs and trade for exactly this reason.

In SA by contrast it's often not clear whether our economic interests and our foreign policy stance are aligned. Indeed, some of SA's foreign policy positions have risked severe damage to its economy. The clear indication from Lamola's department that it intends to integrate

foreign policy with SA's imperative to attract foreign direct investment and to grow and create jobs is therefore most welcome. Whether it will affect our foreign policy choices will be one to watch.

Welcome too was the briefing itself, which the department intends to be the first of many. It plans fortnightly updates and question-and-answer sessions with the media. ANC ministers have reportedly complained about DA ministers showing them up on the communications front. If that has served to elicit more transparency from government we can only hope for more of it.



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