WEDNESDAY, 26 AUGUST 2026

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PROCEEDINGS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

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The Council met at 14:00.

The House Chairperson for Committees and Intergovernmental Relations took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

Announcement

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon members, I'd like to remind delegates that the rules, and in particular sub-Rules 21, 22 and 23 of Rule 103 apply to the virtual sitting. Hon delegates, in accordance with Council Rule 229, subsection 1, there will be no notice of motion or motions without notice today.

Hon delegates, before we proceed to questions, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the Ministers from the Peace

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and Security Cluster 1C, specifically the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, hon Motshekga, and the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, hon Lamola, as well as the permanent delegates, all MECs, all special delegates and the Salga representatives to the House. You are most welcome.

I'd like to remind delegates that in terms of Rule 229 of the Council Rules, the time for reply by Ministers to a question is five minutes. Thereafter, only four supplementary questions are allowed per question. A member who has asked the initial question will be the first to be afforded an opportunity to ask a supplementary question. The time for asking a supplementary question is limited to a maximum of two minutes.

The time for a reply to the supplementary questions by the Ministers is four minutes. The supplementary question must emanate from the initial question or the response thereto. Hon delegates, I now call on the hon Minister of Defence and Military Veterans to respond to Question number 160.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY

CLUSTER 1C

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Question 160:

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, let me also acknowledge the hon members who are here and thank you very much for the opportunity. The answer is that, as the Minister, I will appraise Parliament in a formal and structured fashion, because Cabinet has already approved the document. The modalities have to be agreed by the legislative arm, which means, yourselves and the NA, as to how we do it, when, for how long and have the date from yourselves.

We do expect that perhaps engagements will last, because it's a very long document, will last half the day. So, presentations are customised to fit the set period, whilst an appetite for more information will even be provided. We are willing to share information on the update of the Defence Review Strategy 2015, through the future defence capstone concept, the military concept, but also what we now are terming: "The Journey to Greatness" and consolidate these reports.

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After we have engaged with Parliament, having received their inputs, then we'll be able to put it into a proper document or proper book which can be used by colleagues or by members. So, we are quite ready to present, as soon as there's an agreement on the date, time and venue with the legislative arm. Thank you, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, Minister. Hon delegates will now proceed to the supplementary questions. So, just a reminder to delegates that there is a countdown timer visible on your screens to help you manage your time. The first opportunity, as indicated, will go to the hon Phala.

Mr P A PHALA: Good afternoon to hon Ministers, to fellow members of the NCOP and also to all the support staff from both the Parliament and both departments. Minister, thank you for answering my question.

Minister, how is the long-term evolution strategy and blending concept going to invigorate the organisational renewal and modernisation capabilities of the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, and its entities in short, medium and long term? And,

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what are the strategies of the department in forging minimum national consensus around this evolution and planning concept? Those are my questions, Chair. Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Thank you for the follow-up question from hon Phala. I must say, for me, it's one of the most exciting processes that the department is going through. We're very heartened when Cabinet approved it. I think as you will see when we present it, it really brings live energy. It's a beautiful document in terms of principles, in terms of well-researched, in terms of really what a modern defense force should look like. It has been highly consulted with our local industries but with experts in the Defence Force. It's well-structured over a period of time so that we have the first phase, which is your first phase of five years up to 2030.

I'm quite confident that the department and government will be able to implement because it's really well-structured in terms of theory and practice. Also, the capabilities are well-structured, they're well-prioritised, which even allows us to train people as we implement or as we roll out the strategy. It's aligned in terms of capabilities, in terms of human

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resource, HR, but also in terms of institutional arrangements with some of the entities like your Denel, because we're also doing lots of work with some of the entities supporting us.

Same also with the defence industry, because we also rely on the defence industry, to be able to support the process and understand what and when things are going to happen. So, I think, Chair, when we get the opportunity, you will agree with me that for me it's one of the most brilliant exercises that the department has been involved in. It has been a long process. I was very happy that finally the Cabinet has approved it and it will come to Parliament and then be implemented and be budgeted for. Thank you, Chair.

Ms N S DU PLESSIS: Hon Minister, since the 2015 Defence Review, Defence has blamed the Treasury for underfunding while billions were lost to irregular expenditure, alleged corruption and failed projects like pothole filling and Cuban COVID drugs. More recently, under your watch, you and your Deputies, spent R14 million on travel in seven months, bought luxury vehicles and spent hundreds of millions of rands on fixing a Durban holiday home for generals whilst our troops at Ysterplaat don't even receive their medication.

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Yet, the "Journey to Greatness" now asks taxpayers to fund a dramatically more expensive Defence Force. How is there any guarantee based on defence's historic and current spending that this budgetary request is not simply another attempt to eat the people's money without consequence? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, can I assure members that there is no intention to eat any money. I think that the member is also linking other things about pothole filling. That thing is in Department of Military Veterans, DMV, it's not in the main department. Nevertheless, I think it's the principle that she's raising and making examples of flights that have traveled for R14 million. I don't know the figures.

There are three Deputy Ministers, Parliament is calling us frequently to Cape Town and we fly. We don't walk to parliament. Also, what I found in the Defence Force is that there's lots of international work that is also happening in the department. However, I don't want to be defensive and say, yes, there are no challenges in terms of slippages or in terms of ready money not being properly diverted.

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Nevertheless, the fact that remains ... it is not to blame the Treasury, everybody has conceded that the Defence Department in itself has been defunded over a period of time. There was a time when directly the budget which was meant for Defence was diverted to social services like education, Social Development and also Higher Education. So, the fact that the Department of Defence doesn't have enough money is not us blaming anybody and therefore planning to eat more money.

The money, as you'll see when the capstone comes, it even demonstrates how the money is going to be spent. I can promise the member that there is no plan to eat money. I just think it would be wrong if then we say we will bring a capstone to go in and eat the taxpayers' money. There's no intention to do that, but the intention is to capacitate the department to resource it and make sure that it really is a defense force fit for purpose but fit also to do the work that it's supposed to be doing. Thank you, Chair.

Ms A MATSHOBENI: Hon Chair, can I switch off my video because I'm in a place where the network may cut me out.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Yes, we can see that there's interference. Please continue, hon member.

Ms A MATSHOBENI: Greetings to the hon Minister and hon members. Hon Minister, please bear with me if your response covers me because I'm in a place where the network cuts off. Sometimes I hear you, sometimes you are cut off. Minister, the SA National Defence Force is in a complete state of collapse right now. Aircrafts are permanently grounded, borders are left undefended and there exists broken equipment because of years of budget cuts.

However, let's get straight to the point on the money given that the National Treasury has already warned of severe fiscal constraints. Has the Minister of Finance actually committed in writing to a solid multiyear funding plan to raise our defence budget to 1,5% of GDP or not? If not, such return fiscal guarantee exists, why is this Ministry wasting time pending another 30 years paper exercise while our military falls apart? Thank you very much, hon Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Thank you very much for the question. Chair, it will be perhaps an

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exaggeration to say that it's in the brink of collapse. What we admit and that we have been repeatedly saying is that, there are indeed challenges because of underfunding. That we have admitted, that we have reported at all levels, even to Cabinet.

In terms of commitment of 1,5%, that's what the capstone is asking for. By approving the capstone, it's what the government is committing itself to. So, the 1,5% ... even if they were to give it to us tomorrow, there is no way you can spend 100 ... after years of defunding, then tomorrow you're able to spend almost R50 billion at a go. It's not possible. So, what is realistic is to phase in the implementation towards the 1,5% so that you don't have a boom effect and then cause lots of problems in terms of even administering and managing those resources.

The way the document is structured, it really is a step up towards the 1,5%, which is phased over periods of time, which has prioritised steps that have to be followed to make sure that one step builds on top of the other. So, whether the Treasury has put it in writing, the Treasury has to come through to you, yourselves again, that we are making this

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proposal. The appropriation committees and all the committees of Parliament have then to give permission to the Treasury to allocate those monies.

So, commitment is there, but there can’t be anything writing without a parliamentary approval. That’s why even the introduction of the capstone document will come to yourselves. We’ll engage. It will have to go to all the different committees of Parliament and get approved and therefore then gets budgeted for.

What we are currently doing is to lay the ground to prepare because we assume that as Members of Parliament, you will approve and as you correctly say, there are challenges that needs to be addressed immediately. So, I’m really counting on you supporting the Treasury to give us the money or to find ... or to ... [Inaudible.] ... Thank you.

Mr H J Van Den BERG: Minister, why has the full document with detailed costing and risk assessments still not been tabled in Parliament more than three months later while elements appear to have been shared with the defence industry? Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: No, the sooner it's done, myself, I'll be happy. We are not in control of parliamentary processes. You will know Bills sometimes take forever before they can go through Parliament, I think, because of parliamentary processes. We are ready anytime, as I said in the first question that the document is ready, Cabinet has approved.

What is now waiting is to get the legislative, which use a parliamentary process to kick in. That is not dependent on us, that is dependent on Parliament itself and the NCOP itself to now get the ball rolling and the process running. We are engaging the defence industry because to roll out that document, we will rely on them to be able to support us.

So, they need to have a sense not the details, the sense of what, where we are going, so that they themselves can position themselves because it will be unfortunate that as Parliament, you approve that we get given so much money, then there's the products that we need are not necessarily available. Currently, we're shopping, we're looking around, we're doing research on what we will procure from where and testing the things that we want.

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So, it gives us also a good period of time to plan for the implementation because if we will get money now, having not done full research as to where we will get the equipment and the facilities from, and the defence industry not aware of what will be our priorities.

Is there a priority in the Air Force? What will we prioritise because we can't buy everything at the same time? Is our priority to repair in the navy, They have to know what is the priority so they can position themselves as the key partner who will enable us to implement the document. Thank you, Chair.

Question 165:

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Hon House Chair, thank you for the question. Just as a start, I really would request through you to also submit the reply because it's really a big and a long spreadsheet and my five minutes will not cover all the things that are required by the question. I'll run through what I can possibly run through. But as I say, I would wish, if you allow Chair, that we submit the report because the question is asking for details and the

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details are here. But it's details that, as I say, will need time.

So, what I'll do quickly, and it doesn't mean that I'll be able to cover all of them, I'll run through what I can run through, but I want to promise you that I have the whole spreadsheet before me, and I can make it available. Firstly, I'll run through what are the things that we have confiscated or the people that we've arrested nationally in terms of all the provinces as required.

As I say, it's just a long list. You'll see when I start reading. For instance, in terms of the rifles that we have confiscated, we've got two in the Western Cape and one in Gauteng. Then later on pistols, we got 12 in the Western Cape, two in Gauteng. In terms of homemade weapons, we got three in the Western Cape and nowhere else.

In terms of rifle barrels, we got one in the Western Cape. In terms of knives, pangas, we got nine in the Western Cape and not anywhere else. That's why I say, maybe I could just read without saying what the different statistics are, and if the hon member Gotsell agrees, just to say we've confiscated

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weapons, and we managed to get ammunition. We have been able to get narcotics in big numbers. I'll give you an example that, for instance, we've got 11 grams of dagga, tik about 100 grams.

We did get lots of narcotics during our raids and during our work. For instance on cocaine, we got 52. I'm not even listing all the types of drugs that we got province by province, but they can be supplied because they are on the spreadsheet. We managed to get also stolen vehicles. We were able to even get livestock.

There were also undocumented persons that were apprehended against a whole list province by province, number by number. For instance, we got nine Zimbabweans in the Western Cape. We got 44 in Gauteng. We got four in the Eastern Cape, in the Free State. We also got 10 Tanzanians in the Western Cape. We didn't get them in other places.

We also got a number of criminals that were arrested, 133 in the Western Cape and 47 in Gauteng. On contraband, we also got lots of alcohol, which was worth even R205 000. We managed to get food, which was stolen, compressors and wheelbarrows that

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were used also in terms of illegal mining. There is a whole list of things that we got here. I can just read the items that we got without saying where and from which province, because there are five provinces that I have to go through.

We also managed to get oxygen cylinders, which they use in mining when they do illegal mining, the spades that they're using, we've confiscated them. But besides these items that we've been able to confiscate, the main issue for us as Defence is that we're not going to be there forever.

What is more important for us is to help the police to identify the source, the process, because these are just the outcomes of organised crime. How are they organised? How are they operative? So that we can break the back of the source of the problems of illegal mining. Who are the managers? Because people who are arrested in mines are just people who are going to work there, but who are the kingpins behind the mines?

That's the main work we do with our Defence Intelligence and police intelligence. These will be things that we arrest as we proceed but are not the core mandate of what we have to do, which is dealing with organised crimes. Therefore, we have to

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get how they are organised, how they are processed, how they are directed and working with communities.

The question also wants to know if we do work with communities. Yes, we work with communities because they know the space better, especially on gangsters and other things. But even communities around the mining areas, they will tell us, this is where they hide, this is where they stay. It's very important for us as communities, as the departments, both ourselves and police, to work with communities to be able to deal with the circumstances.

The question again wants to know the monies that has been spent there. Again, with the time that I have, I won't be able to go line by line but just describe broadly to say in terms of allowances, we have budgeted R344 million. Those will be your danger allowances, your standby allowances, your deprivation allowances.

We have also budgeted for rations; we have budgeted at the rate of R370 per person for 365 days. We budgeted R297 million for fuel, R45 million for maintenance and repairs, and also small things that we also found that we had to buy, like

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extension cords and other things, we had to budget for about R25 million. For consumables, like cleaning, toilet papers, it was R42 million. Then for equipment and facilities, like your caravans, your ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you Minister, according to ... [Inaudible] ... you have way exceeded your ... [Inaudible.]

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, I wish to really submit to the member, if you allow me, after this, the whole list, because the breakdown they've asked for is here. But as I said, I wouldn't be able to do it in five minutes. Thank you, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Minister, we look forward to receiving that from you. I am sure the hon Gotsell now has a follow-up question which will allow you more time to respond. Hon Gotsell.

Mr N GOTSELL: House Chair, and good afternoon, Minister. Thank you very much for your detailed response. Please also allow me to applaud our soldiers for these successes. I think it's

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quite commendable, given the poor conditions that they have to operate under, as members of the Joint Standing Committee on Defence, JSCD saw for themselves last week, and as I myself have seen here at Fort iKapa in Cape Town.

Minister, on the second part of the question, Treasury has only released the R823 million for Operation Prosper on 06 August, which is more than five months into this deployment. Does the spreadsheet that you have in front of you show us from which already cash-strapped defence budget lines the funding for this operation has come up until now? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: House Chair, let me agree with hon Gotsell that when we were deployed, we agreed with Treasury that we will use our ongoing budget, which is meant for this year, to be able to fund Operation Prosper whilst awaiting, because there was no money ready in Treasury, and also no legal framework that would allow us.

Treasury had to get the President to write to the Speaker, and also to the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces in terms of the deployment, and only then could Treasury

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release the money. So, Treasury has since released the money. What I can do hon member Gotsell - I just know that we took from our everyday expenditure, and that's why we're beginning to feel under pressure, because we're taking money from different areas. For instance, money meant to run the department, the travelling allowances that have been budgeted over the year, were now being reprioritised on an ongoing basis.

I can also come in, if you allow me Chair to say, in February we took so much from this place, in March we took so much from this place, because indeed we had to use monies which were in the department. But also if you remember hon member Gotsell, we also had a refund that we were getting from the United Nations for the monies that we had spent in the past, and it came as a lump sum, but it's monies which were supposed to replace or to close gaps in the department. So, at least that money was safer to take or to borrow from before we get money from Treasury.

I can also give you and ask the chief finance officer to say, in January, where did we get the money and how much we got and in March, throughout the period of deployment. I didn't bring

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that specific information, because I didn’t expect a question that would be that specific. Thank you, House Chair.

Mr P NOE: Minister, thank you and today is your lucky day, because you had a pat on the shoulder from hon Gotsell. That is commendable. Hon Minister, I just have two sub-questions. What are the other integrated strategic interventions in the short, medium, and long-term by the Justice and Security cluster to deal with organised crime and gang violence, as the SA National Defence Force, SANDF cannot be permanently deployed to assist the police? What concrete plans are there to mobilise effective community participation and partnership against gang violence? Thank you, House Chair and thank you Minister.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Hon Noe, thank you very much for the question, because to deal with organised crime as we’ve said repeatedly, we need the whole government. Because with organised crime, you can’t break it off by hard power, going around with boots on their feet and with guns. It’s when you begin to reorientate and work with society.

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If you look at the gangs, not only in the Western Cape, everywhere, they are getting younger. Those kids are supposed to be at school. It means the societal fabric has fallen apart. Therefore, to rebuild and make sure that organised crime is not sustained and you don’t have recruits, is to work with the Department of Basic Education and see how you can protect children and get them to stay as long as they can in schools and not be recruited into gangs.

You also have to work with the Department of Correctional Services because the information we have is that, in the prisons themselves, that’s where they have all the time to organise, to communicate, despite the fact that they’re not allowed phones. So, the organisation is there.

We have to understand working with communities, how to break even the recruitment, the continuity, the sustenance. So, the security part of policing ourselves is one aspect of stabilising. But the main solution lies in a whole government approach, which also works with communities for it to be a long-term thing.

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So the strategy ... [Inaudible] ... to mobilise communities is to mobilise other government departments through Defence Intelligence and police intelligence, when we identify what is at the heart of these gangsters and who are the partners and engaging the partners, which is a long-term issue, but that's the only sustainable way. Otherwise, you are going to chase the ones that are here now, who are carrying drugs. Before you know it, the younger ones who are young now have been recruited into gangsters. Then we have another problem.

So, the strategy really is to have a whole government approach, but also to work with societies and NGOs. That's what we're also focusing on, the civil society. Thank you, House Chair.

Ms M KENNEDY: House Chair, greetings to the hon Minister and hon members of the House. Hon Minister, you know, the very same issue of kingpins that you have mentioned, is a thorn in our hearts. Minister, the President hon Cyril Ramaphosa stood in the National Assembly just yesterday and stated that, the highly publicised numbers of arrests and firearms seized have done absolutely nothing to reduce organised crime or dismantle the kingpins running these syndicates.

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It is therefore clear that this deployment is failing because it is reactive and lacks any real intelligence-driven capability to target the syndicates' leadership. Minister, why are you now using the SANDF as an expensive blunt-force reactive policing tool to catch low-level runners, while the actual kingpins who finance these operations and buy the stolen gold remain completely untouched by the state intelligence? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: The member is quite correct. Just catching the runners will not be able to solve organised crime. What we will do with the deployment that we have in communities is to stabilise communities and really work with them by being there to gather information. If the member can also remember, because the main thing, as she correctly said, is to break the bag of all these drugs and these organised crimes. That's why you will find - because the drug lords won't stay in the townships, will stay in your Athlone Park because they make and push big money.

What will happen is at the harbour, after you've really understood what is the route that these drugs come through, that's where you should be. For me, intelligence work and

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getting to the source and the core, is the key thing. So, the President is right, even if we can have a house full of guns, unless we can really break the supply chain of those guns. Whether we can get 10 drugs or any other things, that's not what the issue is. We have to know where they come from, who's driving them, and how do they get the country.

The member would already confirm that there have been lots of busts which have been happening because of following more information. There's no way you could know that there's a tractor loader backhoe, TLB coming from Brazil, carrying drugs on your own, running around in the streets. It's when you get information from people. It's when you use intelligence. Some of the intelligence comes from committees.

So, these processes hon member are interrelated, but you're quite right that the main thing is to deal with the kingpins. Who are these people mining for? That's where intelligence comes in. It's not something you go about to say, yes, we've come to North West. You'll close the loop; they'll go the other direction.

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I just want to assure you, what you're saying is correct, that the President is right, that catching the little rats that come with guns will solve the problem. It is an integrated programme. But also rebuilding communities, as I say, with gangsters, the mere fact that the gang lords have a feeding trough where they can get young people is the dysfunctionality of societies and communities, that kids by the age of 12 are in gangsters and not going to school.

It's not really arresting people, but it's to deal with the cause of the problem. The causes are multifaceted. There are many, but we need one centre to co-ordinate social development, to co-ordinate education, to co-ordinate with prisons, to really work with the prison authorities, to say, also this organisation of gangsters happens in prison.

House Chair, partly the member is right, but to say why we go, it's not the only thing that we go there for. We're aware that is the smallest part, but it's a very important part for us to be in those communities, to give people assurance, but also to get ourselves closer to communities, to where the problem is, and understand how it manifests itself so that we are able to trace it back from where the source is. Because these people

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who are organising crime not in your townships. They're outside there, but you can go back to them where they end up. Thank you, House Chair.

Mr P A PHALA: Minister, once again, you have answered the question adequately. But let me say to you Minister, two weeks back, we were in Western Cape. We went to Ysterplaat to engage with the SANDF members, particularly those who are deployed at Operation Prosper. We further went to Mitchells Plain, where we went to walkabout at where the soldiers and the police are deployed.

Minister, in the report we received from the communities, the leaders of the communities, the community policing forums, CPFs and leaders who were there were giving the Operation Prosper a positive nod. Minister, do you have any plan to encourage communities to participate, engage and assist and work together with both the SANDF and the police in dealing with crime? Thank you, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: House Chair, we need communities to a very large extent because for this process to be able to break the back of gangsterism is reliant

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on information, either through the work that we do through intelligence from both police and from the state agencies, but also from Defence. That would be one arm.

But with communities, we need them more than them really needing us. We need them to also provide us with information because that's what is going to help us break or go to the heart of the problem. That's why at all times, we even have community facilitation teams, which interact with communities in very informal manners. Again, I will not be able to mention, to say what are the activities we get to engage with in order to get closer to communities, to get communities to support the programme, because without them, without their knowledge, you're not going to be able to ... am I still audible, Chair?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): You are audible, hon Minister. Someone has just loaded a whiteboard onto the screen.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Okay, thank you Chair, So, the interaction with communities is one very important cog to other things because communities themselves

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do want to get rid of all the stress like their kids get - I mean, there's nothing as painful as a mother to have your child ending up as a drug addict. So, communities are very keen to make sure that the programme succeeds.

But on the other hand, as I say, we need them desperately to be able to provide information and partnerships, but also to work with government and civil society to rebuild communities because this is also a social phenomenon. It's a historical phenomenon. That's why you get gangsters in other communities. It has to be understood within this historical context. You will get zama zamas being foreigners and mostly illegal immigrants. You have to understand it also in terms of international dynamics.

To bust those drug cells in Musina or those Libyans who had opened camps, we would not be able to sometimes crack it without the support and information from communities. The partnership is key for the success of the programme. That's why we always really make sure that we listen to what communities are saying. We get close to them. We get guided by them. We get information from them. Thank you, House Chair

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Question 161:

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, which is also one of the sole points in the department that even this year, the projected over expenditure on our chief executive officer on the budget is R3,3 billion. Last year, we had overspent with R3 billion, and we expect when we do the calculations that it is going to end up at R4 billion for 2027-28 unless there is an intervention come 2028-29 will be at R4,6 billion. We have reported this. We have identified. We have even worked possible ways of reducing our budget expenditure with the Treasury, like encouraging people to take early retirement, those that are able to take retirement to give people incentives to really find employment or engagement using their high-level skills in other areas. But we as a department and Cabinet and the Treasury are aware that the chief executive officer budget is the biggest threat and it keeps on increasing.

Unless there is a complete wiping of a bailout from the Treasury, there is very little we can do. This is a consequence of underfunding where the Human Resource, HR, Budget has not been in line with the development like your salary increases, inflation and all sorts of things. So, it is

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one of our biggest threats in the department. So, when members talk about collapse, the risk of collapse is going to come from here.

Ms S MASUMPA: House Chair, greetings to the Minister. Thank you, Minister, for replying to the question. Hon Minister, the public will be more interested in the background and context of how the department has reached the level of over expenditure on the compensation of employees beyond budgetary cuts? What are the short and medium-term interventions to remedy this situation? How has this affected other key strategic priorities on your department? Thank you, Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, we can assure the public that the source of the problem when the member says they want to know what is underlying. What is underlying is the defunding over a period of time where the budget underfunds which it is the cause for all this.

The underfunding of the department has created this crisis and not only this crisis. This one is visible because it takes money, but what other members have mentioned before of your

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facilities, which are falling apart, it is all underfunding. of your equipment, which is non-functional, it is all underfunding. So, that is what is behind it. That is what we have been raising with both Parliament, Cabinet and also with the Treasury.

The department has been raising that all the time. I even know when I was in education, the Ministers of Defence were raising this threat that is here. So, what is behind this underfunding is nothing else. So, what are we going to do, we are looking at measures. I mean as I say what I have mentioned before that we are looking at asking people to retire but it will not solve the problem and that is what we have said to the Treasury. Even if we can ask all the 50-year-olds to leave the Defence Force, we will remain with younger people, in any case, it would be unfair to say why do you want your most senior well-trained people to leave before time. So, even if we can do and we are doing that. We are no longer recruiting at the rate we are supposed to be recruiting at which we would have wished to recruit.

We only now take about 5 000 after two years to make sure that we can keep tight as a result, where even in terms of the

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complement of the forces that we have is not adequate to the task that we have.

So, we are looking at measures of not recruiting adequately, encouraging people to leave in good time. But the answer lies in both Cabinet and Parliament, which is the one that is really appropriating funds to say they have to appropriate money to go to the Defence. We do not appropriate money for ourselves. We live with what we get. If we get this, this is what we live on. Unfortunately, HR because it is human beings, it is salaries, it is visible. But when you do your oversight, it is also visible what this underfunding is. So that is where the issue is.

Ms N S DU PLESSIS: Thank you, House Chair. Hon Minister, the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, has repeatedly blamed underfunding as the reason behind the lack of training and on the ground impact. However, there has not been any internal or external investigation into the return on investment of bloated compensation of senior employees who have slowly been eroding away at the SANDF funds and not delivering on a specification of their job description as evidence but

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underperforming SANDF. Why has accurate poor performance management not taken place? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, I want to repeat respectfully what I have said, underfunding is at the heart of the challenges of the SANDF. Whether, which I am not even aware of, that we have bloated salaries of generals, I do not know. It has not been brought to my attention. What has been brought to my attention, which I am witness to, is that the resources allocated to the Defence Force do not match up with what they are supposed to be doing. That is why your planes, what members have mentioned before, your ships are not sailing, your planes are not functioning, your infrastructure is deteriorating. It has nothing to do with generals. It is about underfunding. Fortunately, members, the Cabinet has agreed to it. We have been talking to the appropriation. We have been talking to them to say we have to prioritise. There is acceptance. So, it is not us saying the Defence Force is underfunded. There is an acceptance by the government and by Parliament to say the responsibility of the Defence and the allocation of the funds are not consummated and therefore it is causing problems.

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They are able to trace it back to when the deterioration starts. It started with removing funds from defence to fund your fees must fall. Almost R9 billion, I am told, I was not there at the time, was taken from Defence and created the problem.

Some of the funds, when it was COVID, it also would have been monies that were taken from Defence and Police, for instance. So, it is underfunding and it is accepted. It is not us saying it. It is the books. It is the figures. It is information in public.

So, we do not have to even justify and blame. We are stating facts as they are. There is evidence to show it which has been accepted. That is why there is now commitment on the journey to greatness to say we cannot go to greatness when the funding does not speak to the great part.

We are not failing to fix our planes because we are reckless. We do not have the resources. We are not failing to get our ships in the sea or to get all the necessary capability because we do not know where to do it. That is because we do not have the money. We are not failing to fix our

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infrastructure. Really, as the previous member said, and I am also very humble all the time with the soldiers, that they have to do a lot with very little support and resources. Again, as Defence, we do not allocate money to ourselves. We work with what is there.

Money is allocated by Parliament. It is allocated by the Cabinet. But again, I do not want to blame even Cabinet, but we do not allocate money to ourselves.

So, when there is no money, it is not that money to buy aircrafts has gone to generals. I am not sure where that has come from to say this money was for aircraft to pay for generals. I do not believe so. It is underfunding at the heart of it all.

It is for Parliament and the NCOP to hold hands with us, to make sure that Defence is funded to the level that it needs to be funded. Thank you, Chair.

Mr S A ZULU: Good afternoon, House Chairperson. Good afternoon, hon members on the call. Minister ...

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IsiZulu:

... sawubona.

UNGQONGQOSHE WEZOKUVIKELA NEZIGAGAYI ZEMPI: Yebo, bab’ uSfiso.

English:

Mr S A ZULU: Can the Minister therefore tell this House, in rand terms, exactly how much the planned exit of only 227 personnel will save? What the remaining compensation of employees’ shortfall will be after those savings? And which operational capabilities, training, maintenance, flying hours, sea hours, or deployment will have to be reduced if the Treasury does not increase the ceiling? Thank you, House Chairperson and the Minister.

The MINISTER OF DFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: I will be able to answer part of the questions I was taking notes of. I will be able to come to what Sifiso was said. Does specifically, if 230 leave, how much is it giving us? But what happens when they leave? It goes back. It gets planted to the HR, because that is where the gap is, and that is what we are trying to close.

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So, if for instance, we save R100 million, we take it back to the HR Budget, because then it allows us to spend less on salaries. So, it not money that we get concretely to say we have saved R100 million, therefore we are able to use it elsewhere. It means it reduces the very gap that we are going through. So, rather than to be R100 million less what we pay, so we are not going to use it for other capabilities.

The question that bab' uSfiso is raising quite well around what would we do if we had money? I can tell you if we had money, we would address most of the things that you observed when you go in observations. We will get our capabilities running, because you correctly asked to say if we do not get money, what then happens? Already, flying hours have been reduced for the pilots, which is a threat that if we do not get money soon, they will even lose their flying licenses.

We have reduced sea time to make sure that we can be able to stretch the rend. And again, those mare very dangerous activities if we want really to have a great Defence Force.

So, you are going to be building on something that has fractured before. So instead of building forward, you are

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going to have to fix what has deteriorated, your infrastructure and all sorts of things.

So, some of the things bab' uSfiso is raising have already suffered. As I said, flying hours have been reduced and sea time has also been reduced. Even the time when I went to the border, even the uniforms of those soldiers, you want to look on the side when you look at how whitewash that uniform is.

So, everything else across the board, bab' uSfiso, it is affected and further delays. I am encouraged that the journey to greatness has been approved by Cabinet. I am happy that the NCOP and Parliament are ready to listen to it. I am very hopeful that both Parliament and the NCOP will support us to be able to clock back on the gap that is happening because that is indeed a very serious problem. But all the other remedies that we are working on, and I have been saying the department even to the Treasury, it will relieve but it will not address the problem.

You are not going to get R3 billion out of early retirement. You are not going to get R3 billion to close the gap. You can reduce the gap, but you are not going to close it.

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In the meantime, you also do not want to stop recruiting young people so that you have a fresh source of entries to keep your Defence Force young and also energetic.

So, we have to balance on this side to make sure that you do not iterate any further. But in the meantime, we have to hold on to make sure that this thing does not collapse. Thank you, Chair.

Mr S A ZULU: House Chairperson?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Yes, who is speaking?

Mr S A ZULU: It is hon Zulu. Just to correct the hon Minister, I am not bab' uSfiso. [Interjections.] I am bab' uZulu.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Zulu, you are out of order.

Question 158:

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, it goes back to the same problems that I think we've been engaging with members earlier. As a department, we acknowledge that our

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infrastructure is deteriorating left, right, our barracks, our camps, our facilities, and our military installations. We acknowledge that there is a major problem. And that's why, as I say, I'm hopeful and excited that members are engaging us with this so they can support us in our plea. And the challenges I want to repeat for the ageing infrastructure are limited budget allocations, mainly due to underperformance. Not always, but sometimes I don't want to blame other departments, though we work with departments who don't necessarily make our lives easy.

When 1 Military Hospital doesn't work, they'll come back to me, whereas 1 Military Hospital was a project of the Department of Public Works, which has been draining money from the Department of Defence. Last week, I went to open a beautiful hospital in the Eastern Cape. When I asked when the project was started, it was more than 10 years ago. So, you can imagine the escalations, the cost, the changes; again, it's working because, as the government, you don't do some of the things for yourselves; you're working also with other departments, as you have with the Department of Public Works.

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So, the Department of Public Works also has contributed, not mainly, to some of the challenges the department has experienced, and that's why we're already working with them to say some of the work has to come back to the Department of Defence. The Department of Defence has its own infrastructure unit. Let it do the other work it's doing, because working with the Department of Public Works has not been necessarily helpful. So, things like emergency repairs - not to wait for them to go to the Department of Public Works; go and monitor the Department of Public Works to do it ourselves because we also pay the Department of Public Works for this thing.

We are prioritising the sites because there's been a general deterioration. We are prioritising the sites that we have to work on to say, where do we start? Because we have to reprioritise. We are working, as I say, on interdepartmental co-ordination. There is no way we can build capacity overnight. We still need to work with the Department of Public Works, but work with them, not as a sister department, but as a client that will become their client, their supplier, and we treat them like we treat an industry, and we're getting into MOUs.

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But we're also beginning to, and that's why it was very important for us to get the defence industry also activated, because you also get good capacity outside the government, but they have to be geared and be aware that there are opportunities which they can come on. And as I say, using temporary measures, the accommodation. So, we are again looking at different ways of how we diversify our capabilities but also strengthening our working relationships with departments that are supposed to service us. And as I say, infrastructure is the Department of Public Works. So, some of the problems are us; some of the problems are the Department of Public Works, but if you have a Department of Public Works, which will drain the Department of Defence as you did with the 1 Military Hospital, where you've spent more than R7 billion with nothing to show.

All we have to do is to pay, pay and pay. The hospital that I opened, I was told it costs them more than R600 million. It has been built over 10 years by the Department of Public Works. So again, it's to strengthen those areas where we are obliged through government processes to work with other departments. But we are talking with the Minister of Public

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Works to say, how do we improve the situation? Thank you, Chair.

Ms A MATSHOBENI: Hon Chairperson, I understand what the frustration is that the Minister has mentioned: the challenges of a limited budget in her department. Nonetheless, Minister, you have a naval vessel that has been rotting away at a Durban shipyard for 10 years, and it might take another five years just to finish a basic upgrade. Our military cannot even protect power in a local shipyard. How can we possibly protect our oceans from illegal foreign trawlers and piracy? And secondly, what concrete remedial actions have you taken since the committee report includes the submission of the required project or a report with a fixed delivery timeline? Thank you very much, hon Chair.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Thank you very much, Chair, and I have to say, personally, I appreciate it when committee members go and visit sites and confirm what we know. You see, all the information that you give us is to confirm what we know and, therefore, the importance of making sure that we get support to address the problem. Because for it to move there, it's not going to be my wish. It is going to

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be whether the Navy is giving adequate money to get the ship to go. It is not going to be my wish. It is not going to be my desire. My wish is to get all these things to be functional. You mentioned one ship. I can give you a whole list of things which are dysfunctional and are not going on very well simply because there is zero capacity.

I must also say there is zero capacity because business does not wait for a poor client whom they are not sure whether the client is going to come. They start looking for other clients elsewhere. For instance, our local defence industry has 80% of its business outside South Africa, because the South African government was not able to buy and sustain them. And therefore, even the capacity to fix is eroded. But the main thing to say: when do I come with time plans? I can give you time plans. If wishes were horses, I would say, well, I do want that by the next year, everything should be sailing. But you will know that it depends on other things. It depends on resources; it depends on capacity. And unless you can commit resources, no repairer, or any company, is going to come and say, we'll repair for you when they're not sure if you're going to pay. So, let's count, and I'm very hopeful that this journey to greatness is going to start opening opportunities.

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And only then, when the Cabinet has given us, or Parliament has given us R10 billion, you can come back to me to say, yes, there's a ship; when is it going? For the mere fact that it's been there for 10 years, I don't want to assume that those people there were so negligent or were not aware. Most of the reports that you give us, I get happy because you confirm things that I know, the reports that I get on an ongoing basis.

You can imagine the frustration of those generals who are supposed to be leading those sections and are not able to get the support that they need from the government. And in all our management meetings, they keep on repeating, and they hope that I, as a Member of Parliament, will come and bring good news to say, no, the government has sought itself out. We are going to get money. Then we'll give you timeframes when an appropriation has given us money. But for now, I'll be lying to you if I can say, by January, this is what is going to happen.

IsiZulu:

Ngani!

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English:

I will be honest if I can, then commit to what you say I must commit to because it depends on whether I am able to commit honestly and realistically. Thank you, Chair.

Mr P A PHALA: Chair, thank you, Minister, once again. Minister, during the Sona, the President of the country, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, indicated that the department will be moving from 0,76% of the GDP to 1,5%. And in line with the capstone policy document, which hopefully is geared towards the modernisation of the institution across the board, is the Minister, together with the Minister of Finance, considering a new funding model? That is my question, Chair. Thank you very much, Chair and Minister.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, you know, moving from the 0,7% to 1,5%, it's doubling our budget, which means we're asking the government to give us more than R50 billion, R60 billion again, to be able to make the journey towards the 1,5%. And that's why the capstone, even in terms of reality, there is no way after all the years of defunding the Department of Defence is going to be able to spend

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R50 billion overnight. The capstone is a phased process, which then says in the first five years, if we get R20 billion, this is what we're going to do. So that 1,5% is going to be a journey, because that 1,5%, in a way. means doubling. It means because it's 1,5% of the GDP. So, it means doubling the money that the Treasury gives. And it depends on quite a number of factors, to be very honest, with an economy which is not growing. So, there's a commitment. And we do hope that the economy will correct itself and be able to live up to this.

But in the meantime, there's a commitment to move to that process. But it's going to be a journey over time, first because of capabilities, but also getting the budget itself or the finances of the country to be able to live up to that and be able to move in that direction. So, in short, member, we are hopeful and are looking forward to getting this; we'll have this journey, which is going to be stretched over time, which is going to double our budget, but which is going to enable the Defence Force to function. But for now, it’s a big strain, not only to the facilities, but even to the people who are supposed to be running the different sections of the Defence Force. And I can assure you, I sometimes can't believe the morale that remains in the midst of the difficulties that

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the department is facing because of, and there has been underfunding for more than 10 years. I mean #FeesMustFall was 10 years back, and that money was never replaced; therefore, the gap now is being felt 10 years down the line. So, I hope you are answered.

Mr J H P BRITZ: Thank you, hon House Chair. Minister, are you aware of the level and impact of the degradation of the SANDF and the SA Navy? Because if you were aware, you would have implemented systems that investigate and ensure consequences where mismanagement has taken place. So, my question is, are you presiding over the collapse of the SANDF and the SA Navy because you don't understand the scale of this crisis or because you are unwilling to hold those responsible accountable? Thank you, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, none of the negatives. Being unaware, I'm very aware. I mean, as a Minister, we have managed meetings on an ongoing basis. I get reports from the Secretary of Defence, but as a Chief of the Navy, who reports to me on an ongoing basis on issues. I visit sites myself because that's my life. That's what I do every day. So that’s why I'm saying, unaware? No, I’m aware.

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Unwilling? No, I'm very willing and very keen to get things to happen. What am I going to do? I'm repeating the same answer. Unless there's a revision in terms of funding the Department of Defence, we will continue. So, it doesn't need any investigation. That is why I say even the reports that you give me from oversight - what is heartening about them? It is confirming what we know. Otherwise, what are we doing in the department if we don't know what is happening in the department? What do I do on a daily basis if I don't visit the sites? What do I do on a daily basis if I don't speak to the generals that are running those sections and even see the degradation you're talking about? It is worse.

I mean, I visited the border last time; there was not even a fence. And soldiers are expected to be protecting the border when there's no border. So, I'm aware of even deeper problems, member, I can assure you. And we didn't know. And then what was the other un, but for all those uns, I can tell you, no to them. I am conscious, I'm aware, and I'm keen to get things to work. And I am informed. Uninformed? I mean, I'm informed because I get the reports on an ongoing basis because that's where I work. That is what I do on a daily basis. So, I have

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the information, and I have the will and the wish to get things to work. But ...

IsiZulu:

... fak'imali.

English:

The issue, which we have raised repeatedly, is that the underfunding of the Department of Defence is extremely dangerous, both to the country, to the department and to our sovereignty as a state.

Mr M M PETER: Good day, hon Chair, and greetings to the hon Minister. The Department of Defence's 2024-25 annual report confirms that the SA Navy failed to achieve its planned 8 000 hours at sea due to backlogs in maintenance, repairs, refit, and midlife upgrades, affecting much of its prime mission equipment. The department also reported facilities maintenance backlogs of approximately R8,019 billion. These challenges must be considered against a 2026-27 defence allocation of R57,6 billion, of which R37,7 billion is allocated to the compensation of employees, while only R607 million is

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specifically earmarked for the repair and maintenance of naval platforms.

Whether, in light of the concerns raised, can the Minister provide this House with a service-by-service assessment of the current operational readiness of the SANDF, including the SA Navy, together with the specific funding required and clear timeframes to restore the identified capabilities? If not, why not, Hon Minister? If so, what are the relevant details? I thank you, hon Minister.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you, hon Peter. I am not sure that the Minister will be able to reply to that, other than to say she will give you a future document, but, Minister, I don't think there was a direct question. I think it was more a request for information; if you can respond to the request, please.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, I'm happy that the member is citing a report from the Department of Defence, and I can assure him I signed those reports, so the thing he is telling me about, the fact that how many hours were lost, it's things that get reported, and we report to

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you. So, that information, the member could have only gotten from us as the department to say, we've not been able to do so many man-hours in the sea, and not only in the Navy, so that we are not only focused on the Navy.

If I go to the Air Force, they'll tell me how many hours they are losing in terms of flying, and the fact that, which was a big advantage for the country, the Air Force also used to be a big trainer of young South Africans as pilots because they are advanced pilots because they don't fly planes just as taxis from point A to B, but they can even fight with planes. So, it used to train wonderful pilots, but it's been eroded also. And I can tell you in all other facilities, in health, because of underfunding, we're losing professionals, and we're losing specialists that are supposed to serve us. And unfortunately, we even drain and have to outsource some of the work that we could be doing internally because of degradation.

So, it's not only in the Navy. So, if you want a report, I'll give you a full report, service-by-service, the Navy included, the Air Force, and the Army will tell you about vehicles that are unrepairable, which are there, which they require. They are not moving again, as he correctly says, because of some

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things like Project Hoefyster, which were just inefficiencies in the department, 1 Military Hospital, inefficiencies in the Department of Public Works. So, let's not focus on the Navy alone. The Navy is one of them. But the challenge is across the board. Now, these - if not, why not? Maybe you're quite right that I should get the ... because I didn't know by when and why, if not, when ... the reports you got from us, and I've repeatedly said this afternoon that we can only solve the problems that we have if our underlying problem is addressed. I don't want to lie that our problem is only money. Yes, 80% of our problems are money, but you are quite correct that some of the problems emanate from capacities that are within the department to be able to implement projects on time, but also with partners. As I said, I opened a hospital which was built 10 years back. How did we build a 36-bed hospital in 10 years?

So, there are challenges which I want to admit to, but the underlying problem is not only in the Navy, in the Air Force, in the military, in health and in all other services. The member will even know that we had our armaments stolen from our depots, again, because of infrastructure which has collapsed. Our land is being invaded by squatters because we are not able to secure, the fences are broken, and we are not

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able to replace them. So, it's not the Navy; it's the entire defence force that needs money to be able to put it in the state where it will function. So, the when, and how, even if you can say I must go and give an answer, my answer is this one: until we can address the fundamental problem, I'm not going to be able to answer when, how and why not. I am not going to be able to answer it because the truth is that the problem doesn't lie in the way, why and how. It is going to lie in whether we are able to get support and resources to enable us to function maximally. That is what we need for now.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, I want to humbly ask, if you will not take it as being out of order: As there is a vote in the National Assembly, I had requested that perhaps I should be allowed to go and vote in the National Assembly. I had hoped, and I had requested, that perhaps my period should be an hour, but I can see why I am sitting there. So, I am humbly requesting, Chair, that you allow me to disconnect and go and vote in the National Assembly.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): I find that there is no precedent for that. I did not receive that request, and I am

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hearing it for the first time now. I do understand that there is a vote. I am not sure whether it is taking place immediately. As far as I am concerned, though, we are busy with the House of the National Council of Provinces, and I do believe we need you to respond to Question 164. Hon Radebe, I note your hand.

Mr B A RADEBE: Thank you, hon House Chairperson. I think that the debate has just commenced on the side of the NA. I think that we can release the Ministers when they have to vote, but now we can continue with the questions. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): The debate has begun. I do think the Minister needs to be released for the debate when the vote itself happens. So, Minister, we ... [Interjections.]

Adv Inkosi M NONKONYANA: Chair! Chair, I must apologise to you and also apologise to the hon Minister. The Chief Whip of the National Assembly did actually alert me to this eventuality, but I am in your able hands naturally as a Presiding Officer. However, I thought that by now we would be able to adjourn for quite some time, to give our Ministers time to go there

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because both of them are required to actually participate in that important vote.

I just wanted to bring that to your attention, but the decision is yours. However, I would support that we give our Ministers an opportunity to do that. It is on a virtual platform. Thank you, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Acting Chief Whip, yes, I hear what you are saying, and I think we might be able to give consideration to a short break when the time for voting comes. However, at this stage, as far as I am aware - and I haven’t heard any other correspondence- there is still a debate ongoing. Minister Lamola, I note your hand as well.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION: Chair, I think your provision that there will be an allowance during the voting time, for us to vote and come back. That will be fine. I have already requested a similar arrangement with the National Assembly. Thank you.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, hon Minister. Hon Nzimande, I note your hand. Hon Nzimande, was it you that raised your hand? Would you like to proceed?

Mr E NZIMANDE (POINT OF ORDER): Hon Chair, there is no provision for this kind of an arrangement that is being asked for, and I believe this House has the right to be respected. The Ministers must answer the questions. They must remain in this House. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you, hon Nzimande. Hon Badenhorst is next!

Mr F J BADENHORST: Chair, there is no precedent for what is happening at the moment, but there is a precedent for when the Presiding Officer makes a ruling: That ruling stands; and no further discussion is allowed on that ruling. So, you have made a ruling, it has been accepted, and I think we should move on. Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Indeed, let us proceed. Minister, if I can ask you to then proceed with your response to Question 164. We can monitor the process in the National

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Assembly and then make a determination if we are to adjourn shortly. Thank you. Please proceed, Minister.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, I want you to give me two minutes or just a second to ask the office to warn me as soon as the voting starts, because I am not sure how I am going to know. Unless you are going to alert me - just as a process.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): I am sure you have parliamentary liaison officials and numerous support staff that can assist you, but for now, if we can proceed with your response to Question 164. [Interjections.]

Question 164:
The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, the question is about the repeated failures in budget management, which really includes real-time Defence budget declines. As I say, it is with respect that I will be giving the same answers because it is the same issue asked in different ways. So, my response is that we have learned lessons and feedback on the operational performance of the South African soldiers over the years in external and internal deployment, including emerging

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warfare, which we research on an ongoing basis, which has identified, amongst others, sometimes poor understanding of the doctrine.

We have decided to make sure that we ... [Inaudible.] ... through our joint forces that the different services of the division work together as one team, and that is why we work with universities. The annual budget that we have been talking about the whole afternoon, for the intake, is according to the requirements of the services and divisions.

There are different services in terms of their sizes and in terms of the structure that we currently use to get people. What we do is to make sure that there is interoperability. They work together first, train as soldiers and then go and specialise in the areas that they are working.

The interventions that we are working on have to address some of the shortcomings that have been identified. The joint military basing training, which was planned and budgeted for services and divisions, is actually an additional course, but we are really quite conscious of some of the challenges that come with it, which the member has raised.

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So, the decision to conduct a joint basic military training is with the aim of enhancing interoperability. A joint basic military training curriculum has been developed to incorporate all essential services unique to the training areas where they are, so that after they have done the basic, the navy will go to the navy, and the air force will go to the air force. However, there must be common training objectives that will ultimately enable jointness in the operations of the different forces that are there.

So, at orientation, for joint military culture at an entry level three, South Africa has identified a facility that is going to be used to train the 2 500 recruits that we have. This facility, we believe, is conducive to host the defence force. Therefore, there will be no overload on our logistics and our current logistic challenges. Thank you, Chair.

Ms T BREEDT: Thank you, House Chairperson, and thank you, Minister. Minister, you speak about interoperability and common training objectives, but you have not provided any evidence that centralising all recruits at an army infantry battalion improves the operational capability of the navy and the air force.

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Can you point to any measurable outcomes or independent assessment which demonstrates that this approach produces better qualified sailors and airmen rather than simply reducing the costs? With all due respect, hon Minister, you have blamed the budget continually, and I do not think that is the sole reason that needs to be blamed. I thank you.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, thanks for the follow-up question. I can respectfully say to the member that this is what I think she selectively chose to listen to or to hear. I will repeat what I have said because I think the selective hearing was based on what she came with - a package of what she was going to say, despite what I would have said.

I am going to read what I said, which answers the question that the member is saying. In my response number B, I said the decision to conduct joint basic military training was with the aim of enhancing interoperability. So, there is a joint basic military training curriculum which was developed to incorporate all essential services unique to training, such as water safety, training of the navy, as well as common training

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objectives that will ultimately ensure jointness and interoperability.

I have not even at this stage spoken about the budget and underfunding. I am talking about the training. For instance, it will make all recruits to be land, air, sea and military-health-minded. This is to create a soldier that is oriented in joint military culture at entry level three. The SAI, infantry, was identified as a facility - I am still not speaking about budgets- to be used to host the 2 500 recruits.

I have not said what the member is saying; I am responding to what she asked me. So, I really want to respectfully and humbly say, I think it is selective hearing of what I would have said and repeating what I have not said. Yes, about the budget, I have said it and I am repeating it: It is a constraint, but here we are not talking about budgets. So, the member should not say I keep on repeating the budget constraints. I have not spoken about it here. I responded to her question. Thank you, Chair.

Ms S MASUMPA: Minister, thank you for your reply. Minister, has any problem, be it logistical or operational, been

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reported or encountered with the centralisation? Also, where there are decisions in terms of how and where they conduct their training, is it a policy or is it an operational issue? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chair, it is more of an implementation issue, not so much of a policy. I said in my response that the lessons that we have learned and the feedback that we have gotten from operational performance of South African soldiers over the years in external and employment deployment have led to and have even demonstrated fragmentation in terms of skills that are there.

So, already, as I say, we have budgeted annually for the intake according to the requirements of the different areas of work. Again, to repeat what I said to the previous member: We have a facility that has been identified; there is a curriculum that has been identified; and there is even a phase at which that joint training is going to happen.

So, there is an implementation plan and process in place. As you correctly say, it is an operational matter which is being addressed, hon member. It is not necessarily a policy issue.

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It is a strategy and tactic as to how to improve your training and the capabilities of your deployees. Thank you, Chair.

Mr P J SWART: Good afternoon, Chairperson. Good afternoon, Minister. Minister, I didn't hear your response on hon Breedt, on the first question because I was cut off. We had bad weather. However, I am putting this question now through you, hon Chair. Hon Minister, the Defence struggled to accommodate just 146 soldiers at Fort Ikapa. Despite the ANC-affiliated chair of the JSCD, using his oversight role to dismiss our findings as fabricated, the soldiers were subsequently moved from the squalor where they lived, and repairs commenced as a result of DA oversight.

What gives the Minister the confidence that the SA National Defence Force can now centralise thousands of recruits at 3 SAI without repeating the same logistical failure on a massive scale? I thank you, hon Chair.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Yes, Chair, I have no reason to doubt it. I have seen the SA National Defence Force implementing very complicated programmes in very difficult situations. I visited their deployments outside at

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... [Inaudible.] ... or to see how well they planned and execute. So, I have no reason to doubt that they won't do it. I am confident it will happen that these 2 500 recruits will be put as SAI. What you would have seen in other areas does not necessarily reflect what the defence force is all about all the time or always. So, I have confidence; and I have no doubts. Thank you, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much indeed, Minister. The last supplementary question on this particular question is again for the hon Siwisa, who has still not joined us. So, is there any other member of the EFF who would like to put the question? I don't see anyone.

Minister, I have confirmed with the National Assembly Whips' Office that the debate has only just begun, and voting will only happen in the next 90 minutes or so. We are grateful for your full attention as we move on to the last question. The last set of questions that you will be required to respond to are around Question 162, which was asked by the hon Noe. It relates to Project Hoefyster and Project Hotel, which you referenced earlier on. If you can respond to Question 162, please Minister.

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Question 162:

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: House Chair, the Council of Defence, which is chaired by me, has confirmed that Project Hoefyster should continue to implement phase one. So, I have a working committee which reports to me on a different basis and the development and partnerships for instance with Denel have been sorted to industrialise phase two, because the South African National Defence Force still requires ... because I did ask, do you still require the vehicles which should have been built 10 years back? Then they said they still require them, and maybe the advantage of the delay is that it will be modernised, it will have the latest technology, and that's what we're working on to upgrade what the plans are.

I think I received the report about two weeks back, about how far we're going with Hoefyster, so I can assure you, that we are working on it.

We have taken steps to prevent the recurrence of project management and acquisition failures, because that's what Hoefyster went through. First, to recapacitate the project teams which are in place, to establish oversight through

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steering committees which report to me on an ongoing basis and establish a baseline for variance on the project.

And the answer for B, what are the further relevant details? There are no further relevant ... except key decisions on the project have been made for the project to focus on delivery of critical outcomes.

Developments of project therefore includes establishment of the project baseline for variant on Project Hoefyster, which prioritises the section variant earmarked to undergo landmine test. Because as said the delay has forced us to really look at the latest technology so that when it comes back, after 10 years, it would have needed upgrading. So, you upgrade and finalise the project as it is now.

And of equal importance, is the software aspects relating to main weapon and gun drive systems, which initiated by Denel to have original equipment manufacturer finalise the qualifications of software in relation to new specifications that we developed on the 21st of July 2026.

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So, the remaining variant, the fire support, command motor and missiles baseline are being established in parallel to the process detailed above as part of the common platform.

On the execution of project evaluation plan, it was submitted by the contractor and will be subjected to a feasibility study by a third party which will provide holistic views of cost and time indications for completion of the hydraulic survey vessels. And this will provide an independent view and further provide Armaments Corporation of SA, Armscor with a decision-making tool in terms of funding the project. And the project team is in the process of appointing a third party to do the feasibility study. The project team is being beefed up by independent specialists.

So, the long and short, both projects have been confirmed if that the Defence Force still needs them. Teams have been put in place. There's ongoing monitoring. And we're at this stage; we're also looking for partners. I think there was also publication to get parties that are interested to work with the defence on these projects. So, it's out there in the public. Thank you, House Chair.

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A second, my battery is failing. I want to put an adapter. Please, please going to die on me.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, Minister. Mr. Noe, if I can ask for your patience, let's just allow the Minister to deal with her self-inflicted load shedding and give her an opportunity to listen to your question in full, when she's managed to sort out her adapter issues. Minister, are you ready to rejoin us? Hon Noe, put your supplementary question to the Minister please.

Mr P NOE: House Chair, thank you, Minister and hon members in the House. Minister, based on you have just said, indeed there is an acknowledgement of the long delay of these two projects. We have visited them as a Joint Committee on Defence, JCD, and we have seen with our own eyes the kind of condition which is there and which is very much worrying in terms of the plans for these projects initially were initiated.

However, the period that they have taken now is indeed worrisome. Now based on what we have just said, we should have learned something out of these challenges. Now one would like to ask Ministry, how are you going to strengthen the oversight

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and monitoring of the project, specifically to detect and track challenges as early as possible so that when they arrive, there will also be an early intervention unlike what is currently happening? Thank you very much Minister.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: House Chair, I fully agree with member Noe, I mean it's very disheartening to have to witness or even confirm the time it took for those projects, key as they are to really be operationalised and the monies which were spent in the process. I was very encouraged when the army said it still needs them, so which means in terms ... we have lost time, we've lost money, but the opportunity still exists that the equipment that you would have witnessed will still be usable, so that the wastage, which also I found disheartening, not that is going to be completely eliminated.

There will have been serious losses that the state would have incurred, due to the failure failures of the projects. So, as I currently said member, we, for the first time I have established a joint team between Armscor and Denel, because in the past they were working from different departments and not necessarily having a closer cooperation.

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So, we work as a team with the Defence Force, with the Secretariat convening them on an ongoing basis, getting reports. That's why I even know at which stage they are in, that they're assessing. Because army has to say in terms of modern technology, we want you to do the following extra, so there's already work happening around what adjustments would be needed.

It's not a consolation but perhaps it is the fact that in 10 years' time if that project would have been completed. Those vehicles will be due for either maintenance or will be due for upgrades. So those upgrades will already be incorporated in the current fleet so that by the time it leaves, it's even more modern than it would have been 10 years back.

But I agree with you and that's why I've put measures, put teams in place, get regular reports and also see, especially through the Secretary for Defence, SecDef, see what areas we need to support them, but also what we need to do on an ongoing basis, to nudge the teams to work together, because in the past they were not working together. Denel belonged to another department. Armscor had Denel as the client, but now they're one department, they're one family and they know they

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have to work together to make sure that these projects come to fruition.

So, I quite agree with you it's quite regrettable that we found ourselves in the situation that we find ourselves in currently. Thanks House Chair.

Dr I SCHEURKOGEL: House Chair and Minister, I'll take that painful band-aid off and just start with it with Project Hoefyster has been reportedly 14 years behind, so that is very painful. Project Hotel is still incomplete. Parliament itself warned of the deterioration of SANDF, this capability that it poses for national security risk.

Now, can you honestly assure South Africans that if a hostile dictatorship tests our borders tomorrow, that the SANDF could actually defend us or have years of failed procurement, reduce our defence force to a team of camouflaged operation? It looks like defence on paper, but the capacity will never arise.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: House Chair, I can I show the member to sleep peacefully and be sure that his defence force will protect him because the protection of the

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defence force it’s not lying in Hoefyster vehicles, there are other vehicles which will run around and protect you. There are other capabilities that in terms of defence intelligence we have which will protect you. So, sleep peacefully member and know that your defence force will protect you. Because those projects don’t make the defence force. They are a critical part of the defence force, but there are other capabilities that are there which can ensure that we are safe. Thank you, House Chair.

Ms M MAKESINI: Minister, good afternoon. We are having a feeling that the conflict of interest is a cause of the delay of this project, where the former head of defence, material responsible for oversight, took a top on executive job at the winning of the shipyard, subcode and Australia right after the contract was signed. Instead of blacklisting these failed contractors and holding a crook official criminally liable for wasting over 14 billion of taxpayers’ money, why are you throwing more billions into this bottomless pits, while other actual soldiers are left with obsolete equipment on a zero operational state of readiness. Thank you, Minister.

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The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: House Chair, thank you very much for the question. And I can confess, I don't know this information that the member is raising about the crook and which crook to which money. So, if the member can furnish with information. It will be very interesting to know who's this crook she's talking about, which I really don't have that information.

But what I can tell you is that those projects are not bottomless, they remain crucial. As I indicated, for instance, with Hoefyster, I had to call the chief of the army to say, in terms of your facilities and equipment, here we have a project which is stuck, which is not making forward movement, do we still need to continue with the project? He says definitely. And what would be the advantage is that you modernise. That one I can speak to, but about the crook, as I said, I don't know who is this crook we're talking about. I don't know his name. I don't have a report.

But those projects ... it's not bottomless, it's to salvage what is there because it's still needed. Same with hotel. We're even looking at international partners and even working with the defence industry. We called the Lekgotla recently.

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The main aim also is to assess the capabilities and the skills that we have in the country to enable us to complete these projects, because they remain critical and important.

And I must say despite all the challenges that we have, there's also an appreciation from government to assist us to finish some of these projects which are stalled and I can share with yourselves that even through Criminal Asset Recovery Account, CARA, funding process is quite correct. Some of these facilities or capabilities, we need them even to deal with crime. And that's why even CARA funding is also assisting us financially to make sure that we can finish some of the projects.

So, it's not bottomless, it's necessary. And the information about the crook can be shared with me and I can promise that I will be able to... when I have the stories about the crook come back to the member and say what would we do this crook that she knows of that I don't know of. Thanks House Chair.

Mr S A ZULU: House Chairperson, good afternoon, good afternoon again, Minister. It's hon Zulu, Minister. Don't make that mistake again.

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IsiZulu:

Uzohlawula! Uzohlawula!

English:

Minister, Parliament specifically required you to report by 30 July on same blocks capacity to complete the vessel, the cost implications and whether any criminal investigations relating to the procurement are underway.

Did you meet that 30 July deadline and if so, will you tell this House today what the review found, the final additional ... [Inaudible.] ... amount required to complete each project, the enforceable completion dates and which officials' contractors or accounting authorities have actually been held personally accountable for these failures? Thank you hon Minister, thank you House Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Hon Zulu,...

IsiZulu:

...ungibuza imibuzo enzima.

English:

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You know he’s asking me specific questions, on things that I will not have come with preparations on. I don’t know which letter, I might have to go and look for the letter, get the report, reply. So, I thought the follow-ups was going to be based on the question that is here. Now that hon Zulu wants other information which I can honestly say to you, I don’t have before me. If hon Zulu can then if he agrees put his questions for me in writing and then go and follow up and check all the information, he say. But now honestly, I’ll be thumb sucking, I don’t have the answers to the questions he’s asking because I didn’t expect them.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, Minister, I think that’s the appropriate way forward and having said that we’ve come to the end of questions, hon delegates. To the minister of Defence and Military Veterans, I’d like to thank the hon Minister for availing herself to answer these questions. And as I relinquish the chair and invite the hon Radebe to assume the chair. Thank you very much, Minister.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Ryder, thank you, hon Minister of Defence for the eloquent way in which you answered your questions. Afternoon, delegates.

Question 153:

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION: Thank you hon House Chairperson for the opportunity to respond to the first question. Again, I will also join in the same request of Minister Motshekga, and I hope the earlier ruling will still apply if I am called upon to vote in the NA. Thank you.

In the context of the whole-of-government approach, the SA National Security Secretariat received briefings from the Department of International Relations and Co-operation and deliberated on the various issues arising from the conflict. The Department of International Relations and Co-operation continues to work closely with Cabinet, relevant line-function departments, state-owned enterprises, and South African companies to address the implications of the conflict and safeguard South Africa's national interests.

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The Department of International Relations and Co-operation, in collaboration with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, also assisted South African companies in shipping their cargo through the Strait of Hormuz. The President, the Minister and the Director-General of International Relations and Cooperation, as well as the National Security Advisor, have actively engaged the relevant parties to the conflict to convey South Africa's support for credible and sustainable peace initiatives aimed at achieving a durable solution.

The Department of International Relations and Co-operation has issued several media statements on the conflict. In a statement issued on 18 June 2026, the department emphasized that the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz was critical to stabilizing volatility in global oil markets and alleviating the energy and food security challenges faced by developing countries, thereby helping to reverse the adverse impact on growth and economic recovery trajectories.

Concurrently, the department continues to utilise diplomatic channels in collaboration with relevant departments within the economic cluster to mitigate the adverse effects of conflict on energy security, food security, and supply chains. These

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departments remain actively seized of addressing the economic and developmental consequences arising from the war.

We will continue to strengthen our voice for an end to the conflict and for a durable and lasting peace to be found, not just in relation to Iran, but also in relation to the broader Middle East region. I thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Minister for your response to your question. On the issue raised earlier is that you will be covered when coming to voting because the NA usually rings the bells for 15 minutes before the voting takes place. During that time, the session will be suspended here. You can go and vote until the voting is concluded on the other side. So just be calm and collected. Thank you.

Ms O D MEDUPE: Hon Minister, thank you for your comprehensive response. Hon Minister, how has the geopolitical conflict broadly impacted South African diplomatic relations? Furthermore, what plans are in place to mitigate any negative impact and strengthen these relations? Thank you very much, hon Minister.

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The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION: Indeed, the conflict has impacted all aspects of diplomatic relations and triggered economic volatility, including the challenges faced by Sub-Saharan Africa with regard to fertiliser. It is for that reason that we convened the Southern African Development Community, SADC, retreat protocol to respond to these emerging challenges; we realise that we cannot respond in isolation. We need a broader response from the SADC and from the African continent in particular.

As you will have seen, we are beginning to rebuild some of the refineries in relation to energy security here in South Africa. Even during these difficult times and because of our non-aligned position, which calls for peace - and for all parties to return to the negotiation table to resolve this conflict through dialogue rather than the barrel of a gun - we were able to negotiate passage for some of our ships through the Strait of Hormuz, as colleagues will be aware.

As a result, the impact on our energy security was not severe. We never experienced a fuel shortage in South Africa because the Department of Minerals and Energy engaged in this process in a diplomatic manner, while also pursuing other sources of

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diversification. We continue to monitor the situation and call for a durable, peaceful resolution to the conflict. I thank you.

Mr N H PIENAAR: Minister, South Africa proclaims the position of non-alignment. Yet, in June of this year, your Deputy Minister, Thandi Moraka, hosted Iran's Foreign Minister in South Africa for bilateral talks, while the Defence Minister held military drills that included Russia and a sanctioned Iranian warship. All this, while relations with the US and Western partners continue to deteriorate. Is this really non-alignment or is it ANC party politics to rub shoulders with dictatorships and nations in violation of international law? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION: Non-alignment does not mean disengagement. We still engage with all the parties across the globe, which includes Iran. It also includes the US. I have recently hosted the Ambassador of the US for us to engage on a variety of issues, and our Department of Trade, Industry and Competition continues to negotiate with the US. We continue to engage with the various countries, Russia, China, and all countries that have got an impact in

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our diplomatic footprints across the globe, both at the bilateral, but also for multilateral purposes.

Our position on non-alignment is informed by a human rights outlook. It is informed by peaceful resolutions to conflict, but it does not mean disengagement. Engaging with Iran also helps us to understand the conflict. Also in my engagement with my counterpart from Iran, we have urged them to go back to the negotiation table to engage and to find a long-lasting solution.

As South Africa, we remain concerned that there must be long-term objectives for finding lasting solutions from all parties, including the US and Israel. These engagements must be in good faith and must take into account the fact that negotiations were already at an advanced stage when this conflict started.

When the US launched its military operation, negotiations were at a advanced stage to find a durable and a long-lasting solution to the conflict, particularly in relation to the nuclear capabilities and under the Geneva Protocols and

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Convention. Indeed South Africa remains non-aligned, but South Africa does not remain disengaged.

Mr M K MONTWEDI: Minister, we note the co-operation you claim to have with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition whilst many positions of trade attaché remain vacant in many missions abroad. We wonder who is doing that work that you say has been done.

Minister, the US-Israel war on Iran has completely disrupted global trade and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has forced thousands of international ships onto the Cape Sea route right outside our doorstep. This therefore means that our maritime borders are facing a massive traffic surge for which we are completely unprepared. While global shipping networks reroute around our coast, the SA Navy is sitting ducks with broken vessels and zero patrol capacity.

Given your reply Minister, what specific interdepartmental risk mitigation mechanism has the Ministry activated to protect South Africa's energy security, food imports, maritime trade routes and currency stability in the event of a prolonged disruption in the Strait of Hormuz?

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Setswana:

Ke go lebogile thata, Tona yaka ya Bojanala. [My Minister of Tourism]

English:

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Huh-ah! This is the Minister of International Relations, hon Montwedi. Minister, you can only answer one question, but you can answer everything if you want so that you can expatiate on the policies of government. Over to you, hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION: Hon House Chair, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition is in the process of re-appointing the trade attachés in some of the missions, and at this stage they have confirmed that they will re-appoint 12 of them.

With regards to what measures we have put for energy security, for the maritime routes and so forth, I have already explained that we are one of the few countries in the world that did not suffer any energy security challenges during this period. This was due to the multi-layered strategy of the whole-of-government approach to the matter, which focused initially on

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diplomatic engagements regarding access to the Strait of Hormuz routes by our energy vessels, and emphasized to those parties the importance of returning to the negotiating table to find durable solutions, thereby reaffirming our non-aligned position.

In that regard, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy adopted a whole-of-government approach to diversify our energy sources, thereby cushioning the South African market and consumers from fuel shortages. This initiative is coupled with a process by the department to reactivate domestic oil refineries. This will enable the country to secure the necessary energy capabilities, particularly regarding the crude oil, petrol, and diesel that we import.

Our country has provided one of the most efficient responses to this crisis with a short, medium and long-term plan that remains capable of addressing the situation. It is against this background that we convened a retreat of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in the SADC region to ensure a holistic approach. We must engage with our partners across the region to build a comprehensive response and ensure that there is no

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energy insecurity in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique. We share this responsibility. I thank you.

Mr S A ZULU: Good afternoon, Minister Lamola. Let me start off by saying petrol was still 19,3% and diesel 28,8% more expensive year-on-year. What measurable assessment has Cabinet made of the additional food, transport, and agricultural production costs that another sustained disruption of the Strait of Hormuz would impose on South African households? And at what point would government activate its emergency mitigation measures? Thank you, House Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION: Good afternoon to hon Zulu. It is great to see him on this platform from our days in the ANC Youth League.

Government has always put comprehensive plans in place from the beginning of the conflict. As I have said, the plan has been multidimensional. Initially, it involved a diplomatic front calling for a negotiated settlement among the parties, as that is the most durable solution regarding access to, and the use of, the Strait of Hormuz. Its closure impacts global supply and global pricing. We have put a lot of effort into

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that front. However, we have also put a great deal of effort into ensuring, at the bilateral level, that South African products and those from the African continent are still able to access and use that platform. This applies not only to energy but also to fertiliser, as we are entering the ploughing season in sub-Saharan Africa. We need access to fertiliser and to some of the inputs relevant to its production.

Government has also put in place mitigation measures for consumers at the height of the conflict. As hon members will remember, the suspension of the fuel levy at one stage was aimed at further cushioning the consumer. Government has been hard at work, addressing issues concerning oil refineries across the country alongside other measures implemented by various departments. As a result, this country never suffered a fuel shortage, even at the height of the conflict. The Department of Mineral Resources has assured the country that, over the long term, our current plans will ensure that we continue to stabilise the situation. Thank you.

Question 140:

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The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon House Chairperson, since the outbreak of the sporadic incidents of confrontation and protest against some immigrants amongst them citizens of fellow African states residing in South Africa, by sections in our communities I had intensive engagements with a number of fellow African foreign Ministers and resident African ambassadors regarding these developments to assure them that these matters are receiving the attention of relevant authorities in South Africa.

I engaged with mu Nigerian counterpart and reaffirmed South Africa’s commitment to protect the rights of national residents and visitors in line with the rule of law and to strengthen bilateral co-operation.

Furthermore, we went on to clarify developments related to these incidences that alleged that some nationals from Nigeria were killed during recent protests by law-enforcement authorities. There was no credible evidence to draw these conclusions at this stage. The matter is under the attention of law-enforcement agencies. As President Ramaphosa’s special envoy, I visited both Nigeria and Gana in August 2026 to engage with relevant authorities on the issue. Further

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reassure the two countries of South Africa's commitment to the rule of law and to provide evidence of the continued protection of everyone within the borders of South Africa and their assets and also to inform them of the challenges that the South African government faces with regards to irregular migration, disorderly migration and in some instances the creation of enclaves in some parts of our country like in Sunnyside in Pretoria and Hillbrow particularly by Nigerian nationals.

We have raised this as a concern that does provoke South Africans. We had agreed to work together to resolve these challenges and that the law must be enforced by the relevant lawful authorities like the SA Police, immigration officials and the labour inspectors and not private citizens or private individuals. I thank you.

Mr M BILLY: Hon House Chairperson, good afternoon to yourself and good afternoon, hon Ministers. Hon Minister, given the growing diplomatic strain and reputational damage to South Africa, and also appreciating your answer, in indicating that there are efforts in place: Will you at least Minister, outline a clear timebound plan to prevent any further violence

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against foreigners in our country and in that way restoring confidence among African partner states or is the government once again reacting only after there is international pressure? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon House Chairperson, the Minister of Home Affairs has put forward a White Paper, the hon Schreiber that deals with the processes in relation to regular migration, the issues of first count of entry and all those processes. I believe that government is doing this because the law requires us to do so, to ensure that migration is orderly and is regular.

Hon House Chairperson, we have engaged as I have said with our counterparts. We have recently seen the Southern African Development Community, SADC, Summit despite spirited attempts to isolate South Africa. I believe these gatherings and engagements have shown that South Africa is not isolated despite these emerging challenges. The countries are willing to engage with us and are willing to find a long and durable solution. For migration is not just a South African challenge, it is an African continent challenge that affects everyone.

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You would have seen the reports of the United Nations with regulations to Libya where a number of migrants are also dying and as many parts of Africa where there are challenges with regards to migration. Ourselves are one of the highest receiving countries in the continent and we have to work within the law to ensure that migration is regular and is orderly or else we will end up being victims of our laws that have to ensure that migration is orderly, regular and it is within the bounds of the law.

Hon House Chairperson, in a nutshell, I think that the hon member is wrong in characterising these as a growing diplomatic challenge. I think we have turned the corner. The fact that we had SADC and we had a number of Binational Commissions, BNC's, in this country since the challenge with Zimbabwe and many other countries have sought to engage and work with us to find a durable and long-lasting solution shows that the diplomatic corner has been turned and that South Africa needs to continue to ensure that there is no vigilantism. We condemn it in the strongest way and that the law is only enforced by those empowered by law to enforce the for immigration in our country.

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Mr P NOE: Good afternoon, hon House Chairperson, hon Minister and hon members in this House.

[Interjections.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Noe, you can turn off your video. It is like you are struggling.

Mr P NOE: How am I now?

I just want on a point of emphasis, hon Minister, especially coming to the SADC issue. With the background already been given regarding the latest developments about illegal immigrants: What exactly if you can just assure us not in general terms but steps that South Africa has taken in actual facts to assure us that the matter has been elevated to SADC and the African Union, AU, and it is on the agenda and on the table for discussion and if you can also explain to us how effective and adequate is the current security protocol of SADC and the African Union to rectify step-by-step this continent wide anti-illegal immigration? Thank you, hon Minister.

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The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Firstly, we as South Africa were against a move for South Africa to be placed in the dock by some of the countries in the AU in particular Gana that requested a debate just on South Africa's xenophobic attacks. We said that debate is not properly phrased. The debate should be about migration in the whole continent because the African Union has the resolution of 2015 that said that the African Union need to have a conference that must deal with the root causes of illegal and irregular migration. The pull and push factors that leads to citizens of countries in the continent to move from their countries as we speak about 45% of people in the African continent move out of their countries not out of choice but out of necessity to strike a living out of their countries. South Africa is one of the receiving countries in the continent. Therefore, if we are one of the receiving countries, there are reasons for that. We cannot be blamed for being a receiving country. What we need is a continent wide solution that must enable each and every African country to have economic stability, political and security stability and have issues that respond and mitigate to issues of climate change so that people can find a living, work, and grow the economies wherever they are.

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Regarding the SADC protocol, we have called for countries in the SADC regions to sign and ratify the SADC protocol because it has only been ratified by only seven countries and it needs 11 countries to come into effect. For the SADC protocol will then enable easy movement of people and goods, but also it does not call for a disorderly and irregular migration. It calls for regular, orderly and legal well-managed migration. I thank you.

Mr K CEZA: Hon House Chairperson, greetings to the Minister. Hon Minister, Nigeria is actively evacuating its citizens because they fear for their lives amid violent antimigrant protests on our streets. Your administration has chosen to pick a patty financial fight by demanding a R292 million reimbursement check from Abuja for repatriation and deportation costs. How can you claim to be handling relations with our continental peers with maturity when you are turning critical human rights and security issues into a bill collecting exercise and secondly, what urgent measures have you taken to ensure that xenophobic protests do not erode South Africa’s relations with frontline states, weaken trust within the African continent and reverse the gains of Pan-Africanist democracy? How will your department ensure that the

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migration policy is aligned with humanitarian principles and ideological commitment of African unity? Thank you very much hon House Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Regarding the quantity of the bill, I may need to verify, hon House Chairperson. I doubt it is that R292 million regarding to Nigeria. We need to verify. I am not sure. However, there is indeed a process by home affairs to reclaim some of the funds that they have used to support and aid some of the countries that have repatriated their nationals from our country. It is not a bill collecting exercise. It should be on the basis of reciprocity as you would have seen that South Africa we have supported.

This is a process of voluntary repatriations by their own countries and the countries that could no longer be able to do the voluntary repatriations have asked the South African government to do it on their behalf.

It is costly even to themselves when they do it voluntarily, they pay. It is a cost that they have to incur. On our side also we also have a cost that we have to incur. So, it is fair

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that we need to collect that money from the people that would have requested us to assist them with the voluntary repatriation process.

The South African government has been in compliance with the human rights laws from Geneva and the conventions on migrations in dealing with this matter. Even when you look at how we dealt with it in Durban, the support measures, the food, the shelter and how even when we shifted to the voluntary repatriation site in Musina declared one. Again, it was done in a very human way that the South African government also incurred huge costs of running the tents, providing food and there were also a number of NGOs that supported this work. We also want to thank them.

However, the reality is that this is a costly exercise. So, the costs had to be shared. We are a receiving country but also must be shared by the countries of return with the South African government because even when they do it from their side at the voluntary repatriation the costs they incur, they pay for them also from our side, we incur the costs, they need to pay for them. That is the reality of the situation that this whole exercise costs cannot be incurred by the South

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African government alone. We have already as I have said, if you look at the costs in Musina that we incurred is huge astronomical amount of money because we have to put tents with speed and we also had to support with everything that is needed for a human facility. Ablution facilities, food and the infrastructure that was need was packaged at a very quick pace.

So, no one in the world can accuse the South African government of human rights violation. We complied with all the necessary human rights ingredients. However, also South Africa is one of the few if not the only country where we do not have refugee camps. People are embedded in the structures of our society. Hence sometimes these conflicts will from time-to-time reoccur due to the competition for limited resources. It is a class struggle. I thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Are you done, hon Minister?

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Yes.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you.

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Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Hon House Chairperson, my question is focussed from the other side of the argument. Hon Minister, does government acknowledge that countries labelling public frustration over illegal immigration, job losses and rising crime as xenophobia or Afrophobia is a deliberate deflection from its own failure to secure borders and enforce immigration laws and will you commit to prioritising the rights to security of South African security above diplomatic niceties with Nigeria or any other country? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: It is not an is or substitution on this matter. In terms of the Constitution everyone within our borders must be protected and equally. If there is anyone who has violated the law, it is for law-enforcement agencies to enforce the law not for private citizens.

It is not a diplomatic nicety for us to engage with Nigeria or Gan or any African country. For when you look at the Africa Free Trade Area, the African continent is the growing continent in terms of trade in the world. Now, we are going to have about 1,4 billion people, this is the biggest market for South African products in the world. Fifty percent of our

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agricultural products goes to the African continent and all processed products from the South African factories even the factories that South Africans are complaining about that the people are taking jobs from them and so forth. When you look at where those products are going to the biggest market is the African continent.

So, we do need to strike a balance that immigration on its own is a necessary product of economics. Across the globe all countries have developed because immigrants have been able to get in through lawful means.

So, we have to ensure that this is done legally, lawfully and in accordance with the laws of the country. There are skills sets that are said and needed to allow for the working visas, working permits and so forth, we should be able to allocate and deal with that because that is definitely good for our economy.

What is a challenge for us is the irregularity of it and the disorderly manner of it but also employers not respecting the immigration laws by employing illegal immigrants therefore

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impacting the lives including impacting the competition amongst Africans even within the South African borders.

So, these are the issues that are part of the five-point plan that the President has announced that we must deal with, we must cap, employers must employ people who are documented, who are regular who are having proper papers. However, also there must only be law-enforcement that enforces the law and not private citizens. Thank you.

Question 155:
The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: The issue of irregular migration is addressed extensively within the SA Development Community public security architecture. Recently, the 46th Ordinary Summit of SADC Heads of States and Government held on the 17 August 2026, in its communique, received an update from the Republic of South Africa on migration governance and called for a coordinated multidimensional dialogue at the regional level to address the underlying drivers of migration and develop a comprehensive, sustainable and effective response.

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The SADC security architecture addresses these matters primarily through protocols on politics, defence and security cooperation implemented via the strategic indicative plan for the organ. The protocol sets out the objectives of the SA Development Community, SADC, organ on politics, defence and security cooperation, including the promotion of peace, security and political stability, the prevention and the resolution of conflicts and the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law within the region.

The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, one of SADC's blueprints called for the development and implementation of a regional framework to promote safe, secure and dignified migration across the region.

The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, RISDP, outlines a comprehensive approach to irregular migration and emphasises moving away from purely criminalising undocumented movement by addressing the root socioeconomic drivers, harmonising legal frameworks and creating structured orderly pathway for regional labour mobility.

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Furthermore, SADC has adopted the Regional Migration Policy Framework, which includes the protocol on the facilitation of movements of persons, providing an enabling legal mechanism for people to move freely between SADC member states visa free.

This framework still needs to be ratified by all 11 members of SADC. As I said earlier, it has only been ratified by seven thus far, hence it is not yet in force. Other elements of the framework include the Labour Migration Action Plan 2020-2025, the SADC Common Regional Policy Framework on Refugees and Asylum Seekers 2019, the SADC Coordinated Border Management Guidelines 2011, the Regional Strategy to Combat Illegal Migration, Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking in Persons 2016-2020 and the SADC United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee Action Plan, UNHCR 2020-2024

I thank you.

Ms J S MANANISO: Hon Chairperson, let me take this opportunity to thank the hon Lamola for being all over with regards to this issue of illegal immigration. I think one is impressed

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with the terminology that he is using because there is confusion on whether it is xenophobic or not.

But my question, Minister, regarding to what you have said in terms of the seven out 11 that have agreed to dealing with illegal immigration properly. One would want to know what the plan is thereof to ensure that four of those that are left behind, are part of this ratification because we need this law sooner than later, noting what could have happened during 30 June and what is happening currently.

One can affirm that the security of the country is the backbone of the country and if we are not intact to close those gaps, we are risking for our people, and we will be against our people. I just want you to tell us what plan is regarding those four that are pending to be part?

Thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon House Chairperson, during our briefing, in particular by the President during the recent SADC Summit, we raised the issue

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of the four countries that need to join to rectify the SADC Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons.

There is growing support from SADC member states that have not yet signed the protocol. At the start of this process, only six countries had signed, and Malawi became the seventh. We have encouraged the remaining member states to sign, and we believe many are now viewing the protocol favourably and are likely to sign soon

We will be able to present a progress report at the next summit. There have also been bilateral engagements to encourage more countries to sign the protocol, as it will enable easier movement, better tracking, smoother facilitation, and more orderly and well-managed movement across SADC countries.

At this stage, we have bilateral agreements with individual SADC countries. However, if there is an overall protocol for SADC, it will make the work of Home Affairs much easier. It will also create a shared framework for managing migration.

Thank you.

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Mr J H P BRITZ: Minister, which neighbouring country is currently the least cooperative with South Africa in preventing illegal cross-border migration and what exactly is government negotiating to change that?

Thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: As I have already said, the security architecture enables engagement through security cooperation as part of SADC's Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ. So, there is cooperation, but I believe it can be improved and strengthened to ensure that we do not have a situation where someone can travel from Bangladesh or Ethiopia, pass through multiple countries, and eventually reach South Africa.

The principle of first entry or first counter of safety has to be applied, and that is what the White Paper is aimed to resolve and to respond to. Those are some of the issues that are discussed on these SADC platforms, both at the multilateral and bilateral level.

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The principle of first entry is a key element in the management of migration. That is why the principle of the visa-free agreements that we sign, is embedded in the agreement. If a person enters the country and it is clear that they first entered another country, that person can be returned to that country. A very clear example of such an agreement is the one we have signed with Kenya.

Thank you, House Chair.

Ms M MAKESINI: Minister, we cannot keep blaming our rational neighbour or pointing fingers on the SADC protocols when the real rot is sitting right inside of our own. Our borders are weak because even the Minister of Defence just highlighted that. Our own borders control infrastructure is heavily compromised by institutional corruption.

We are making it incredibly easy for multi-million-rand syndicate to simply buy off our official and operate absolutely without any precision. Let's look at the fact that just in the past months Special Investigating Unit, SIU exposed a deep-seated corruption within our border system and leading to the immediate freezing of multi-million-rand bank

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accounts belonging to the senior officials who are pocketing bribes to bypass security.

In light of this, what specific and immediate steps are you taking to work with the security cluster to stop what is happening to compromise the safety of our country?

Thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon House Chairperson, this is a very nice platform. I see my former comrades from the Youth League. It's very heartening. Thank you very much, Chair.

The first call with regards to a migration challenge, as I've said, and this has also been acknowledged by the African Union itself, including the SADC Protocol, is the reality of dealing with the root causes of irregular migration, which are the push and pull factors, issues of lack of economic growth, job opportunities, wherever people are.

The International Monetary Fund, IMF, estimates that our population is going to grow by 2040 to almost young people

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seeking employment to almost 800 million. We need the entire continent to build towards job creation that is at par and at pace with population growth.

As we currently stand across the continent, we create only 3 million jobs when there are 12 million job seekers entering the job market every day. This gap must be closed by the entire continent because when you only create jobs for 3 million, what happens to the 9 million?

That is the 9 million that end up being desperate and move irregular, either to receiving countries like South Africa, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Morocco, and other countries in the continent. Or they end up dying in the Mediterranean Sea, trying to flee to Europe, as we have seen with various reports.

This is the response and the question that we need to respond to. Create economic growth at the pace of population growth. That must also go with the job creation that must also be in line with the population growth as well as the job seekers that are entering the job market.

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The issues the hon member is raising with regards to the weaknesses in our system, indeed those are issues that must be addressed and the five-year plan has been put in place to respond and to address to those issues. But those issues are as a result of the symptoms of the challenges of the root causes of irregular migration.

We would not be facing these challenges if migration across the continent were a matter of choice. But as things stand now, it is not a matter of choice; it is a matter of necessity. At the strategic level, we need to turn migration into a matter of choice rather than necessity. It should be about people travelling for tourism or moving to South Africa or any other receiving country because they have skills that country needs. The reality is that all economies will, at some point, require migrants. There's no economy that can grow without foreigners or migrants playing a role in that country's economy.

Mr P NOE: My phone has just switch. Can you go to the next person and call me afterward, Chair?

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Once we pass the question, we cannot go back to it. Just switch off your video. Are you coming right?

Mr P NOE: Yes. You can call the next person, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): But you are here.

Mr P NOE: I will just follow up afterwards, Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): [Laughter.] ... No, we cannot break the Rules hon Noe.

Mr P NOE: Really Chair, it just switched off. I don’t know what happened.

Ms M MAKESINI: Pass Chair, please.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Makeseni, you are not a co-chairperson here. You might have been in the Youth League with the hon Lamola. Are you coming right?

Mr P NOE: Yes, Chair.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Alright, you can ask your question.

Mr P NOE: Here I am, Chair. I am coming all right, Chair. No, I'm not sure. Let me not waste the House’s time. It is really giving me challenges.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Alright, thank you. That's why the pen and paper are the trusted methods of recording stuff. Alright, hon Minister, we now come to Question 146, asked by hon Gericke, which is dealing with the issue of assessment of economic loss. Over to you, Minister.

Question 146:
The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: The United States’, US, 30% reciprocal tariffs on South Africa are having had negative impact on South Africa’s economy, particularly in the automotive and agricultural sectors. These tariffs have now been lowered to 12,5% since the US Supreme Court ruled that the initial 30% tariff was illegal, as we’ll explain later. However, starting with the impact in agriculture, at the time of the higher Liberation Day tariffs, some South African agricultural exporters took advantage of

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the 90-day pause on the higher tariffs in the second quarter of 2025, and exported more volume than usual during the second quarter.

After this pause, we saw some cooling in the exports in the third and the fourth quarters of 2025. Notable, South Africa's agricultural exports to the US decreased by 11% in the third quarter of 2025, compared to the same period in 2024, at the US$144 million. In the last quarter, South Africa's agricultural exports to the US fell sharply by 39% to US$81 million. Still, from an annual perspective, South Africa's agricultural exports to the US in 2025, total US$504 million, down by 3% from the previous year. This slight annual decline doesn't suggest that the previous 30% Liberation Day tariffs didn't have a negative impact on our agricultural sector. We benefited from the substantial exports in the second quarter, as I've mentioned above.

The automotive sector is experiencing significant disruption, with vehicle manufacturers facing sharp downturns South African vehicle exports to the US have already declined by more than 80%, with export volumes falling from US$1,55 billion, 25 254 units in 2024, to just 6 530 units.

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This decline is driven by the 25% sectoral tariffs on the automobiles. Together with the general import duties imposed by the US administration the Mercedes-Benz plant in East London KuGompo City is facing severe volume reductions and temporary suspensions of assembly lines due to declining US demand. Total vehicle and component exports to the US have fallen to approximately R8 billion severely affecting local automotive components plants and manufacturers to offset the sharp decline in North America demand.

South African manufacturers have redirected exports to the United Kingdom and the European Union, enabling the country to achieve a record 414 268 global vehicle exports despite the contractions in the US market. In addition, government is engaging the United States through official trade negotiations with the last round having taken place in September 2025, and a second round initially planned for February 2026. However, the meeting was postponed at the request of the US, coinciding with the US Supreme Court ruling that removed the International Emergency Economic Powers Act reciprocal tariffs. While the ruling resulted in the general reciprocal tariffs being reduced from 30% to 10%, the 25% vehicle-

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specific tariffs remain in place, continuing to place pressure on South Africa's automotive industry.

The US has since expressed willingness to resume negotiations with a second round potentially scheduled for June 2026. I was not informed of any direct impact of the United States global health funding cuts on the supply of human immunodeficiency virus, HIV, and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, Aids, products manufactured in South Africa. South Africa funds its national antiretroviral, ARV, programme primarily through domestic resources and does not rely on donor funding for the procurement of ARVs for the public sector programme. Consequently, the supply of ARVs within South Africa has not been directly affected by the reported reductions in the United States global health funding.

In addition, South African manufacturers of ARVs medicine generally do not hold World Health Organisation's pre-qualifications for these products, and as such will not ordinarily have participated in procurement programmes funded through the United States Agency for International Development Contracts for the supply of ARVs to other countries. Consequently, South African produced ARVs were not exported

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through US aid-funded procurement channels. Furthermore, many countries outside South Africa rely significantly on donor-funded procurement mechanisms for the supply of ARVs. In the absence of World Health Organisation pre-qualifications, opportunities for South African manufacturers to access these markets have therefore remained limited.

Government continues to support the sustainability and competitiveness of the local pharmaceutical manufacturing sector through ongoing engagements with the industrial stakeholders, efforts to strengthen regional market access opportunities, and initiatives aimed at enhancing the regulatory competitiveness of local manufactured products. I thank you.

Ms M KENNEDY: Thank you, House Chair and hon Minister, for the answers. Hon Minister, given the withdrawal of this foreign assistant in funding, what is your department’s plan to bridge the gap to enable marginalised groups to access funds and continue with this acquisition of ARVs? Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Kennedy. The discretion is up to you, Minister, to answer.

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The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: As I have already said that almost the Department of Health is self-sufficient. We have been able, as a country, to fund our own ARV procurement process. Indeed, there has been marginal groups, some nongovernment organisation, NGOs, and so forth, that were funded by the United States Agency for International Development, Usaid, and it remains a collective responsibility with us, government, and those groups to look for other sources of funding to support the work that they do in the marginal communities. I thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Minister. Honourable delegates, please, let us not put our Ministers on the spot. We cannot ask them questions about other departments. However, I'm very happy that the Minister responded. The next follow-up question will come from hon Phala, a delegate from Limpopo.

Mr P A PHALA: House Chair, through you to Minister, good afternoon, and good afternoon once again to hon members. Hon Minister, you indicated earlier on and you said spirited attempts against our diplomatic work, that was an understatement. You were just about to say, I understand

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that’s a ... [Inaudible.] ... You said that it’s an imperialist hegemonic attempt to destabilise our country. Therefore, what I would say, Minister, I would ask the question is that, what are other issues regarding rapid shifts in foreign and international trade policy of the United States of America? What are other issues which you are dealing with as a Ministry, Minister? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: We, indeed, have had five asks as honourable members may be aware from the US, which we are looking at them in the short term, long term, and medium-term. Some of them at the short-term level, colleagues are already aware that there are negotiations with the US in relation to the products, African Growth and Opportunity Act, the preferential process, International Emergency Economic Powers Act and others that the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition is involved in.

However, with regards to the other issues, we view them as issues that belong to a long-term engagement. As such issues involve our own domestic sovereignty, such as the issues related to expropriation of land without compensation, the

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black economic empowerment, and other policies of redress, which we have indicated that these are constitutional imperatives of the Republic of South Africa, which are important for the redress, given the imbalance, given the history of our country, we have to redress these historical injustices.

These are issues that we'll have to continue to engage with in the long term. There are issues that offer short term that we believe we can find solutions with them. I think honourable members might have seen that in some of them, like the issues of funding for HIV/Aids research, and there are already positive indications from the US side with them, including the process related to the extension of African Growth and Opportunity Act. We think that these are good confidence building measures that are important in the movement towards the restoration of good bilateral relations with the US, including the fact that we now have reciprocal ambassadors from both capitals. I thank you.

Mr J H P BRITZ: House Chair, through you to Minister, many South Africans' jobs are directly at risk from the 30% US tariffs. Name the alternative market that can realistically

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replace the lost US demand, and by when can it be replaced? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: It's now 12,5% to be accurate, hon member. It's no longer 30% reciprocal tariffs. These tariffs, as honourable members are aware, affects everyone across the globe, including some of the US western allies. It's not just a South African exceptionalism or phenomenon. However, the South African government has been at work with the various players in the private sector in terms of diversification, and the European Union has come into the party. As I've said, the African continent, through the African Continental Free Trade Area, almost 50% of our agricultural products for 2025, went into the African continent. China is opening zero tariffs market, huge market for our agricultural products, including beef and many other products.

India is also moving in the same direction. There are several countries that are opening and willing to diversify, including the Southeast Asia countries. There is a plethora of countries that our President has visited, I have visited, and our various Ministers, Trade, Industry and Competition,

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Agriculture, to investigate the diversification process. I think it has mitigated, as you have seen, in the automotive industry, whereas it may not have been enough, but there was mitigation, including in the agricultural sector. Thank you.

Mr M M PETER: Hon House Chair, through you to the hon Minister, greetings. The steep 30% tariff threatened to undermine decades of economic co-operation and expose the vulnerability of the export-dependent agriculture sector, leading to job losses, particularly in the agriculture and automobile manufacturing industries. As South African producers faced increased competition and reduced market share in the US, this threat requires South Africa to focus more on other trade alternatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, which offers South Africa both an opportunity to generate foreign earnings while also deepening the industrialisation in agriculture, which could optimise the contribution of the sector to the country’s development and prosperity.

Has your department, hon Minister, engaged any relevant departments, the Presidency and other stakeholders to enforce radical action to ensure that African Continental Free Trade

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Area transforms South Africa's agriculture export and create job opportunities? I thank you, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Thank you very much, hon House Chair. I think that that question I've just responded to it just now. Firstly, I have clarified that the tariff has now been lowered from 30% to 12% since the US Supreme Court ruled that the initial 30% tariff was illegal. Again, we have indeed worked in relations to the agricultural exports. The African continent, through the African Continental Free Trade Area, now constitutes 50% of the agricultural exports from South Africa, and this was the year 2025. Again, the European Union has opened for our automotive sector, and I did mention that the United Kingdom and the European Union combined, they've enabled our country to achieve a record of 414 268 global vehicle exports despite the contractions in the US market.

This was the outcome of our work with the President to diversify the markets, including in Southeast Asia and China, which has now offered 0% tariffs to all African products, and South Africa is one of those countries that wants to take advantage of this huge market that has been opened up by

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China. India is also in the process of doing the same. The process of diversification is in full swing and can be seen and touched through the reports from our SA Revenue Service, Sars, and what I've just alluded to now. Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Minister, for your response to this Question 146. Hon members, we are left with Questions 137 and 156, but we have made an undertaking to the Minister that he will be released so that he can go and attend the NA session. We don't want to, I know that it has been very easy that you could have connected to one gadget, but if anyone could have challenged the proceedings in the NA, could have proved that the Minister was in the NCOP, could not have been at the NA at the same time.

What I'd like to do for the next two questions, I'd like to suspend the proceedings now and then come back after an hour, because the process of voting on the other side will be a little bit long because the Deputy Speaker will ask each and every individual Member of Parliament, MP, on the other side whether you vote in favour or against or abstain. Therefore, I request that now the House will be suspended for an hour. We

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will come back around 18:00. Thank you everyone. The proceedings are suspended.

Business suspended at 17:00 and resumed at 18:03.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Good evening, hon delegates, as I'm very happy that you have respected the time, I put aside that at 18 hours we must resume the proceedings. I'm happy that the Minister is back on the platform. We have monitored him and he was able to vote. So, hon Minister, we now come to Question 137, asked by hon S H Zulu, a delegate from Mpumalanga.

Question 137:

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Yes, thank you, hon House Chairperson, diplomatic engagement within the BRICS bloc takes place under political security co-operation, Pillar 1 of the three pillars of BRICS co-operation, serving as the foundation for official engagements in all three pillars of BRICS co-operation. Over the years, the Department of Home Affairs, with the support of DIRCO, has concluded agreements with Brazil, Russia, India, and China, to ensure visa-free access for holders of South African

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diplomatic and official passports. Furthermore, all South African passport holders do not require visas for entry into Brazil and Russia.

South Africa has similarly entered into agreements with BRICS countries to facilitate visits by the private sector under Pillar 2 of BRICS co-operation, trade and finance, allowing for greater engagement between business communities of these countries in inter alia trade, agriculture, infrastructure, small and medium enterprises, energy, finance, and banking. In this regard, long-term multiple entry BRICS business visas for captains of industries, entrepreneurs, and business delegations have been agreed and are being issued. As the bloc has expanded with five new members, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates, an assessment is being undertaken on the inclusion of the five new BRICS members who will join the business visa agreement soon.

Work in this respect is ongoing as Pillar 2 is imperative to BRICS co-operation. A bloc driven by scale of economic opportunities, it should be noted that all passport holders from South Africa already do not require visas for travel to Egypt and Indonesia, whilst diplomatic officials’ passport

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holders do not require visas for travel to Ethiopia. Greater access for holders of ordinary South African passports is continuing to receive attention from bilateral perspective rather than from a BRICS perspective, a matter falling within the mandate of the Department of Home Affairs.

Co-operation within BRICS will continue as part of our universalisation strategy and diversification strategy, and this should in no way be seen as an anti-West posture, but we also remain steadfast in strengthening our position within BRICS. Remaining BRICS versus cordial and strategic relations with the West is no zero-sum either approach. Thank you.

Mr S A ZULU: Good evening, House Chairperson and Minister Ronald Ozzy Lamola, and thank you very much for your comprehensive responses. I think, hon Minister, I can safely say you almost covered all my follow-up questions, but I'm tempted to ask this one. Has your department formally requested a reciprocity from Beijing? Yes or no? That's my only supplementary question. Thank you very much, House Chairperson and Minister.

Ms J MANANISO: [Interjection.]

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A RADEBE): Thank you, Mageba. Hon Mananiso, no! Hon Minister, you can respond.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Our engagements with Beijing remain very cordial and reciprocal. So, on all issues, we endeavour to find solutions, including the visa challenges that sometimes are faced by our two nationals. Thank you.

Mr P NOE: Chair, very quickly, hon Minister, good evening once more. What are the key strategic security and economic considerations that underpin South Africa’s visa policy? On this basis, what categories of countries does South Africa currently consider to be strategic to enter into visa waiver agreements with? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Indeed, there are security considerations that remain important in underpinning our visa-free regime. The categories we start with are our neighbours within SADC. As hon members are aware, most of our SADC countries have got a visa-free regime with them at the bilateral level, while awaiting the countries of SADC to enter into the protocol on the free

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movement of people and goods. This is our first because you will never have any different neighbours.

Then we also work with countries that we are operating with within the Africa Free Trade Area and the African Union, but it's not a blanket approach. It is on a case-by-case basis, security, and other economic dimensions. Also, the BRICS countries fall within that category because of the developmental and co-operative aspects of bilateral agreements with some of the countries in the BRICS grouping.

The European Union, because of the huge number of tourism investments that we receive, is also engaging them on a reciprocal basis, including G20 countries. So, it's a wide variety of issues, a compendium that is being looked into when the issue of visa waiving is being considered. Thank you.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: House Chairperson, good afternoon, Minister, or is it good evening already? I'm not quite sure. Minister, beyond meetings and ongoing engagements, what tangible improvement has your diplomacy secured for ordinary South Africans, South African passport holders seeking visa-free access to these countries? Thank you, Chair.

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The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Those meetings are not just mere meetings. They produce tangible outcomes, which bring foreign direct investment into our country and help with the diversification in our economy. As I have already pointed out, when we were dealing with the issue of diversification, you can see the visits and the engagements with the United Kingdom, with the European Union, you can see it with the number of vehicles from South Africa, a record 400 and something thousand that went into the European Union, the UK and other countries. But also, with regard to the agricultural products that we have now secured, including some of the products from our country on a zero-tariff basis into China, the securing of a market into India, and Southeast Asia, all this did not happen naturally or by osmosis.

It was because of these meetings and the engagements that we were involved in with the head of states and the other ministers, including the Africa free trade area, which is now one of the biggest markets for South African products. As I've said, 50% of our agricultural products now go into the African market. So those summits, those meetings have produced this, which is tangible.

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You can see it on the factory floor. You can see it in the farming areas of the Western Cape, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, North West and Free State, where people farm for exports. It's just that sometimes they may not be aware that as we go around the globe having these agreements, it impacts them directly, their families, where the food of their families will come from, where the money to pay for the school fees will come from.

It's because of the work that we are doing for the farmers of this country, miners, mining companies of this country, pharmaceutical companies of this country, and various sectors of South Africa. The work that the South African government is doing for them to find markets is immeasurable. The President's annual foreign direct investment, the investment conference that now achieves almost a trillion rands in foreign direct investment is also another very good flagship project, which you can count on the various towns of our country where the investment is happening, including in Atlantis, in the Western Cape, in Mpumalanga the fresh produce market, in Nkomazi, as she asked me from Mpumalanga. That is a tangible work of us, of those meetings, and they should not

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just be called mere meetings because they produce real work, tangible, and can be felt in the households of our country.

Mr M K MONTWEDI: Chairperson and Minister, regarding the last Question 146, before we went for the break, the Minister is not entirely correct, and I think the Minister must stick to what he may know best. As much as alternative markets are being opened after the African Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA, issue, the beef export to China remains a challenge and under threat as a result of failure by South Africa to put proper traceability systems in place from farm to fork, with China not willing to overlook that, and the mess caused by the former delinquent DA Minister of Agriculture with the DA's man-made foot and mouth disease, FMD, crisis.

Given your reply, Minister, I notice that South Africa lags behind comparable emerging economies in securing reciprocal visa waivers. What specific obstacles, political, administrative or diplomatic has your department formally recorded as a primary reason for the failure to conclude such agreements with BRICS partners and the European Union and what measurable corrective actions in terms of timelines, negotiating milestones and responsible officials have been

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implemented since January 2025 to address this obstacle, Minister? Thank you very much, ...

Sepedi:

... ke botšiša dipotšišo tše dintši. Ke a leboga.

English:

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: With regard to that first point of China, I was indeed correct. There is an agreement in principle with China with regard to the exports of the South African beef into the Chinese market. The FMD issue is a matter arising that when there is FMD, there are conditions that we need to meet as a country, even ourselves when we import meat from any country that must meet certain obligations and conditions.

Mr M K MONTWEDI: The Minister must not misquote what I said, please.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: He said I am incorrect with regard to the first answer, and I am now clarifying that indeed I was correct. There is an

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agreement in principle in terms of the export, and the FMD issue is a matter arising that the government is dealing with.

Indeed, there are challenges and there were challenges of FMD that have now arisen, which makes it difficult for us to export our beef into the Chinese market. But once the issue is resolved, the conditions will be lifted and we will continue to operate within the agreement that is there, that is in principle.

Regarding the second issue of the waiver agreements, as he has already said, it is a reciprocal issue and there are security dimensions that we have to look into. It is not free for all and free for every country that we want reciprocal visa arrangements with because of those security dimensions. So, we continue to deal with it on a case-by-case basis. Thank you.

Question 156:

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Chairperson, since joining the Southern African Development Community, SADC, in 1994, the Republic of South Africa has consistently deployed efforts within the region to strengthen co-operation and address tensions as they arise. South Africa

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has served as the interim chair of SADC since November 2025 and, subsequently, as a full chair from August 2026. South Africa is taking up this responsibility at a time when geopolitical tensions have heightened competition over critical minerals, resources, trade routes and policy choices.

As part of its interim chairship of SADC, South Africa facilitated regional discussions on the impact of evolving global geopolitical developments, culminating in a retreat of SADC foreign Ministers in May 2026. This, it should be noted, is the first time that such a Ministers' retreat has been convened since 1994.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen regional solidarity, enhancing policy coherence and institutional effectiveness, deepening co-operation and accelerating collective responses to emerging global challenges. They further agreed that the retreat's outcome should serve as a roadmap for building a more resilient, self-sustaining and competitive SADC region through improved implementation, accountability and regional co-ordination.

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It should be noted that the SADC Secretariat has developed an implementation plan and roadmap that translates the resolutions of the SADC Ministers of Foreign Affairs Retreat into a structured five-year regional programme. It responds to geopolitical uncertainty, economic fragmentation, climate change, debt pressures, food and energy insecurity, supply chain disruptions and the structural dependency of member states on imported energy fertilisers and manufactured goods.

The plan converts the Skukuza Outcome Statement into 25 high-level priority actions, organised as controlled work packages with defined outputs, milestones, responsibilities, directories, institutional approval, routes and performance indicators.

At the 46th Ordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, held on 17 August 2026 and chaired by His Excellency the President, Mr Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, the summit noted the evolving global geopolitical and economic landscape, and urged member states to leverage emerging opportunities to deepen regional integration, strengthen trade and investment, mobilise domestic resources and build

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collective resilience to advance sustainable development and regional agenda. Thank you.

Adv Inkosi M NONKONYANA: Chairperson, to the Minister: Thank you Comrade Minister, for your elaborate reply. It is gratifying that the progressive government led by the ANC is doing what you have reported to us.

Now, the concern that we have, as the ANC deployed here, is that there have been some civilian protests against illegal foreign nationals that have been branded as xenophobic attacks. As ANC deployees, we appreciate the steps taken by our government in addressing the matter.

How did your department explain our position in both SADC and the African continent in this regard? Is there any co-operation of your counterparts in addressing this matter to promote peaceful co-existence for development of both the SADC regions and our continent, Africa? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Chair, we have recalled the resolutions of the African Union of 2015, which is called the Johannesburg Declaration. This

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called for a continent-wide dialogue or conference on migration to deal with the root causes of the challenges, the pull and push factors, all the issues related to climate change, economic growth and job creation, that have an impact and that results in migration in the continent.

There's also been recent statistics that are coming through the migration platforms of the African Union, AU, including the African Peer Review Mechanism, that indicates that in the African continent and other research platforms, about 45% of the people in the continent live outside their countries and not out of necessity, but for various reasons and factors.

These factors need to be factored in into any debate on migration. Instead of just putting one country, like South Africa, on the dock, where we are supposed to defend ourselves, we need to have a wide-ranging discussion that responds to the push and pull factors, economic factors and job creation, so that people find jobs where they are, the economies of such a country in the continent growing and South Africa playing its role in terms of being one of the most industrialised countries in the continent with the African

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Continental Free Trade Area, AfCFTA, and into regional integration.

The SADC region has been one of the most helpful in this debate because they saw this as a domestic matter, as a matter of engagement amongst ourselves to deal with this pull and push factors, and to respond comprehensively to the challenges related to migration. Thank you.

Mr O J MOKAE: Good evening hon House Chair Radebe, colleagues on the platform and hon Minister Ronald Lamola.

Minister, does your department truly believe that it can deepen material independence and the rule of law within the SADC region without demanding political accountability from our neighbours? Or are you simply too afraid to name the problem for fear of offending our fellow SADC leaders? Instead, you choose to stand here with a straight face preaching shared railways, power grids and industrial corridors when the courts are compromised in Mozambique, treasure is looted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC, and the police are partisan in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Thank you, hon House Chair Radebe.

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The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: House Chair, South Africa is not a police officer of the SADC region. Countries in the region have got their own sovereign laws that they follow, that they must account to with their own platforms and constitutions. It is when such issues have been elevated to the regional body, like SADC or the AU, where South Africa then participates like all member states of SADC or of the AU in dealing with such issues.

As the current chair of SADC, we deal with all issues, there is no holy cow. These are issues of democracy, regional integration, trade within the region, etc. These are very important in driving factors of economic growth in terms of job creation, and in terms of responding to and planning for issues related to climate change and disasters.

South Africa engages all issues at a SADC level. We are not afraid of any issue. If you look into the outcomes of the summit, all matters are ventilated in that platform. That is what we seek and continue to do. Thank you.

Mr M M MAMPURU: Greetings to the Chair and Minister. Minister, you almost responded to my question when you addressed the

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question by the hon Inkosi Nonkonyana. However, Minister, I will pose my questions.

Minister, following the engagement with the SADC member states and other African countries, has your department mapped a clear and time-bound strategy to strengthen regional co-operation and address persistent political, economic and security tensions? If not, why?

If yes, what are the relevant details, including specific commitments made, countries involved and measures being implemented to advance the South African leadership role in the SADC and AU? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Chair, as colleagues will have realised, prior to the AU meeting mid-term in Addis Ababa, which happened last month, South Africa was in the process of being isolated. However, the situation has turned around. South Africa is now part of the African continent countries that are in the process of finding a long-lasting, durable solution in relation to the migration challenges facing the continent, not just South Africa. Its impact affects everyone, as I said earlier on.

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The fact that we have now hosted SADC countries, who also want to share with us this responsibility of engaging with regards to the free movement of people and goods, regional integration, trade within the SADC region that must be expanded, including co-operation on issues of critical minerals beneficiation, is a clear sign of South Africa taking initiatives and leadership in the SADC region and the African continent on various issues that have an impact on migration, security and political situations.

It’s also a clear sign, because you will remember that the issue of critical minerals was on top of the agenda of South Africa’s G20 Presidency. It’s now an issue that the SADC countries are taking forward in terms of beneficiation within their own borders. If you go to Zimbabwe, you can see it in action. The DRC is following and there is clear co-operation that is emerging so that we can beneficiate at source, we can work together, including on the Southern African Power Pool.

This must enable us to power the beneficiation, the industrialisation of SADC, including the critical infrastructure that we need. Some of them include the North-South Corridor, which includes the One-Stop Border Post of

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Musina, Limpopo and the other border posts that are very important to link and enable economic integration within the SADC region. Thank you.

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Chair, I have to end our night with, hopefully, a difficult one.

Minister, following the hon Mokae, you know there's an Afrikaans saying ...

Afrikaans:
Meng jou met die semels, dan vreet die varke jou op.

English:
In English, I would say, it's called, if you associate with the bad guys, you probably will, or when mixed with the bad guys, you probably will be associated with them.

You speak of bolstering regional co-operation and strategic reconfiguration with several SADC member states, but some of them continue to face serious governance, human rights and democratic deficits. How does South Africa reconcile calls for this deeper integration with the failure to hold those

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partners accountable while moving away from democratic western relations where they do keep themselves accountable? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION: Hon House Chair, South Africa has already provided leadership domestically. When the ANC lost the 50% majority, it accepted the outcomes of the elections and said let's all work together. That's why we have 10 parties in the Government of National Unity, GNU, in South Africa within the Constitution of the country. This is the first sign of a bold leadership by South Africa, the ANC and all the parties that joined hands to form the GNU.

This is an example that we carry across the region and continent. Even the world was in awe because in some of the most advanced democracies, they don't have such quick solutions when there is an impasse after elections. This is a sign of a maturing democracy, which is exemplary to everyone across the globe. South Africa always works within the boundaries of the multilateral institutions, including at the SADC level, as I've already said.

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Countries have their own domestic laws that allow and enable them to deal with disputes and challenges on the outcomes of elections. When these issues end up at the multilateral platforms of SADC and the AU, South Africa is able to make its own inputs in favour of supporting democracy, the rule of law and respect of a fair democratic process in any member states of SADC or the AU. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Minister. Basically, you have covered all the questions that were posed to you this afternoon.

Firstly, I'd like to thank you and the Minister of Defence for availing yourselves because of the three-run week which is there at the National Assembly, NA, but you decided to honour your invitation to us here in the National Council of Provinces, NCOP. With that done, you have relieved us a lot of stress because we would have had to reschedule this session. So, thanks a million for availing yourself for that.

Thank you also to the delegates for showing that the NCOP is a very agile institution. We decided just on the spot with the procedure that we're not going to postpone the sitting of

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today. Instead, we'll have the break when the Ministers have to go to the other side.

Without further ado, hon delegates, I would like to thank the Ministers, permanent delegates, MECs, all special delegates and SA Local Government Association, Salga, representatives for availing themselves for the sitting. Hon delegates, that concludes the business of the day. The House is adjourned.

Afrikaans:

Baie dankie.

Setswana:

Kea leboga.

IsiZulu:

Ngiyabonga.

IsiXhosa:

Enkosi.

Business of the day concluded.

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The Council adjourned at 18:34.

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