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PROCEEDINGS OF VIRTUAL MINI PLENARY SESSION

Members of the mini plenary session met on the virtual platform at 10:00.

The House Chairperson Mr C T Frolick took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

VIRTUAL SITTING

(Announcement)

The House Chairperson Mr C T Frolick announced that the virtual mini plenary sitting constituted a meeting of the National Assembly.

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON MINERAL AND
PETROLEUM RESOURCES ON OVERSIGHT VISIT TO EASTERN CAPE AND
KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCES FROM 27 TO 31 JANUARY 2026**

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Mr M G MAHLAULE: House Chairperson, I rise to present the report of the Portfolio Committee on Mineral and Petroleum Resources on its oversight visit to the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal undertaken from 27 to 31 January 2026. This visit is part of our duty to ensure that government policies are effectively implemented, regulatory bodies function well, and that South Africa's mineral and petroleum resources significantly contribute to economic growth, job creation, and community development. During our visit, we engaged with the department, mining companies, traditional leaders, communities, Transnet, the Richards Bay Coal Terminal, and the Central Energy Fund.

We also visited areas impacted by illegal mining and key energy infrastructure. Both these provinces have rich mineral resources that can drive economic growth and create jobs. The Eastern Cape offers opportunities in industrial minerals and exploration projects, while KwaZulu-Natal is expanding its mining activities, particularly in coal, heavy mineral sands, and emerging lithium and iron ore opportunities. Currently, the sector employs around 12 000 workers, with the potential to create thousands more in the future. This growth must be accompanied by genuine transformation, ensuring that historically disadvantaged South Africans, women, youth, and host communities participate

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meaningfully in ownership, management and the broader mineral value chain.

However, we also identified several urgent challenges that must be addressed to unlock this potential. One major concern is the widespread issue of illegal sand mining. We learned that illegal mining is rampant in both provinces, leading to environmental damage, loss of state revenue, infrastructure harm, and serious safety risks for communities. Our visit to the Valley of a Thousand Hills in KwaZulu-Natal highlighted the severe impact of these activities, including land degradation and hazardous conditions threatening nearby communities. Despite enforcement efforts, illegal operators continue to extract large amounts of sand. The committee believes that combating illegal mining requires more than targeting those physically extracting minerals.

Law enforcement must also focus on the criminal networks that organise and profit from these activities. We are also troubled by the capacity issues within the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources. Regional offices in these two provinces are understaffed and underresourced, which hampers licensing, compliance monitoring, enforcement, and the execution of social and labour plans. Vacant critical positions lead to delays and

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weaken the regulation of the sector. A strong and well-resourced regulator is vital for attracting investment, fighting illegal mining, and ensuring compliance. Social and labour plans remain central instruments of transformation, and their weak enforcement deprives mining communities of the skills, development, local procurement, and infrastructure commitment owed to them.

We also examined concerns about licensing and regulatory processes. Stakeholders pointed out delays caused by fragmented legislation, land ownership disputes, consultation issues, and poor interdepartmental co-ordination. These obstacles create uncertainty for both investors and communities, slowing the growth of the mining sector. Therefore, we recommend improved co-ordination among departments and a review of legislation to minimise duplication and enhance efficiency. Supporting junior miners and promoting transformation remains our priority as a committee. In our discussion with the Richards Bay Coal Terminal and Transnet, we assessed the Quattro Allocation Scheme designed to aid junior and historically disadvantage miners in export markets. Although progress has been made, challenges such as limited export allocations and barriers to market access persist. I will allow other members to expand on this. Thank you. [Time expired.]

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Declaration(s) of vote:

Mr L D SELEPE: House Chairperson, the MK Party notes the adoption of this oversight report. However, we are compelled to state that the observations contained in the report are far more alarming than the recommendations that flow from them. The report paints a disturbing picture of a state that is steadily losing control over the regulation of the mining sector. In both Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, the committee encountered widespread illegal sand mining. Rivers are being degraded, infrastructure is being damaged, communities are being exposed to danger, and valuable mineral resources are being extracted with little regard for the law.

In some areas, these activities reported occurred openly and repeatedly despite the authorities being fully aware of their existence. The question must, therefore, be asked: if the government knows where these illegal operations are taking place, why do they continue unabated? The report further reveals that the department itself lacks the capacity to perform its core function. Critical vacancies remain unfilled, regional offices are understaffed, compliance monitoring is inadequate, and enforcement is weak. In KwaZulu-Natal, the committee heard that more than a quarter of the department workforce has been lost over time. A regulator that lacks inspectors, investigators, and

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technical personnel cannot regulate. It can only observe while the evaluation continues. The committee also heard concerns regarding the governance of community trusts, and whether the mining communities are receiving the benefits that rightfully belong to them. Decades after the promise of inclusive development was made, communities continue to sit on top of the mineral wealth while remaining trapped in poverty.

The observation concerning junior miners is equally troubling. Instead of creating opportunities for emerging participants in the sector, existing arrangements continue to favour the established interest. Transformation is being spoken about, but it is not being experienced by those seeking entry into the industry. The report also highlights the strategic vulnerability related to the fuel infrastructure and energy security. There are no mining operations. This speaks directly to the country's economy, resilience, and national preparedness. While the observations are serious, the recommendations do not adequately measure the scale of the problems identified. The report largely calls for the department to strengthen its capacity, improve co-ordination, fill vacancies, engage stakeholders, and enhance monitoring. As I'm closing, the MK Party believes that oversight must be more than merely recording problems. It must compel action. We, therefore, call for time-bound implementation and

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addressing. In closing, people need to register to vote for the right government. The MK Party will be able to address this incompetence that the department is doing in our country. People should vote for the MK Party on 4 November.

IsiZulu:

Gwaza Mkhonto!

Mr M KHOZA: Hon House Chairperson, on behalf of the hon Ntlangwini, it is Muzi Khoza that will be presenting the declaration.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Please proceed hon member.

Mr M KHOZA: Hon House Chairperson, this oversight visit was specifically focused on illegal sand mining both in the Eastern Cape and in KwaZulu-Natal. Both these provinces are not traditionally mining provinces. However, there is a growing interest in mining in both provinces.

The visit further highlighted that there are a number of mining exploration on potential sites in these provinces of the Eastern Cape specifically far beyond just sand mining.

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Hon House Chairperson, in the Eastern Cape specifically, perhaps due to lack of mining experience in that province we found that the mining licence operations were quite fragmented and that there were a lot of issues the community have raised.

In relation to the question of illegal sand mining, we find that the department is unable to make a distinction between sand mining for immediate construction needs of residents. Which involve residents mining sand the same way they have done for generations and illegal sand mining for commercial purposes.

We are of the firm view as the EFF that commercial exploration of our sand resources must be strictly regulated. However, we cannot stop residents from using sand for their own immediate needs.

Hon House Chairperson, the country is now under siege from those fighting African immigrants. In the Eastern Cape we found that there are a lot of illegal Chinese operations focused on sand mining. We visited one of them which is Loyt Bricks where there were allegations of illegal sand mining. The mine is owned by the Chinese. It was alleged that brickworks operated without clear evidence of valid mining rights or permit in terms of the Mining and Petroleum Resource Development Act. The regulatory enforcement regime is very weak, hon House Chairperson, in both

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these provinces, allowing criminal enterprises to mushroom which this House must know. What is happening at The Valley of a Thousand Hills for instances, poses serious safety environmental and socioeconomic risks. Mining occurs predominantly at night resulting in land degradation, hazardous conditions and threats to public safety particularly near roads used for school children.

The EFF is in support of the recommendations of this report and we say we need stringent measures that must be placed to ensure that the department is able to enforce its own regulatory mechanism. Thank you very much, hon House Chairperson.

Mr A K NGOBESE: Good morning, hon House Chairperson and good morning to hon members. The IFP notes the report on the oversight visit in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal which exposed serious challenges confronting the mineral resources sector particularly the scourge of illegal and mining regulatory weaknesses and failures in community beneficiation. The findings paint a troubling picture of environmental degrading, a loss of state revenue, threats to public safety and exploitation of vulnerable communities.

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We are especially concerned by the report of organised illegal mining operations that continue to operate within apparent impunity while damaging critical infrastructure and natural ecosystems.

We further note the severe capacity constraints within the department which undermine effective licencing, compliance monitoring and enforcement. Economic growth and job creation cannot be realised when the state lacks the capacity to uphold the law.

The IFP a stronger action illegal mining syndicates, greater transparency in community trust and meaningful beneficiation that ensures mining wealth and uplift local community rather than a connected few. I thank you, hon House Chairperson and hon colleagues.

Ms S M PETERS: Good morning, hon House Chairperson. It is the hon Peters on behalf of the hon Mathopa.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): You may proceed, hon member.

Ms S M PETERS: Thank you.

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The PA rises in support of the Portfolio Committee on Mineral and Petroleum Resources oversight report following its visits to the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal from 27 to 31 January 2026. The committee's findings are unambiguous. Illegal sand mining has become a serious national threat. It is destroying river systems, damaging critical infrastructure and enriching criminal networks. While weak enforcement allows these activities to continue unchecked. The lack of co-ordination, delays in decision-making and limited monitoring capacity have severely weakened the regulatory environment.

At ... [Inaudible.] ... the committee has found out that the state has inherited significant environmental liabilities without a long-term operational strategy.

At Richards Bay Minerals, communities expressed deep concerns about governance, transparency and whether mining trust benefits are reaching those they are intended to serve.

At Transnet's Island View Precinct, delays in infrastructure upgrades continue to threaten energy security and undermine investor confidence.

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Hon House Chairperson, the PA believes that South Africa's mineral wealth must benefit the people who have historically been excluded from it. Communities living where extraction takes place cannot remain spectators while others profit from their resources. Licencing conditions must require measurable, transparent and enforceable community benefits. If mining applicants cannot demonstrate how communities will genuinely benefit, they should not receive licences. The era of extraction without accountability must come to an end.

We support this report because it exposes the gaps that demand urgent attention. However, support for the report must translate into decisive action to strengthen enforcement, protect our environment and ensure that the wealth beneath our soil finally serves the people above it. I thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, before I call the next speaker, may I request political parties making changes to the speakers list to communicate that to the National Assembly, NA, table. For the hon Mathopa for instance is on the platform. When your name appears on the speakers list you must participate. Unless we are informed prior to that that you are no longer participating. This will just ensure that we flow with the

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debate and we call members who will participate. If the Whips can just pay attention to that please.

The next speaker is the hon Beesley.

Mr A D BEESLEY: Hon House Chairperson, ActionSA notes a reported 8,2% year-on-year increase in mining output. However, this growth is not a result of effective government support or competent administration, rather it is a sphere despite persisting regularity failures, infrastructure, constraints and weakened enforcement by the state.

Indeed, while government celebrates growth and the formal mining sector it will be useful to know how much illegal mining activity is growing alongside it. The spinning of this oversight report suggest that illegal extraction continues to flourish with little consequences.

The committee's observation regarding illegal sand mining in both the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are particularly concerning.

In The Valley of the Thousand Hills, illegal mining operations reportedly occur under a cover of darkness causing environmental degradation, damaging infrastructure and creating serious safety

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risks for nearby communities including that of school children. This is a clear indication that regularity enforcement is failing.

ActionSA is equally concerned by the ongoing tax disputes between PetroSA and SA Revenue Service, Sars. Potential liabilities running into billions of rand, disputes with Sars and mounting debt obligations raise serious questions about governance, financial stability and risk management within the strategic state-owned entity. South Africans cannot be expected to continuously shelve the consequences of poor decision-making and weak oversight.

This report demonstrates that while South African mining sector remains enormously potential. That potential is too often undermined by state incapacity, poor enforcement and governance failures.

ActionSA supports the adoption of the report and calls for urgent action to address these shortcomings. I thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Mr W M THRING: Hon House Chairperson, the ACDP believes that this oversight report presents both the opportunities and challenges

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facing South Africa's mining and energy sectors. While the report highlights significant economic and potential in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal through industrial minerals, heavy mineral sands, lithium and iron ore, it also exposes serious governance, regulatory and enforcement failures that undermine stable development.

Particularly concerning, in the view of the ACDP, is the persistence of illegal sand mining. Evidence from the Valley of a Thousand Hills and several Eastern Cape hotspots demonstrates that illegal mining has evolved into a sophisticated criminal enterprise.

The resulting environmental degradation is a threat to public safety and a loss of state revenue, and it requires a more co-ordinated response. Significant capacity constraints exist within the Department of Mineral And Petroleum Resources. Critical vacancies, licencing backlogs, weak compliance monitoring and inadequate enforcement of social labour plans have created conditions where noncompliance flourishes, while legitimate investors face uncertainty and delays.

The findings relating to Petro-SA and the South African Petroleum Refineries, Sapref, further highlights risk to South Africa's

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energy security. Although plans to restore refining capacity are encouraging, financial liabilities, regulatory disputes and operational uncertainties remain unresolved.

The ACDP therefore calls for three urgent interventions. firstly, the establishment of specialised multi-agency units to combat illegal mining syndicates. Secondly, adequate staffing and resourcing of the Department of Mineral And Petroleum Resources to improve compliance and licencing processes. Thirdly, mandatory independent audits and public reporting of mining trusts to ensure communities benefit from mineral wealth.

As kingdom builders, the ACDP asserts that South Africa's mineral resources can drive growth and job creation, but only if governance, accountability and enforcement become non-negotiable. Thank you, House Chair.

Mr S ZONDI: Hon House Chair, the oversight to the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal was an important fact-finding mission undertaken by the portfolio committee. The committee found a lot of challenges, especially around illegal sand mining in the two provinces.

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Illegal sand mining continues to be a challenge both nationally and regionally, especially because most people do not even know it is legal to mine sand without a valid licence or permit. The matter is further exacerbated by the confusion of the roles of tribal authority councils and the department when it comes to the licencing process, as in many rural areas, residents believe tribal authority land allocations entitle them to mining the allocated lands.

The department should run an awareness campaign on illegal sand mining in the affected areas in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The resolution of the mining licence issue between Lloyd Bricks and the Eastern Cape department following the oversight is a clear sign of the importance of constant oversight by Parliament. The approval and compliance of the Lloyd Bricks Social Labour Plans, SLP, represents a positive step in making sure the company complies with the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, MPRDA. The staffing issues in both the Eastern Cape department and the KwaZulu-Natal department were also noted, with hard-working staff members constantly having to perform dual roles due to chronic understaffing in the department. There is a clear need in both provinces to employ more environmental officers and registry clerks to ensure

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effective functioning of the departments in line with their legislative mandate.

The illegal sand mining in the Valley of a Thousand Hills in eThekweni remains a challenge. A challenge so bravely confronted by the dedicated councillors, councillor Mxolisi Khubisa and councillor Jenni Black, along with the member of the provincial legislature, Hannah Winkler. The Valley of a Thousand Hills, or 999 hills, after so much illegal sand mining has taken place, is an important tourism and heritage site.

We call on the department and the South African Police Service, SAPS, to arrest all forms of illegal mining in the area and ensure this important heritage site is reasonably restored to its former glory.

The oversight also took the committee to the South African National Petroleum Company, SANPC, refinery, formerly known as Sapref. The refinery was procured by the Central Energy Fund, CEF, Group for a mere R1, following the refinery being destroyed by flood damage. The refinery, according to the department, will be refurbished and its capacity ramped up to at least 100 000 barrels per day. The outdated process units will be demolished and replaced with modern environmentally compliant

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infrastructure, aligned with international standards. This is, again, according to the department and the CEF group. The question then remains, with what money?

The acquisition should not be judged by the symbolic R1 purchase but should be scrutinised via the lenses of the refinery's decommissioning liability and environmental liabilities. This is quite important, as that area is now known as "cancer valley" because of the years of pollution by this refinery.

At the time of purchase, the decommissioning liabilities stood at R6 billion, with BP and Shell pledging to cover half the amount. The two companies at the time of purchase made no such contribution, leaving the state with a R6 billion rands liability quagmire. The taxpayers are then left with this financial burden brought about by a section 54 subsection 2 approval by the Minister to purchase a failing asset, despite numerous warnings to not do so. The question then remains, when the department talks about restoring and expanding the refinery, with what money?

The DA will actively monitor the progress around the SANPC refinery and enforce accountability by the Minister, the department, and the CEF Group. The overall oversight trip was a

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success, revealing many challenges in the two provinces. House Chairperson, I thank you.

Ms M L MOFOKENG: Hon House Chairperson and hon members, the ANC rises to support this report. The oversight undertaken in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal address communities whose rivers and coastlines are being stripped by unregulated sand mining. It examines strategic energy assets on which the country's fuel security depends.

As a country we have witnessed firsthand the importance of security of supply and co-ordination in times of global geopolitical uncertainty. The National Development Plan envisages a mining sector that is productive and socially accountable. What this committee found requires us to be honest about the distance still to be travelled.

The position that we take as the ANC is clear. Enforcement of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act must reach beyond the arrest of individual diggers to the prosecution of the syndicates and intermediaries who profit. To arrest the most desperate participant while the organised beneficiaries continue without a trace is not enforcement. The department cannot enforce what is no longer there to monitor. The KwaZulu-Natal regional

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office has lost more than a quarter of its workforce through departmental measures and the National Treasury moratorium on filling posts.

In contrast, the Eastern Cape office carries vacancies across functions central to processing applications and conducting inspections. We acknowledge the fiscal constraints behind the moratorium. Still, a regulator stripped of inspectors cannot give effect to the law, protect the environment or unlock the employment that the province's lithium, iron ore and heavy mineral prospects promise.

The committee is correct to require a province-by-province account of capacity. The licencing regime remains fragmented across the MPRDA, the National Environmental Management Act and the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act, with poor co-ordination between the department, co-operative governance and land reform.

The ANC supports aligning this legislation with a permanent intergovernmental co-ordination mechanism, but alignment must not become a euphemism for lowering environmental or consultative standards. The acquisition of Sapref refinery by the Central Energy Fund in May 2024 was a deliberate state act to retain

refining capacity that the market had abandoned. The objective is to restore the facility to 100 000 barrels per day with a feasibility study examining a longer-term scale in 400 000 barrels per day, using existing Single Buoy Mooring, SMB.

The ANC supports this strategy and the call for a phased roadmap with milestones, finding mechanisms and a clear treatment of the inherited environmental liabilities. Since the public cannot bear open-ended exposure without a costed plan, the Island View Precinct shares a related concern. Its very certainty to the national fuel supply makes it a single point of failure, and the engagement on the Minister of Transport's recent directive must be resolved with that vulnerability in view.

The report we are referring to supports the ANC, as it does precisely what the system of oversight is intended to do. It names the failure, ensuring accountability becomes central to governance and is a central point in the construction of a capable, ethical and developmental state. It ties each to a remedy with a deadline. Actionable deadlines and tasks must accompany every identification. It keeps the affected communities at the centre.

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This House exists to serve the people. The people must be at the centre of every decision that is taken and every action point that is considered. As the Freedom Charter records, the people shall share in the country's wealth, and the ANC will hold the executive to each recommendation within the timeframe set. The ANC supports this report. Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON MINERAL AND
PETROLEUM RESOURCES ON OVERSIGHT VISIT TO NORTHERN CAPE ON 10
MARCH 2026**

Mr M G MAHLAULE: House Chair, this oversight visit was conducted in response to one of the most tragic mining incidents our country has experienced in recent years. On 17 February 2026, a mud rash at the Du Toitspan Joint Shaft of Ekapa Mine trapped five mine workers underground, setting in motion a complex and difficult rescue and recovery operation.

The committee deemed it necessary to intervene urgently, not only because lives had been lost, but because the incident raised broader questions regarding mine safety, regulatory oversight, worker protection, emergency preparedness, and the responsibilities of mining companies operating under financial distress.

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During the visit, the committee met with Ekapa Mine Management, Mine Rescue Services, the department, and Mine and Health Safety Inspectorate and organised labour. This engagement provided the committee with a comprehensive understanding of the events leading to the disaster, the challenges experienced during rescue operations and the concerns of workers and affected families.

Hon members, allow me first to express on behalf of the committee, our deepest condolences to the families, colleagues, and loved ones of the five mine workers who lost their lives in this tragedy. No report, recommendation, or intervention can undo the pain and loss suffered by these families. However, we owe it to them to ensure that every lesson is learned and that every possible measure is taken to prevent similar incidents in the future.

True transformation of the mining industry must begin with the transformation of its safety culture in which the lives of mine workers are valued above production targets. The committee also wishes to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Mine Rescue Services and all personnel involved in the recovery operations. Working under extreme hazardous and uncertain underground conditions, they demonstrated professionalism, courage, and

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commitment in carrying out a difficult and emotionally demanding task.

The committee was equally concerned by the evidence relating to the financial conditions of the mine. The incident occurred against the backdrop of a significant financial distress, labour instability, and ongoing restructuring measures. Organised labour raised concerns regarding layoffs, salary reduction, unpaid salaries, limited access to Unemployed Insurance Fund, UIF, benefits, retrenchments, and inadequate consultation processes.

These concerns led the committee to question whether prolonged financial strain may have indirectly affected safety conditions and operational resilience. The committee further expressed concern regarding the timing of the liquidation proceedings initiated shortly after the incident. Workers and their families must not become the unintended victims of corporate financial difficulties.

Their salaries, benefits, pensions, and legal rights must be protected throughout any liquidation or business rescue processes. Transformation also demands economic justice for workers. A sector that cannot protect the wages, benefits, and

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dignity of its most vulnerable employees cannot claim to be transformed.

The committee's oversight visit also highlighted an important policy issue that extends beyond Ekapa Mine. South Africa's mining industry contains many operations that inherit historical workings, legacy infrastructure, and geological risk from previous owners. The committee believes that stronger due diligence, improved transfer of technical knowledge, and enhanced accountability mechanisms are necessary when mining rights are transferred between operators.

The principle must be clear. Historical risk cannot simply disappear when ownership changes. Transformation of ownership must be matched by transformation of responsibility.

Empowerment transactions should never become vehicles for transferring liabilities to new entrance workers or surrounding communities. The committee firmly believes that the greatest tribute we can pay to the workers who lost their lives is to ensure that this tragedy leads to meaningful change. The mining sector remains a critical pillar of our economy, but economic activity can never come at the expense of a worker's safety and

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human dignity. Other members will expand on our visit. Thank you very much.

Mr M MANYI: Hon Chair, the MK Party rises to reflect on the report on the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Committee on its oversight visit in the Northern Cape following the tragic mud rush disaster at Ekapa Mines operation.

First and foremost, we extend our sincere condolences to the families, colleagues, and communities of the five mine workers who lost their lives. Their deaths are not mere statistics. They are painful reminder that behind every failure of mine safety, our workers will leave their homes expecting to return alive.

The most troubling aspect of this report lies in this observation. The committee found itself confronted with serious concerns relating to historical underground workings, their water ingress risks, geological uncertainties, inherited liabilities from previous mining operators, and the inadequacy of risk management systems. These are not minor operational matters. They go to the very heart of the mine health and safety.

The report further raises concerns regarding whether sufficient due diligence was undertaken through successive ownership changes

of the mine and whether all known and foreseeable risks were properly identified and managed. What makes these observations particularly alarming is that they did not emerge before the tragedy. They emerged after the five workers had already lost their lives. The report therefore exposes a regulatory system that appears more efficient at investigating disasters than preventing them.

The recommendations of the committee are significant because they implicitly acknowledge that serious questions remain unanswered. The committee recommends a comprehensive compliance audit and investigation into compliance with the Mine Health and Safety Act, enhanced oversight of mines subjected to repeated regulatory directives, and even the possibility of criminal charges should negligence or regulatory breaches be established. These recommendations are noted. However, they raise unavoidable questions.

If such measures are now considered necessary, why were they not implemented before the tragedy occurred? Why must Parliament recommend escalated oversight only after lives have been lost? Why must compliance audits follow fatalities instead of preventing them? Why must criminal accountability be considered only after the grieving families have buried their loved ones?

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The MK Party is particularly concerned that the report focuses extensively on the obligations of the mining company but is less rigorous in interrogating the performance of the regulator itself. We can only hope that this imbalance is not political coverage for Comrade Minister. Oversight must not stop at examining the conduct of the mine. It must also examine whether the department discharged its own responsibilities effectively.

The MK Party believes that the recommendations should include clear timeframes for the completion of investigations, public reporting on findings, accountability measures against any regulatory officials or Minister found wanting, and a broad overview of similar mining operations across the country, where historical workings and water-related risks may pose comparable dangers.

As I close, the deaths of mine at Ekapa must serve as a turning point. Mine workers should never become the price paid for delayed oversight, weak enforcement, or inadequate risk management. The true test of this report will not be on the quality of its observations. It will be whether the recommendations resulted in meaningful accountability and concrete reforms that prevent another family from receiving the

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devastating news that their loved ones will never return from work.

The MK Party government is the only solution. On 4 November, vote for the MK Party. The MK Party rejects these one-sided recommendations. I submit. Thank you, Chair.

Mr M KHOZA: House Chairperson, let us take this opportunity to first greet the EFF's commander-in-chief and president, commissars, fighters, ground forces, our people in Africa, and the diaspora.

The EFF formed part of this parliamentary delegation to the Northern Cape following the mud rush disaster at the Ekapa Diamond Mine in February this year, which led to the death of about five miners. The most tragic observation made from the presentation by the Mines Rescue Services and the department was that, for quite some time, it had been a known fact by everyone that the mine had problems with water management, even as they said that these concerns were not of the magnitude experienced by the mine. But the reality is that everyone knew that there was a problem in that mine relating to water management, which could potentially cause disaster as it did, leading to the death of five human beings. The mine has always been a disaster waiting to

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happen. As indicated by the labour union during the oversight visit, the mine had experienced ongoing safety issues over several years, including fatalities in 2023 and 2024, linked to the fall of the ground incident and alleged non-compliance with safety procedures. The department, the mine, and everyone else involved did nothing to ensure the safety of those working in the mine.

Most concerning from this visit is that the Mine Rescue Services, Ekapa Mine Management, and the department were unable to determine the source of the water despite the presence of technical expertise within the mine. The large amount of water and uncertainty on its origin raise concerns about the limitations of the current hydrological conditions of the area and future mine operations. Up until we left the oversight, there was no conclusive indication of what caused the disaster. This is unacceptable at this level, and the department cannot leave this hanging. The country, and most importantly, the families need to know what caused the death of their loved ones.

We support the recommendations of the report for an independent multidisciplinary investigation into the disaster at the mine. Similarly, we support the proposal to conduct an independent compliance audit at the mine, which audit must also determine if

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the regulatory compliance mechanisms are sufficient and adhered to, and bring those who fail to do their job to account.

We want to take this opportunity to express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the departed. The EFF is not going to rest until all those responsible are brought to book. We support the report, House Chairperson. Thank you. [Time expired.]

Mr S H M VAN WYK: Greetings, House Chairperson, and greetings to all the members on the platform. The PA notes that the report of the Portfolio Committee on Mineral and Petroleum Resources on its oversight visit to Ekapa Diamond Mine in Kimberley on 10 March 2026, where five mine workers were trapped underground, one recovered, and four families left in agonizing uncertainty.

The PA supports this report, but our support comes with a firm expectation of action and accountability, and those responsible must be held to account.

The PA therefore calls for a full independent investigation into the mud rush disaster, a worker-centred rescue and recovery plan with proper support for the families, a suspension of liquidation processes until the workers' rights, benefits, and compensation are secured, as well as stronger enforcement of mine safety

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regulations and real consequences for negligence and a long-term economic plan for Kimberley to ensure communities are not abandoned when mining houses collapse.

South Africa cannot continue to be a country where workers die underground while companies file paperwork above ground. Our people deserve dignity, transparency, and protection. May the souls of these mine workers rest in peace. I thank you, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon member. Hon Ngobese, my apologies. I inadvertently missed you. So, excuse me ... [Interjections.]

Mr S H M VAN WYK: And you put me under pressure with that one, Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Excuse me!

Mr S H M VAN WYK: And you put me under pressure with that one, Chairperson, because you called my name out of the blue.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): You must be ready if you are on the speakers' list, you can be called anytime. We try to follow the sequence, hon member. But also, my apologies if you

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feel that you have been caught unaware by two minutes. The hon Ngobese!

Mr A K NGOBESE: Hon Chair, let me greet members on the virtual platform. The IFP extends condolences to the families and community affected by the tragic loss of mine workers at Ekapa Mine. This incident serves as a stark reminder that workers' safety must remain the foremost priority within the South African mining sector.

The findings of this report raise concerns regarding safety, risk management, and regulatory oversight. We note with concern that despite previous inspections and directives issued, serious shortcomings remained. The reinforcement of the importance of capable oversight, effective enforcement, and ensuring compliance measures are implemented before lives are placed at risk, particularly concerning the challenges faced by workers and their families due to financial stress, including uncertainty regarding employment, salary, and benefits.

We support stronger oversight, accountability, and protection of mine workers. The IFP therefore supports this report and reaffirms that mine workers deserve safe working conditions. Effective oversight, dignity, and wellbeing protected through

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accountable governance and consequence management is important. I thank you, hon Chair and hon members.

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Hon House Chair, the symbolic importance of this very regrettable disaster is even more distinct than the actual tragic days of the five persons. The present economic structure of South Africa as a mining-industrial economy originated in Kimberley during the 1860s, even before there was a place like Kimberley. And in a certain sense, it is symbolic that Ekapa is under economic pressure because diamonds can be manufactured in laboratories much more easily with less danger and with less labour than in deep-level mining. There are still many small-scale mines doing surface work, but the deep-level mines are a different story and are much more dangerous. And importantly, it requires a lot of expertise in geology. Now, generally, Kimberley is in a dry area of the country. For two or three consecutive years, there was above-average rain. And although we do not know where the water came from, we do because it drained a lot. What we do not understand is the mechanisms by which the water drained into the mine and caused such a huge disaster. Now, a decision must be made in this holy city full of holes, just all of it, to get diamonds out of the soil. How are we going forward? Is this going to remain a mining town? It cannot be if the biggest mine is in liquidation. If mining is going to be continued, then the

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understanding of the geology of the whole area must increase substantially. This is a crossroads, and it might be the end of Kimberley, the way it became world-famous, and the way we know it. I thank you.

Mr A D BEESLEY: Chair, I was ready two minutes ago, sorry. ActionSA extends its condolences to the families of the five mine workers who lost their lives at Ekapa Mine. We welcome the successful recovery of their remains and commend the Mine Rescue Services, rescue personnel, and all those who contributed to bringing closure to grieving families. However, this tragedy raises difficult questions about safety, accountability, and the dignity afforded to mine workers and their loved ones.

The committee's findings revealed serious concerns. Despite multiple inspections and regularity directives, a catastrophic mud rush still occurred. This raises legitimate questions about whether compliance systems are generally preventing risk or merely creating the appearance of oversight. Equally concerning are allegations that financial distress, cost-cutting measures, and labour instability may have compromised workers' safety.

ActionSA is also troubled by the liquidation proceedings surrounding the Ekapa Mine. Parliament must ensure that

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liquidation is not used as a shield against accountability, compensation obligations, or the rights of affected workers and their families.

Whilst we welcome the retrieval of the five miners, we must ask an uncomfortable question: Why are the families of Lily Mine victims not enjoying the same dignity? Ten years after three mine workers were trapped underground, their families are still waiting for closure. If the mining industry can mobilise resources and expertise to recover workers at Ekapa, then renewed urgency must be applied to the recovery of the container and the remains of those lost at Lily Mine. Mining companies, regulators, and the government have a duty not only to extract mineral wealth but also to protect the lives and dignity of those who make the wealth possible. I thank you, Chair.

Mr S ZONDI: Chairperson, allow me to express my deepest condolences to the family of the five miners we lost earlier this year at Ekapa Mine. The safety of mineworkers should be the most important consideration for any mining operation. The miners who bravely go underground every day remain the cornerstone of our mining sector.

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They are not shift numbers nor are they expandable factors of production, they are fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers committed to providing a better life for themselves and their families. This oversight was urgently undertaken after a tragic mudslide trapped five miners underground at Ekapa Mine.

The Mines Rescue Services did a stellar job under tough circumstances and it would be amiss not to recognise their brave efforts in the recovery of the trapped bodies. They worked around the clock in long shifts to ensure we don't see another lily mine impasse. The Minerals Council South Africa also played an important role in supporting Ekapa mining in its rescue efforts. The collaboration from the mining industry under these trying circumstances demonstrated what can be achieved if all stakeholders work together.

It is, however, important to ascertain how did this sudden mudslide happen and if it was possible to prevent it. It is important for the future of mining in this country and equally important to bring closure to the affected families. The Mine Health and Safety Inspectorate was aware of a water ingress in this mine. Section 54 and section 55 notices had previously been issued including those related to water management and real-time monitoring. The risks identified were at a smaller scale than

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what would befall this mining operation. However, the relevant question is: Were these directives complied with by Ekapa Mine?

The investigation remains ongoing and it is important not to appropriate blame without the relevant details. This incident however coupled with the section 54 and section 55 notices canvases us to review whether compliance-based systems do actually translate to risk prevention. The nature of hydrogeological assessments done prior to the accident need to be reviewed and hopefully they can pinpoint a plausible source of water that could have led to an influx of such unprecedented amounts.

The Mine Safety Inspectorate within the department remains understaffed and does not have enough inspectors to cover all nine provinces. This issue needs urgent addressing to prevent mining accidents like Ekapa accident. The zero-harm goal set by the Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources will remain an unfulfilled ideal so long as there are insufficient inspectors across the country.

The investigation for the source of the water that caused the mudslide need to be expedited to ensure the same incident does not occur in the future. The Council for Geoscience needs to play

an important role in assessing the pertinent hydrogeological circumstances that may have led to this accident. The mine at the time of the accident was under financial distress.

The investigation must cover the financial aspect and ascertain if cost-cutting measures may have negatively contributed to the safety in the mine. Mining in South Africa, contrary to popular belief, is not a sunset industry. The country has vast common critical minerals that was catalogued with the global mining sector. There is so much value to be extracted from these critical minerals, but this has to be done in a safe manner. The path to change and reform is paved by the sacrifices of many. Today we recognise the contribution of the Ekapa five. May their souls rest in eternal peace. Thank you.

Ms M M SENNE: House Chairperson and the hon members, the ANC rises to support this report and it does so with a heavy heart. Five mineworkers descended the Du Toitspan shaft of the Ekapa Diamond Mine in Kimberley on 17 February 2026 and did not return to their families. A mud rush, a sudden influx of water, mud and debris flooded the underground workings and sealed their escape. We now know that all five have been recovered and that all five are deceased.

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On behalf of the ANC, we extend our condolences to their families, to their colleagues and to the Kimberley community. The deaths are the reason this oversight was undertaken and the measure against which every recommendation must be judged. The ANC commends the Mine Rescue Services which cleared mud and rockfalls under unstable conditions, working extended shifts to bring the deceased to the surface with dignity.

We commend the industry-wide support, including the Minerals Council South Africa's commitment to sustain the operation until all who were trapped were recovered. The committee was nonetheless right to record that this commitment was neither formalised nor budgeted. A pledge for this gravity cannot rest on goodwill alone and the ANC supports the recommendation that the Minister ensure it is reduced to a funded and enforceable undertaking.

The most troubling finding is that the mine, the Mine Rescue Services and the department could not identify the source of the water despite the technical expertise on site. A catastrophe of this scale still occurred. The ANC accepts the conclusion that the committee reached, that the failure was not the absence of systems but their inability to translate compliance into the prevention of high impact risk.

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A directive that is issued but never verified as implemented is a record, not a safeguard. We support the call for an independent, multidisciplinary investigation with the Council for Geoscience. We are at ease that where fault is established, consequence management must follow, including the opening of a criminal case against the mine and its responsible officials. This obliges us to direct hard questions at both the inspectorate and the mine.

Eight inspections and repeated directives ought to have prompted the state to escalate its response well before February. The ANC supports the recommended compliance audit of the section 54 and 55 directives and a mandatory escalated oversight protocol under which a mine with repeated or unresolved directives faces intensified monitoring until compliance is verified nor merely undertaken. Organised labour placed a disturbing pattern before the committee.

Ekapa had been in financial distress since at least September 2025 with layoffs, salary reductions and the restructuring known as Project 20 said to have lengthened working hours and deepened fatigue. The NUMSA, amongst others, asked a question whether cost cutting eroded the conditions that keep miners alive? The ANC will not pre-empt the investigation but it accepts the committee's position that financially distressed mines carry a

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heightened safety risk and it supports the development of a framework for the enhanced oversight of mines in that condition.

The timing of the liquidation compounds the injury. Ekapa resources and Ekapa minerals applied for provisional liquidation on 26 February 2026, nine days after the disaster. The application was granted on 3 March with a return date of 17 April. Workers who laboured in February were reportedly left unpaid while others were placed on unpaid layoffs in 2025 without the documentation needed to claim from the UIF.

We support the recommendations that unpaid salaries be settled, that access to the pension funds and benefits be enabled and protected. This report honours those who have lost their lives by ensuring that their deaths are neither forgotten nor treated as routine. It identifies systematic failures, sets out the corrective measures required and directs specific actions to the Minister within defined timeframes.

In doing so, it affirms Parliament's commitment to accountability, oversight and the prevention of future loss of life. The ANC supports this report. House Chairperson, I thank you.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon member. That concludes the debate and the decision on this report will be taken at the full plenary session of the National Assembly. We shall now proceed to the last order, which is: The Consideration of the report of the Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation on oversight visit to the research and technology infrastructure in the Western Cape.

**CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION - OVERSIGHT VISIT TO RESEARCH
AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE IN WESTERN CAPE**

Ms G MCHUNU: Hon Chairperson, greetings to you and the hon members. The Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation undertook a critical oversight visit to key research and technology infrastructure ... [Interjections.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon member, my apologies. Can you switch off your video feed? The feed is not good. Please. Thank you. You may proceed.

Ms G MCHUNU: Thank you very much. This visit was a pivotal action in fulfilling the committee's constitutional mandate to exercise oversight over the implementation of DSTI policies, programmes

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and investments in the science and technology sector as provided in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Rules of the National Assembly.

The strategic focus of the visit was on national research and technology infrastructure facilities that form the backbone of South Africa's space science and accelerator-based science capabilities. These included the Denel Overberg Test Range Space Science in Hermanus, the Denel Houwteq Assembly, Integration and Test facility, the National Research Foundation, and the iThemba Laboratory for Accelerator-Based Science.

Collectively, this institution represents significant pillars of the country's national system of innovation, contributing to aerospace, nuclear science, satellite engineering, space weather monitoring and medical isotope production. The oversight visit was promised by a prior briefing during the Budget process in 2025, where the DSTI and its entities presented the strategic direction and future plans for space science and accelerator entities - the accelerator space science infrastructure.

The committee sought to directly engage with these entities and observe infrastructure and operations firsthand and assess the

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effectiveness, sustainability and alignment of these investments with South Africa's broader technology and innovation priorities.

The importance of these facilities extended beyond mandated ... [Inaudible.] ... but their immediate research functions. They serve a critical national interest by supporting industrial development, advancing technology transfer and enhancing human capital development in weather monitoring. Earth observation data is vital for disaster management, environmental planning and climate monitoring, while iThemba Labs is a key contributor to nuclear medicine through the production of radioisotopes essential for diagnostic and cancer treatment.

Despite recent investments, the committee noted that significant challenges remain, including infrastructure defects requiring urgent upgrades, governance complexities due to overlapping mandates between civilian and defence entities, building constraints and a pressing need to enhance human capital development and transformation within the sector.

Furthermore, the visit highlighted emerging opportunities for South Africa to revitalise satellite engineering capabilities, develop a domestic space ecosystem and expanding nuclear medicine services regionally. Overall, the oversight visit provided a

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comprehensive platform for parliamentary scrutiny of national science infrastructure and enable the committee to formulate targeted recommendations that seek to strengthen co-ordination, governance, funding and skills development in the strategically important sectors.

This report encapsulates the findings, observations and recommendations arising from the visit, underscoring the imperative of sustainable commitment to protect and expand South Africa's leadership in science, technology and innovation. I therefore present this report to be adopted by this House. Thank you.

Mr T S MJADU: Hon House Chair, hon members, South Africa possesses world-class scientists, engineers and researchers. Yet these professionals are expected to deliver miracles while operating inside institutions crippled by governance failures, funding uncertainty and policy confusion. The GNU speak endless about innovation and fourth industrial revolution while presiding over the gradual decay of strategic national infrastructure.

As things stand, public funds are being invested into facilities whose ownership, governance arrangement, financial obligations and future operation responsibilities remain unresolved. The SA

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National Space Agency, Sansa, is spending taxpayers' money on infrastructure it does not own while Denel remains in financial distress and burdened by uncertainty.

The report indicated that approximately R300 million was spent on the EO-Sat-1 programme without the satellite being delivered. To this day, there has been no consequence management of those responsible. Additionally, Sansa is owed money by Denel while Sansa rents facilities from Denel and funds upgrades to those same facilities. If this is not proof enough that the GNU is the blind leading the blind, then I don't know what it is.

At Daniel Overberg Test Range, the committee found outdated infrastructure and technology that can no longer compete internationally. The estimated cost to restore meaningful launch capabilities stands at approximately R1,2 billion. At iThemba Labs, infrastructure older than 35 years requires urgent modernisation.

Furthermore, millions of rands are needed to prevent the deterioration of facilities that are critical to cancer treatment, nuclear medicine and advanced scientific research. These are the result of years of neglect, poor planning and under-investment.

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As the MKP, we are worried that South Africa continues to spend below the international benchmark on research and development while also claiming that science, innovation and industrialisation are the national priorities. The MK Party calls for a full parliamentary inquiry into the governance arrangement between Sansa, Denel and Otec.

Additionally, we call for an audit of expenditure associated with EO-Sat-1, an urgent national strategy to restore South African technology sovereignty. As the MK Party, we declared that we reject this report. South Africa cannot claim to be a development state while allowing strategic scientific infrastructure to drift into uncertainty. I thank you, hon Chair.

Dr S THEMBEKWAYO: Chairperson, most South African institutions lack the infrastructural capacity to conduct its business and this is a concern considering that our government always advocates for industrialisation, technological independence and economical transformation. This is the case even for the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation where there is inadequate infrastructure, calling for more intervention from government. The government should be investing directly rather than relying on private capital and foreign dependency.

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The Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation conducted an oversight visit to assess the condition, performance and sustainability of national research infrastructure, supported by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation and its entities.

The visit included Denel Overberg Test Range, South African National Space Agency, Sansa, Space Science, Denel Houwteq Assembly, Integration and Test Facility and iThemba Labs. All these institutions in the report faces various challenges that include governance and infrastructural issues and uncertainties around agreements and debt.

Sansa Space Science plays a critical role in space weather monitoring and forecasting but faces funding constraints and infrastructure needs. iThemba Labs is a key facility for accelerator-based science and nuclear medicine but faces funding challenges and governance concerns.

The EFF calls for a full parliamentary investigation into the EOS SAT-1 project, and this is due to the report of the committee disclosing that Sansa paid approximately R300 million for a satellite that was never delivered. The report raises concerns regarding the limited representation of women and historically

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disadvantaged groups in iThemba Labs and the National Research Foundation, NRF. Therefore, the EFF calls for transformation in the sectors.

The report also commends Sansa's satellite capabilities in disaster management, flooding, monitoring, climate change, but critique is levelled against this institution for not working with municipalities to release the data which could help communities to prepare better for disasters. The EFF supports the report. Thank you.

Mr A K NGOBESE: Hon Chairperson, the IFP notes the committee's report on science, technology and innovation and would like to reaffirm its support for technological advancement, as it is closely linked to sustainable development, a key priority of our party. We appreciate the efforts and dedication of those committed to advancing science, technology and innovation and acknowledge the progress that has been made thus far.

However, we would like to highlight some of the concerns raised in the report, including the need to increase investment and strengthen public-private partnership. This is to ensure our long-term competitiveness and technology development. We also

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remain concerned about the persistent challenges relating to representation of historically disadvantaged groups.

This reinforces the IFP's consistent call for greater investment in the education sector, particularly the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Stem, field to address the critical skills shortages. The IFP supports the report and calls for its recommendation to be implemented. Thank you.

Mr E HENDRICKS: Hon Chair, hon members, the PA notes the report of the Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation, on its oversight visit to facilities like Sansa, iThemba Labs, Denel Houwteq Assembly and the Overberg Test Range that exposed a frustrating truth. South Africa has world-class infrastructure without a world-class plan. Let us demystify this for the public.

Nuclear medicine is not about weapons; it is about using safe, advanced technology to diagnose and treat cancer. iThemba Labs is one of the few places in Africa that produces these life-saving medical isotopes. It is a national asset, yet it is underfunded, under pressure and starved of long-term investment. Because of this neglect, our state facilities are increasingly forced to survive on foreign contracts.

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During a visit to the Overberg Test Range, we asked a simple question, for whom are these drones being tested? This raises serious questions about national benefit. Are we using public infrastructure to uplift our own people, or have we just become a service provider for foreign government? Meanwhile, the historical, marginalised and so-called coloured communities of the Western and Northern Cape remain completely excluded from this innovation.

There is no targeted recruitment, no local skills development, and no doors opening for our youth.

Afrikaans:

Ons mense sien elke dag hierdie groot science [wetenskap] geboue, maar hulle kry nooit 'n kans om binne te stap nie. Die kinders van Elsiesrivier, Bonteheuwe, Mitchels Plain, Upington en die platteland hoor van satelites [satelliete] en nuclear medicine [kernkragmedisyne], maar hulle kry nie die training [opleiding] of die jobs [werksgeleenthede] nie. Jy kan nie drones [hommeltuie] vir Singapore toets, terwyl ons eie communities [gemeenskappe] nie eers 'n voet in die deur kry nie.

English:

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Therefore, the PA calls for a comprehensive national innovation strategy, full transparency on all foreign testing contracts, a dedicated national drone policy, a targeted inclusion programme, so that communities left behind for generations can finally benefit from science built on their own soil.

South Africa cannot be a country that hosts innovation without owning it, that tests technology, ... [Time expired.] And I thank you.

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Hon Chair, I must say, this was maybe the most interesting and surprising oversight visits I have been in the short period that I have been in Parliament. It is clear from the outset that most of these facilities were very important in the previous dispensation and were then well funded.

However, after 1994, there must have been some strategic decision that this is a luxury that South Africa cannot really afford or something. Because all these facilities show signs of being run down, of having very dedicated staff doing what they can with what they have. And it is indeed surprising how relevant they can be with what they achieve with the little funding.

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Just consider for a moment that the whole Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, of which this is just one part, has about half the budget of all the Sector Education and Training Authorities, Setas, combined. And then it is clear where you must invest if you want results, and that is not in Setas.

Regarding Denel Houwteq in Grabouw , this was very interesting. We travelled for several kilometres through the Khoisan settlement of Knoflokskraal and then suddenly, this huge building appears, which has been mothballed after 1994, and apparently all employees were laid off immediately. One of the young staff members is an alumnus of the University of Venda who then advanced his studies first at the University of the Witwatersrand and then in France before returning to South Africa. He was surprised to find this 40-year-old technology still being relevant in today's life. This was indeed very interesting and needs more attention. I thank you.

Ms N W A MAZZONE: House Chair, the recent oversight visit to the facilities in the Western Cape for the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, I'm afraid left me with far more questions than answers. It's become increasingly apparent from this visit especially, that there needs to be a clear delineation

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between the responsibilities, objectives, and activities of the DSTI, and in this case, of Denel.

The relationship also appears blurred in that a lack of clarity raises legitimate concerns about governance, accountability, and the potential misuse of scarce public resources. Nowhere was this more evident than our visit to HarTech.

When we walked through HarTech, it felt much less like entering a cutting-edge facility and more like stepping into a Cold War relic from the 1980s. It was as though people had been hurriedly evacuated decades ago, leaving even unfinished cups of coffee on desks. Equipment was just abandoned in the place that it was left. Dust was gathering around remnants of what was clearly a once very ambitious programme.

The reality is that HarTech presents the state with a difficult question. What is the relevance and significance that it can now offer the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, when it is very clear that it is going to be used to prop up a failing state entity like Denel? And it is so clear that Denel is using HarTech, an entity of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation to keep its doors open on this particular issue.

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And quite frankly, a very serious investigation needs to be undertaken by our committee and our department, as to why this is being allowed.

In contrast, we went to the missile testing range, and we saw infrastructure and strategic assets that exist within South Africa and the scientific and technology ecosystem of South Africa that would be the envy of the world.

The value of these facilities creates an obvious risk that DSTI structures are going to be increasingly drawn into supporting objectives and property that belongs to Denel.

Without firm boundaries, I'm incredibly concerned that our department will just be abused by failing state-owned entities.

Science and innovation are too important to South Africa's future to be treated as an extension of any state-owned enterprise. And Parliament must insist on clarity, accountability, and purpose.

Until we receive these answers, and I may add, I have submitted written questions, and they get ignored, and very insubstantial answers are given. Until we receive these answers, many of us

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will remain unconvinced that the current arrangements either serve the taxpayer or, quite frankly, the national interest.

I thank you.

Mr V A NKOSI: Hon House Chairperson, hon members, the ANC hereby express its full support and endorsement on the comprehensive report of the Portfolio Committee on Science, Technology, and Innovation, following the oversight visit conducted to key research and technology infrastructure in the Western Cape from the 26th to the 29th of January 2026.

The ANC acknowledges the critical role that science, technology, and innovation play in advancing South Africa's socioeconomic development. Technologically, sovereignty and positioning as a leading knowledge economy on the African continent.

The committee's visit to strategic national facilities such as Danel Overbeeck Test Range, the South African National Space Agency, Space Science Facility in Hermanus, the Daniel / HarTech Assembly, Integration, and Test facility, and the National Research Foundation's iThemba Laboratory for accelerator-based sciences reflects a strategic commitment to oversight and

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ensuring that public investment and research infrastructure deliver maximum national benefits.

The ANC supports the committee's recognition of this institution as a fundamental to South Africa's ambitions to cultivate a robust space science ecosystem, advance aerospace engineering capabilities, and lead in a nuclear medicine and isotope production critical for healthcare delivery.

We acknowledge the interconnected roles these facilities play in enabling research, industrial development, technology transfer, and human capital development that underpin our country's aspirations towards inclusive and sustainable growth.

In light of the observations regarding the financial instability of the Denel state-owned company and the associated risk to sustainability at the Denel Overbeeck Test Range, the ANC concurs with the committee's call for agent comprehensive financial and governance review and transparent disclosure report on partnership agreements to safeguard these critical capabilities.

The need to modernise outdated infrastructure and develop a time-bound infrastructure upgrade plan comprising all relevant

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stakeholders is imperative to keep pace with global standards and maintain South Africa's competitiveness in this strategic sector.

The ANC also echoes the committee's concern about the governance complexities arising from the dual use nature, the civilian and defence of facilities such as the Denel Overbeeck Test Range and the HarTech assembly integration and the test facility, underscoring the necessity for clear interdepartmental coordination, robust regulatory frameworks, and adherence to international treaties such as the Outer Space Treaty.

We support the proposed amendment across parliamentary committees to address legislative gaps and establish transparent governance mechanisms that promote peaceful use of outer space activities while fostering South Africa's industrial advancement.

With respect to the South African National Space Agency, SANSA, the ANC acclaim its high-impact space weather monitoring, earth observation, data services, postgraduate training, and transformation achievements, including gender parity, and increased representation of Black scientists.

The committee recommendation to expand funding for research and innovation, diversity funding models, and improve national

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communication and collaboration around science, technology and innovation, STI-derived data for disaster management and planning resonate with the ANC's commitment to strengthening science enable societal resilience.

The ANC is mindful of the leadership and governance challenges highlighted in the NRF, and iThemba Labs, alongside the infrastructure funding needs critical for sustaining nuclear science capabilities.

We affirm committee's call for strategic focus on transformation, succession planning, and investment to position South Africa as a regional hub in nuclear medicine research and isotope production.

Finally, the ANC endorses the committee's overarching conclusion that South Africa possesses a strong foundation of science and innovation assets that require integrated strategic governance, adequate resourcing, and modernising regulatory environments to remain globally competitive and technologically sovereign.

The consolidation of these pillars is vital for expanding economic opportunities, technological independence, and national resilience.

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I would like to also address the MKP, to note that innovation isn't driven by political rhetoric. It's driven by multi-decade continuity. And the difference is that the Government of National Unity, GNU, is focused on building structural solution while others are merely spectators.

We affirm our dedication to positioning South Africa at the forefront of the African science and technology innovation through sustained investment, good governance, and inclusive transformation.

The ANC supports this report. I thank you.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary rose at 11:34.