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PROCEEDINGS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

The Council met at 14:03.

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

The Chairperson announced that the hybrid sitting constituted a sitting of the National Council of Provinces.

QUESTIONS – CLUSTER 1C: PEACE AND SECURITY

Question 81:

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Hon Chair and hon members, let me start by sincerely apologising for not being there in person today. The only reason for this was because of an urgent engagement on border management issues and, in fact, I will be able to give some feedback on that in one of the questions that has been asked. So, my sincere apologies and this will be a rare occurrence, I assure you.

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In terms of this question let me indicate that the contemplation of digitisation for this department is not only one of the things we are looking at - it is the central vision that we have for moving Home Affairs forward. The question refers to a range of documents including identity documents, IDs, birth certificates and passports, and then asks about what the plan is for digitising those.

Now, hon delegates will be aware that in the past there has been some digitisation at Home Affairs. If you look at the smart ID card and the passport processing issue, those were digitised about a decade ago and there have been some efficiency gains from that.

There have also been some halting attempts on other areas. The online booking platform is a tool that we need to use and build on, however, the goal here is to go much further. We want to move towards digitisation and automation in the space of applications, adjudications and the issuing of outcomes. In other words, what we have in mind is to use technology to such an extent that someone is able to apply from a smartphone or from laptop and that the process happens within seconds wherever machine learning and digital tools can assist us. Most excitingly, that will even create the possibilities for

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us to enable the delivery of some of these documents right to someone's doorstep rather than having to go to a Home Affairs office.

We believe that this will free up huge capacity within the department. It will enable us to perform keeping in mind the understaffing of Home Affairs, and it will deliver unparalleled convenience to our clients, while also critically securing our system against corruption, which is often reliant on paper-based manual systems where people exploit weaknesses in the process to solicit bribes and engage in other corrupt activities.

So, we are very excited about the possibilities here and indeed it is the central vision we have for transforming Home Affairs into a digital first organisation. Thank you, Chair.

Ms J S MANANISO: Chairperson, let me greet the Minister and welcome his response and taking us through how the department has transformed in terms of digitisation. However, one would want to know how far we are in terms of deploying automations, as you are saying, and digital services because one has noted that most of the things now have been done in terms of ensuring that the system is digitalised.

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Lastly, I want to know, in terms of international or global models that one has been exposed to, can you share with us if you know whether there are some best models that the department could have been exposed to and how soon can we get these models deployed in our services? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, hon Chair and thank you to hon Mananiso. I would say first that the work has not been done; we are not anywhere close to where we need to be on the technical side of things because what we are talking about here goes well beyond the existing process. What we need to do is learn from an organisation like the South African Revenue Service, Sars, where if you recall submitting tax returns was a paper-based manual process up until the late 2000s. What happened at Sars was their ability to replace that system with a risk engine and an online system that we got to know as eFiling where all the uploading of information and all the applications are made without even visiting a Sars office and without filling in a piece of paper. That is certainly not the case here at Home Affairs; we still have far too many pieces of paper and we have reliance on people going to offices even for routine applications and matters.

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What we need to do first is to build that kind of engine. I have said very clearly that we are not asking for billions of rands to buy a Rolls-Royce which will then suddenly be available three or four years from now; what we are seeking to do is build an engine, something you can switch on and show to ourselves and to the country that we can automate these processes. If we can do that then we can go out and motivate for the resources that will be so critical for us to succeed. So, at this stage of the process we are very much moving ahead with planning and putting in place the requirements to build an initial prototype that can do this.

In terms of international examples, I think it is a fantastic question. We must always be open to looking at examples and learning from them. I think at a global level you have a country like Estonia that has made huge gains in terms of e-government and is a world leader. It is a small country but has become a world leader in terms of e-government and digital technologies. They have demonstrated, I think, to the world what can be done.

I think even more inspiring is the example from Kenya where we have recently seen a complete move away from visas with the introduction of what they call Electronic Travel

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Authorisation, eTA, which is a really exciting concept where you can apply online and within a few hours you receive a barcode and a digital document that you can use that in lieu of a visa and travel to Kenya and get your biometrics recorded.

It is an exceptional example. It is a home bred African example of what can be done, and I think that is the way to go for South Africa. We certainly don't have to stand back for any other country; I think we have the potential to become a world leader in this space and that is the vision we are pursuing. Thank you, Chair.

Mr M BILLY: Chairperson, let me first use this opportunity to commend the Minister for the exceptional work that they are doing with the department on this occasion. Minister, it is true that digital transformation is extremely necessary, but it is also true that it does present an opportunity for wrongdoers, those who are involved in cybercrime, to steal people's identities and can also create anxiety for users. Minister, I want to know from you, in your effort to try and embark on this digital transformation, how does the department intend to ensure that this digital transformation is safe and secure and clamp down on identity fraud, whether for people

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who are applying for the first time for IDs, certificates and so on, or for citizens who are applying for reissuing? How can your department ensure that there is less interference in as far as identity theft is concerned? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, I would say firstly that if you want to be anxious about identity theft then the anxiety does not lie with digital transformation, it lies with the system that we currently have. If you talk about having a system that is open and vulnerable to identity theft and other forms of fraud and corruption, then I submit it is the system we have today.

You can only look at some of the recent incidents to see that identity theft remains a serious problem. You can look at research that has shown that especially the green ID book in South Africa is one of the most vulnerable documents to fraud in the whole world, and yet we are still using this booklet at the moment to some extent precisely because we have not fully digitised the smart ID process.

There are still categories of people in our country, including South African citizens, who are unable to obtain a smart ID card even though they should qualify for it. That is entirely

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due to a technical IT problem that has just been dragging on for far too long. So, we remain very vulnerable to identity theft for as long as we have the green ID book, for as long as we have application processes where people can engage in things like photo swapping and of course for as long as we have these manual paper-based systems.

So, yes, there are certainly risks that need to be mitigated on the cyber front, but the truth is that you can't really get a worse situation than the one you have where you are paper-based and manual. So, what we will do to mitigate that risk is learn from the best.

We are approaching this programme in a very collaborative spirit. Just look at what is possible in terms of online banking in South Africa. South Africa is a world leader when it comes to online banking and the security of that system. As I mentioned, you also have Sars which even as a government institution has dealt with many of these issues very effectively.

The way that you prevent cyber threat in this kind of digital world that we are moving towards is by simply making sure that you are open to learning and collaborating from those who have

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gotten it right. We must accept that we don't have all the answers and that is why we are approaching this entire project in a spirit of collaboration, precisely because we want to crackdown on the vulnerabilities that we have in our existing system by building a bulletproof digital automated system. Thank, Chair.

Mrs N N CHIRWA-MPUNGOSE: Minister, one of our crises systemically currently rests on corruption and fraudulent activities that are eminent in the Department of Home Affairs internally where innocent persons are subjected to identity theft. Even after being reported, such incidences receive little to no help at all. A case in point is the one that we reported to you, Minister, on 19 August - Siyamthanda's case who suffered identity theft and was unable to write her matric, was unable to go to university and is unable to vote as a citizen of South Africa. She has been reporting this matter to officials in the department for years without any assistance in sight hence we raised the case in the office of the Minister directly. Her life is dwindled into absolute nothingness.

How then does digitisation in the face on internal rot in the Department of Home Affairs offer us tools that are useful

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enough to confront the corruption that is inside the Home Affairs and done by Home Affairs officials and personnel?
Thank you so much.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, thank you to the hon member for the question. Yes, indeed, we will follow up again on that particular case. Thank you for raising it and coming forward, in fact, thank you to a number of public representatives in this House and in the National Assembly who are also helping to serve their communities by raising individual cases like this.

On a bigger point, that is exactly the motivation, hon member, to close the gaps and the vulnerabilities that allow officials to exploit and commit corruption. That is exactly the point. Let me give you a practical example. If you have a paper-based system of applications for anything, it doesn't have to only be at Home Affairs, I can assure you right now that the same problem is dogging every part of our government where we have not embraced digitisation.

So, if you have a paper-based application where you require something from the state and you are handing over that pile of documents to a human being or an official, that person has the

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ability to place that application beneath their desk and say, you either pay me something now and we will process this application or it will simply disappear like police case dockets disappear and like so many other things in our state disappear. That is just one example of the vulnerability you have when you cannot monitor applications on digital central platforms.

It is what happens when the decision around your application is open to human discretion. In other words, when a human being has the power to determine your fate - to take away your ability to write your matric exams, as you outline, or to basically derail your life through identity theft or by simply not giving you the documents you require to even open a bank account or apply for a job. That person has huge power over you, and they can abuse that power through their discretion and especially then solicit bribes from you in the process. That is exactly what we need to address, and we will only ever address that at a systemic level if we remove the ability for human discretion in the process.

This is exactly what Sars has done. When you submit a tax return you get the outcome instantly within seconds, and if something is picked up by that digital system then of course

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it is referred for auditing where you will have specialists who are following up on that case. That is exactly the direction we need to move so that someone's life cannot be derailed by human discretion, by officials who exploit loopholes and practice corruption and open a space in the process with the kind of syndicates that we are seeing. Thank you very much, Chair.

IsiZulu:

Mnu E J NZIMANDE: Nginyabonga Sihlalo, ngibingelele imbokodo, ngibingelele iNdlu yonke.

English:

As a department heralds transformation of its systems of production, management and governance through digitisation of applications, I hear the Minister emphasising, maybe it is because of time, one risk factor but there are a number of risk factors that are involved like in any other country when such systems are introduced.

Surely it is inevitable that the introduction of technology and infrastructure impacts heavily on human experience and job competences in the country. The question would then be whether the department has some plans to address affordability,

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accessibility for part of our citizens because of high unemployment and also because they are unskilled, illiteracy level is high and they may not be able to deal with what is being introduced? Are there plans to mitigate around that? Also, are there plans to mitigate against job losses because this is introduced where there is high labour intensity? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, yes, indeed, those issues are top of mind. The hon member is absolutely right to raise them. Firstly, let me say on the job losses with reference to Home Affairs that there will not be a single job loss. The truth is that Home Affairs currently has 40% of the staff it requires. We need about 18 000 officials, and we are currently sitting with about six and half thousand. You will see the same pattern with the Border Management Authority when we get to that later, there is massive understaffing.

At the moment, one of the reasons why Home Affairs is not able to function optimally is because officials are massively overburdened. We have too few people in a manual environment to process manual applications in a sustainable way. That is exactly why you are seeing, especially when it comes to more vulnerable people and people with more complicated cases that

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require more time and resources, that they are being negatively impacted by the system that exist today.

What we are saying is that embracing technology to help with routine processes will be massively beneficial to workers at Home Affairs because for the very first time that 40% staff component will be assisted through technology and will be able to do their jobs as they were supposed to and will also be able to deal with more interesting and complex matters where machines can't be involved. Again, that is exactly the model that we have from Sars because there are still Sars offices, and they still have people there. They are just doing the kind of higher-level work that does not require sort of routine applications and processing.

On the second part of the question, it is absolutely fundamental that we must enhance our service delivery to the poorest and most vulnerable members of community and that is exactly what this project is about. If you are able to automate routine processes and offer a service where people who do have access to this kind of technology can do it in a seamless way that does not require them to go to office and burden your officials, then you are freeing your officials to actually go out and personally serve those members of the

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community who may either be too poor, who may be part of the 10% of South Africans who don't use smart phones or who can't afford data. You are actually serving them far more effectively because then the officials we do have can devote themselves entirely to serving the needs of the most vulnerable and in cases that require special attention where there are complicated factors.

So, this is a win-win process and at the end of the day that is what we are looking at to make sure that we stop the disadvantaging of vulnerable communities and that we free-up Home Affairs to zoom in and use human resources to serve the people who need it the most. Thank you, Chair.

Question 90:

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Hon Chair, even this question relates to the underperformance of South Africa in terms of attracting tourism from China and India. In fact, it is a massive, missed opportunity for us at this stage. If you look at the numbers, you will see that over 100 million tourists from China travelled last year, but South Africa got less than 1% of that. The same kind of figure exists for India as well.

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These, of course are two Brics partners. These are two of the fastest growing economies on Earth and they are becoming increasingly important in the tourism space. So, for a long time, South Africa has been underperforming. We have launched a scientific inquiry through support from Operation Vulindlela and the Presidency, as well as Minister De Lille from Department of Tourism to make sure that we actually understand what the reasons are for this enormous underperformance.

Just to give you a sense Chair that, in a country like Australia, there's 1,4 million Chinese tourists per year. In South Africa, it's only 93 000. We should be outperforming Australia without any shadow of a doubt, and yet we don't. What we are finding through this work is that the red tape that has been put up in terms of the visa process has massively discouraged tourism from these two huge countries.

If you saw what President Cyril Ramaphosa said yesterday in China, I thought it was really instructive statement where he said that crime and visas are the two biggest deterrents to South Africa creating jobs in these sectors as a result of Chinese tourism and Chinese investment.

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So, you can see that at a presidential level this has also been identified as a massive obstacle. The good news is that we are not sitting resting on our laurels at Home Affairs, we are taking decisive action to position this department to also play a role as a key economic enabler.

One of the ways we are doing that is through the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme that we've just announced. This scheme will come into effect in January of next year. What it will do is, it will allow a big tour companies from these countries to register with the department with support from the Department of Tourism. These companies will be security vetted, and they will be background checked. Then, once we have satisfied ourselves that these companies are indeed trustworthy, they will assume a lot of the risk for bringing in clients and tourists.

Chair, we have to understand that especially in China, people travel as part of large, organised tour. That is an established practice in that country. At the moment we have been struggling big time to process group applications. And as I said, a lot of red tape has stood in the way.

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We are now able, through the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme, to cut down on that red tape to process group applications. We are very excited that this is going to make a very meaningful difference in growing jobs for South Africans right here at home, by making sure that we exploit the full tourism potential of our country.

So, I would say to hon members, please watch this space once the scheme is implemented from January next year. Because I've got a feeling that the numbers from China and India in terms of tourism, in terms of the money they spend here and in terms of the jobs they create for South Africans in this country is just going to keep going up from here. Thank you, Chair.

Mr V GERICKE: The Asian market is of critical importance to South Africa and the slow issuing of visas is totally unacceptable, regardless of all the excuses by the Minister this afternoon. Does your department suffer shortage of staff in response ... [Interjections.]

Mr F J BADENHORST: Chair, on a point of order.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Badenhorst.

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Mr F J BADENHORST: Chair, I just want this for point of clarity. I think I am ...

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: On which Rule are you rising hon Badenhorst?

Mr F J BADENHORST: On Rule 228. Hon Chair, I think I am up for a follow-up question. Sorry to interrupt you, hon Gericke. Can I proceed?

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: You can proceed.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Hon Minister, thank you very much for enlightening us. It is refreshing to see that we have a Minister in this very important portfolio after it has been gutted by poor political leadership over the past 30 years. So, it is refreshing to see you are there ... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Can you ask the question hon Badenhorst.

Mr F J BADENHORST Hon Minister, it is common knowledge that South Africa in general taking India and China aside, punches below our weight when it comes to exploiting the lucrative

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tourism market internationally. How can the Department of Home Affairs be utilised as an enabler of more tourism to South Africa in general? Thank you very much.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Is that the point of order hon member? Hon Badenhorst can you respond to the question and accordingly hon Badenhorst, I want to indicate to you that in actual fact that is a follow up that you are making to the Minister. I will then allow him to respond to that follow-up question.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: House Chair, yes there is no doubt that there is a massive underperformance and that we can create tens of thousands of jobs for South Africans if we unlock the potential of tourism. In fact, there are some studies that indicate that if we can increase tourism by just 10% per year, we would be adding 0,6% to annual gross domestic product, GDP growth which translates into tens of thousands of jobs right off the bat. So, that is why it is so vital that Home Affairs plays its role not only in terms of national security and in terms of civic administration, but also as a vital economic enabler.

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Chair, you would know that the Government of National Unity has adopted an apex priority which is to increase economic growth and create jobs. Therefore, the marching orders to all of us is to utilise whatever we can in our departments to contribute to that apex goal of creating jobs. I think in Home Affairs we are very much committed to that. We are going to do exactly that, and we will do so through visa reform.

The Trusted Tour Operator Scheme as I say we will contribute substantially, but I must make it clear as well hon members that, this is an interim measure. This will immediately help from its roll-out next year to boost tourism from these countries. But what we must ultimately do, is reform the entire visa process, to simplify it, to make it more secure against fraud and corruption and to ultimately them be a welcoming destination for tourists from around the world.

Again, if you look at the Kenyan model, an African nation that has embraced the potential of tourism through a very, very comprehensive visa reform. We really can do the same and we can make it secure and easy for people to come to this country, spend money here and then go home and tell their friends and family about it.

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That is the vision we want to unlock and again, digital transformation holds the key. So that someone can conveniently apply online, have an application assessed very quickly and receive that outcome in a digital format that they can use very easily.

It all can be done. It is all within our reach. What we need is the political will and the co-operation to make sure that we realise that particular vision because the benefits for South Africa will truly be enormous. We can become a world leader in tourism if we reform our visa system and make it attractive for people to come here. Thank you Chair.

Mr V GERICKE: Chair, before I get to the follow-up question, can I also rise on a point of order in terms of Rule 228. If a point is frivolous and is not a point of order, then we expect you to Rule on it and say it is not a point of order like in the case of hon Badenhorst now. It was not a point of order. It's a waste of time and it's meant ... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Gericke, hon Gericke.

Mr V GERICKE: Yes.

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The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: I afforded you an opportunity to ask a follow-up question. You can check your Rules, Rule 228 speaks precisely to that. Therefore, how he started to rephrase his follow-up question, the reference is correct to what he was supposed to do and accordingly you are being afforded an opportunity to ask a follow-up question with regard to Rule 228 as well. Can you shoot to the follow-up question. Thank you.

Mr V GERICKE: I will shoot to the follow-up question, but you should not be intolerant when we raise points of order.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Hon Chair, on a point of order.

Mr V GERICKE: The point here is, we cannot ...

[Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Gericke, can you take your seat in the meantime. Let's hear the point of order from hon Badenhorst.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Hon Chair, I rise on Rule 61(b):

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No delegate may deliberately make a statement which the delegate knows to be false.

I did not make a - you ruled that my point of order was not frivolous, and he said that my point of order was frivolous. So, I would like him to retract that please Chair.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Badenhorst, I did not hear that. I will have to consult Hansard and accordingly respond to in the next sitting. Over to you, hon Gericke.

Mr V GERICKE: Okay, thank you Badenhorst. You belong to the Government of National Unity, GNU so you will always win. But you must wait until we come back. We will get ready ...

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Gericke, can you please address the House through the Chairperson. What you are doing is just out of order. I afforded you an opportunity to ask a question not to respond to hon Badenhorst. I have made a ruling in that regard.

Mr V GERICKE: I am getting to my question.

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The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Please get to your point. You must ask the Minister.

Mr V GERICKE: I am getting to my question. The question is: The Asian market ... I will challenge you; I am telling you. The Asian market is of critical importance to South Africa, ... Chief Whip I expect you to stand up for me. Thank you. The slow issuing of visas is totally unacceptable regardless of all the excuses by the Minister this afternoon. Does your department suffer a shortage of staff to service the Asian market? If so, does the department have plans in place to address the issue and by when? Thank you very much.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Minister, can you please respond to hon Gericke's questions.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, I'm happy to do so. Yes, there's no doubt that the Department of Home Affairs is significantly understaffed. As I outlined earlier, we're currently functioning with 40% of the staff complement that we are supposed to have. That has been the outcome of many years of poor financial decision-making, where money has been allocated for bailouts and many other things and not for

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critical functions like Home Affairs. That has led indeed to a very serious problem that we must now address.

Now, we could either wait for money to start growing on trees, or we could look for other ways in which we can make up that shortfall. If you're an organisation with 40% of the people, you need, the question is, how will you get to 100%, especially in an environment where the fiscus is very severely constrained. So, we need to find that outstanding 60%. That's basically the job that we need to do.

What I am proposing to the House is that the way to find that 60% is by innovatively embracing a digital-first future. Because wherever you look at the world is moving and reaping the benefits of moving away from things like paper-based applications. That is leading to huge increases in productivity and efficiency.

We are going to make up that 60% by being innovative in the technological space and we are doing so at speed. We are moving as fast as we can to embed these priorities in the department. We of course will like to build that engine that I spoke about, which demonstrates that we can do this in a

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digital way and then we will need to get support and financial resources.

This House has a very important role to play in that Chair, because if you are to realise this vision, we also need Parliament to make the argument to Treasury and to others that it is important to fund this project, because this is ultimately the only way that we're going to unlock the economic growth and markets like the one referred to by the hon member, while at the same time enhancing our national security.

That is the only way forward. We are so understaffed that we are relying on officials from Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Dirco in some of the missions around the world to assist us with visa issues, which is not technically even the mandate whatsoever of Dirco, it is the mandate of Home Affairs. Yet so understaffed are we that we have ended up in this really untenable situation. And so, we have no choice, if you want to find that extra 60%, we're going to have to innovate. We're going to have to embrace technological and digital transformation. Thank you, Chair.

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Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Minister, while researching this question, I ended up on an Indian blog where it seems there was a discussion on what the best occupation was to fill into a South African visa application, to ensure a successful application. In this case, it was alleged that being a writer or a reporter was the easiest occupation to get a visa in South Africa.

My question to you, are we verifying the information given to our department in visa applications? Are many applicants not claiming tourism visas but actually come in to do business or for work? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Well, the answer is yes, of course verification is at the heart of the adjudication process. So, when someone applies, they will be applying for a certain category, whether that's a visitor's visa for tourism, whether it's a work visa, study visa, etc. Then they will upload certain types of supporting documents and that needs to be verified.

But here's where the rubber meets the road, because if you have a situation where you are relying on an overburdened staff component to verify this information, and especially if

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it is a manual process, then you are opening up gaps for people to engage in in fraudulent activity, or indeed as you say, approve one category of visa when it was actually meant for something else.

Once again, the reality is that, if you use something like machine learning technology you can spot fraudulent applications faster than the human being ever could. Equally, if you are plugged into some of the various databases that Home Affairs needs to verify from for example, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission, CPIC database.

If you look at the Department of Labour as well as the Department of Higher Education, if someone were to claim a certain kind of qualification, or a or a certain company registration, we would be able to instantly check whether such a company exists, whether such a person is associated with it. That significantly, of course speeds up the process, but also enhances the security.

So, there can be no doubt right now that for as long as we're sitting with manual paper-based systems, that the verification

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process itself is one of the vulnerabilities in the system because it's subject to human discretion as I said earlier.

What we need to do is move as much of that away from discretion so that, you know, if you submitted a fraudulent application, you will be caught and you will be banned from this country. But equally, if you submitted a legitimate application, for example for a tourist visa, you mustn't be in doubt about the fact that you will get it.

So, that predictability of ensuring that honest applicants know that the system will treat them fairly and they will be able to come here to bring their money, their tourism dollars, their skills or their investment must be done. At the same time that people who try to defraud the system will know that they will be caught. And that's exactly the space into which we would like to move as fast as we can. Thank you very much, Chair.

Ms O D MEDUPE: Hon Minister, let me appreciate the point that you have alluded earlier on regarding your acceptance to the fact that you don't have all the answers, or your department does not have all the answers. I strongly agree with you that, firstly, working together with your Deputy Minister would

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actually take you somewhere, and including your other government departments that need to play a role in ensuring that your department delivers its own mandate. So, working together is quite a very important thing.

Hon Minister, I am mentioning this mainly because you've got the Deputy Minister who has been in your office. There are men and women who have been in those offices. To a larger extent they have delivered services to the South Africans and that cannot be unnoticed. We can't turn a blind eye for the work that has been done by men and women who occupied that office before.

Hon Minister, as you have explained the eVisa is critical for tourism component of our economy. The following question arises. Hon Gericke asked this question, and I'm going to ask this question because during our interaction with the Department of Home Affairs, it was a matter that was raised sharply by the members of the committee with regard whether the department has got plans to roll the eVisa as a universal mode ... [Interjections.]

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon member your time is up for the question.

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Ms O D MEDUPE: Hon Chair, I will reduce them to writing. Thank you.

The CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Please, hon member, be mindful of time. Don't make it preamble. Just go straight to the question. If you were to do that, just try and shorten it up so that you can go zoom straight to the question. We are now moving on to the next question, which is Question 91, which is asked by the EFF member hon Mcinga to the Minister. Over to you, Minister.

Question 91:

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, thank you once more. Yes indeed, the services provided by the Department of Home Affairs are delivered in terms of the Constitution, first of all, but also in terms of legislation that translates those principles into action. And of course, when it comes to the outcome of applications, one of the important principles is to enable people who have had an adverse outcome to be able to appeal that and to make sure that an application for citizenship or permanent residency can be thoroughly considered and appealed.

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And of course, there is also the possibility of legal action. Everyone does have the right, although we are working very hard to make sure that our processes are watertight. But the truth is that we have to enhance the efficiency of home affairs very significantly if we want to play our role in nation building and dealing with the scourge of xenophobia that the question alludes to.

Because, when the state is failing on its side, then it is actually not serving that particular agenda. If we make it so that we have to wait for years for the outcome of an application if we have a corrupt environment that flows from inefficiencies in the system, then we are actually making it harder on ourselves. And on the state as a whole to make sure that we can have confidence in the outcomes of applications made by foreign nationals.

So, the efficiency that I have talked about today must also apply to all home affairs systems so that we can ensure that we build watertight adjudication systems and that, when there is an outcome, we have confidence in that particular outcome. So, someone who breaks the law cannot claim that they have been victimised by the authority because of a flawed system. And that we can enforce the law in such a way that we don't

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end up fuelling things like xenophobia and the dangers associated with it.

This is an important part of the agenda for transforming the home affairs into a world-class digital organisation, because then we can tackle these kinds of problems much more quickly and effectively and, of course, restore the rule of law in the process. In doing so, we must always make it clear that it is absolutely unacceptable to attack groups of people or to launch programmes against foreign nationals and fuelling xenophobia is absolutely unacceptable. Where there are bridges of law, the rule of law must be established and not mob rule. Thank you.

Ms N P MCINGA: Thank you, Chairperson. Minister, while the measures you have mentioned may seem to address the efficiency of home affairs services, there remains a critical issue of systemic bias within the department that contributes to the neophobic attacks and black on black violence. There is no foreign national who wants to remain in a foreign land illegally, but the reality is that the systems of South Africa often appear to be unfairly skewed against African asylum seekers compared to those from European countries. For example, African asylum seekers are frequently given interview

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dates 30 years in the future. And these days often come without any official documentation that confirms their appointment, just a date on a piece of paper. This leads to further doubts and vulnerabilities, perpetuating a cycle of illegal status due to no fault of their own.

There are continuous delays in processing applications for married couples where one partner is a foreign national. Minister, can you imagine how much revenue the department could generate by simply providing efficient legal pathways for documentation and charging reasonable fees instead of these prolong processes which pushes individuals to illegal avenues which can then be used to justify the xenophobia sentiments. Is not this a failure to streamline and clarify processes and the perceived professional treatment of certain nationalities an intentional way of creating conditions ripe for xenophobic attacks, Minister? What specific steps is your Ministry taking to ensure that these biases are eradicated ...

[Time Expired.]

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, Chair and to the hon member. Yes, bias is inherent in human nature, and that is exactly why when you give discretion to human beings, you will also find bias in the process. So again, I go back to the

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point that we must remove the space for bias, for discretion, because indeed, it is something that creates the space for corruption or for the kind of bias that you are describing, and we will based do that by the embrace of digital technology.

Chair, I think it is also important to say that this is exactly why there is so much focus on clearing the backlog. The problem of appeals for asylum seekers has led to a huge backlog. And I have said before in this House that we also need international support to tackle this. That is a message that I will continue to advocate in these forums to ensure that South Africa and Africa in general are not left behind by the international institutions. Because migration, asylum-seeking and refugees are by definition international issues, and we need support to catch up. But we have made the message very clear in our department that we need to clear our backlogs if we are to make progress on these issues.

The hon member raises the systems at the refugee centres, this is something too that I am concerned about, and we will be looking into that booking system in finding ways to not only speed up the appointments but to not have a system of insecurity there. We are looking at that, hon member.

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Chair, however, if you will allow me, I must make one more comment. And I thought the hon member's questions were really well thought out. But it is often difficult to respond to questions from the EFF because, you know, the last time we worked together in this House, there were all sorts of claims about people not being allowed to come into this country. There were claims that extending benefits to people waiting for visas, including cases where they had applied for spousal visas, was somehow wrong or unacceptable, and now the member from the EFF is raising that issue. So, it is often difficult to understand where this party gets its questions from. But I thought that this one today is at least a reasonable question for us to deal with. Thank you, Chair.

Adv Inkosi M NONKONYANA: Hon Minister, thank you very much for your response. And I must also congratulate you for having taken over the department, which is a well-oiled machinery from Dr Motsoaledi who has been in charge of that department. And it is gratifying to see that you are now on course to pursue the challenges that have been besetting that department. Having said that, I must also indicate that we have noticed that you have ... We congratulate your department for digitising the Zimbabwean Exemption Permits, ZEPs, application processes as reported in the media.

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My question arising from that is whether there are plans to extend digitisation to all aspects of applications for asylum seekers, visas, work permits and citizenship? If not, why not? If so, we would be grateful if you could provide us with your details in this regard. And thank you really for congratulating the EFF for coming to its senses. Thank you so much.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you very much, Chair. To Inkosi Nonkonyana, consistency is already your trademark I can see. So, no need for concern there. The answer to the question is absolutely a resounding yes. The small step, - and it's a small step, let's be honest about it but it is meaningful. That we have now moved towards the issuing of waiver outcomes, starting with the Zimbabwean Exemption Permits applications in a digital portable document format, PDF, format.

Hon Chair, through you, just to give a sense to the hon member for why that is important. You can imagine when we are sitting with... in this case, it was over 60 thousand of those applications. If you have to print them, just think about all the pieces of paper, just think about the logistical issue of getting those pieces of paper to the right offices. Then think about the time lost to applicants who have to go to the office

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to pick up this piece of paper, and you can see the efficiency gains if you are able to issue those digitally.

So, it's certainly true, this is not an earth-shattering move, but it already in this particular case will be yielding benefits both for the department and for the applicants in this case. Of course, we want to now expand the use of these digital outcomes. As the hon member asks, it really has to be across the board.

So, we need to extend this principle to all areas so that we give applicants the opportunity to apply easily and from anywhere, to use modern technologies to submit these applications and to process them securely. And then actually issue those kinds of results. So, I want to thank the hon member for his support in this regard. This is a team effort, and you will see that in everything that we do, from the Deputy Minister and myself to the entire department, we are talking about team home affairs. And I would very much like that team to include, as would the questioner, the member's support for this very important transformation journey that we have embarked on. Thank you very much, Chair.

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Mr B J FARMER: Thank you, Chairperson. Hon Minister, I have a long question which I must shorten it in the time available to me. But in an earlier question to the Minister of Small Business Development, it was about these foreign nationals who are opening businesses in our communities. Her answer was that their visas don't actually allow them to trade and that should be the starting point to close those businesses and drive them out. That may be a good answer for her, but it sounds to me like she is just trying to kick the can down to you.

So, my question is: do you agree that all these spaza shops being opened by foreigners in our communities are in almost all cases in breach of visa regulations? And what does or will the Ministry do about it?

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, hon Chair. I think again, as with everything in the home affairs space, we must always be careful to differentiate, so we can't always sweep everything under the same brush and say that all people are bad or all people like this are breaking the law. We need to find the law breakers and to deal with them decisively. But we must always be careful as public representatives not to feed into dangerous stereotypes or fuel xenophobia or other things that could severely damage our social cohesion.

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However, on the specific question, of course, this is a major problem. We have far too many examples where people are trading who don't have these kind of visas and documentation. And of course, home affairs have a role to play there. But I think it's very important to emphasise that what we have been seeing recently should really encourage South Africans who are really desperate for the rule of law to be restored.

If you look at some of these major operations that have been conducted, including recently in eThekweni, where you are seeing the police, home affairs, you are seeing various other government departments co-operating in these raids to restore the rule of law in this space. Those are yielding the best results and let me tell you why. When the Minister of Small Business Development responds by pointing at visas, it's because the Ministry of Small Business Development is one link in the chain, the Department of Home Affairs is another link in the chain, the Department of Labour is another link in the chain, as of course is the department of South African Police Service, SAPS.

When you have one of these links, not part of a particular operation, you will have problems. Because as the Department Home Affairs, for example, we are able and authorised to

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verify any particular document, but we are not able to act as the Department of Labour to make sure that someone who is employed illegally, for example, is held to account. That is not our function. And of course, equally it goes for the functions of the police. So, each of these departments have their own particular function and home affairs is part of that chain. But if you have any of them absent in the process, that is where you often have very frustrating outcomes. For example, where home affairs could identify these people, we could detain them, but then we hand them over to the police for processing and you know that does not happen and they are back out on the streets. This is the most frustrating thing we are facing. However, I am really encouraged by the operations that we are seeing recently.

Chair, you will be aware that from home affairs' side, we have increased our inspections by 50% in terms of our updated annual performance plan and most encouragingly, a lot of those operations are taking place jointly with other law enforcement agencies, including very recently right there where you are now in the City of Cape Town, where even local law enforcement went with home affairs and with SAPS and we were able to make decisive intervention. That is really the way forward, collaboration across departments, is how we will

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systematically send the message that while we welcome people in this country, we follow the law, who want to contribute to South Africa, we have zero tolerance for those who break the law or disregard the South African Constitution and our immigration system. Thank you, Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Thank you very much, Hon Minister, and whilst we are dealing with the matters of home affairs, I have just been informed by the Chief Whip that it's hon S Ndhlovu's birthday today and we want to wish her a very happy birthday and all the best for many, many more years. Thank you very much.

Mr M BILLY: Minister, I cannot begin to imagine what it is like to inherit a department that has got a 40% staff capacity. That is a department that is almost on the verge of collapsing, and I think you have got a massive responsibility. Everything that you have done so far, we fully support it, and this House is fully behind you and your team. Having said that ... [Interjections.] ...

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): You are protected hon Billy, please continue.

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Mr M BILLY: ... We are complimenting good work, and it must be heard. Having said that, Minister, xenophobic attacks in South Africa committed against immigrants have often been associated with economic factors, particularly the availability of employment opportunities. Minister, I think what we need to probably hear from you is what is the status of the Immigration Advisory Board. And what role can it play in providing evidence-based advice to tackling these challenges? Because that body is meant to function and give particular assistance to the work that is being done, to the question that has been raised and it is very important that you give this House some clarity as to what its role and how can it assist in terms of providing evidence base advice on how these challenges can be dealt with. But again, want to commend the work that you are doing. We know that it is not easy, but you have shown that with this new refreshed approach through the Government of National Unity, GNU, we have got full trust in the work that you are doing ... [Time Expired.]

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, Chair and thank you to the hon member for those words of encouragement. Of course, as I said it is a team effort, and so it is wonderful to see the support from members of this team, whether you sit in

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government or in the legislature, we will have to work together to make this vision a reality.

Yes, the Immigration Advisory Board process is underway. If I am not mistaken, there are two days left for applicants to submit their nominations. Then we will go through a rigorous and merit-based process to ensure that we appoint persons to this board, who can assist us with working through the many challenges we face in the immigration space.

So, if you look at the Immigration Act, the board is actually a product of that Act and it has some very specific functions in terms of advising the Minister on immigration related matters, looking at regulatory reform and also dealing with matters that are referred to it by the Minister for advice.

Chair, one of the things you will recall in my initial speech to the NCOP was to say that we have to build better stakeholder relations, because there has been quite a lot of hostility towards the Department of Home Affairs, and I think we are making progress. But the Immigration Advisory Board, I think will assist us even more to make sure that we actually provide a listening ear to stakeholders in society, people who have expertise, who can contribute to us, making sensible

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policies going forward, and dealing with some of the issues that we are facing in this environment.

One of the other keys principles, - if you look at the Government of National Unity' Statement of Intent, is a commitment to evidence-based policy making. That is very important in this space as well, to make sure that we make decisions that are based not on emotions or politics, but really on rational evidence that is presented to us in terms of how we can handle the many challenges we face.

So, I am very excited about the role that this body can play in putting us on the right path. And indeed, as the hon member says, to ensure that we strengthen the social fabric of South Africa instead of fraying it. Because the truth is that problems like xenophobic hatred and violence are a society-wide issue which, as he rightly mentions, also affects the economy. And that is why I say it is so important that we all do what we can to create more jobs, because that will create more opportunities and ease some of the tensions.

It involves law enforcement, as I said in my answer to the previous question, to ensure that we restore the rule of law and that people who enter the country illegally or break the

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law are brought to justice. So, this is really a challenge for all of us to strengthen our social cohesion. But I do believe that the Advisory Council on Immigration will play an important role in providing us with the necessary evidence-based policy guidance. Thank you very much. Chair.

Question 82:

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you very much, Chair. This question relates to the Border Management Authority, BMA, which was established as a Schedule 3(a) public entity on 1 April 2023, following the President's ascent to the Border Management Authority Act. So, this is a young institution that was really launched on the 5 October, last year. So, you can see, it has really only been a matter of months that this organisation has really existed on the ground.

The rationale for the BMA was compelling, I believe, because it enabled a fragmented system to really be brought together under one roof. Previously, you would have had officials from Home Affairs, officials from SA Police Service, officials from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health, the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, and they were all fulfilling functions at the border - and at ports of entry, specifically. However, with the Border Management

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Authority, we now have the ability to really streamline and co-ordinate these functions more effectively.

Chair, the auditing process is underway for the BMA's first financial year in existence, and of course that will be fully reported to Parliament so that we can engage in an assessment. What I can say is that the BMA has really gone through a very unique process, where it had to be set up from scratch. So, there have been without a doubt, teething problems, but I do think that there is some real progress now being made in terms of getting the organisation to move from existing on paper, to really existing in the real world, "Helping to secure our borders for development", as the slogan of the BMA has it.

However, I would have to emphasise, Chair, that the major obstacle we face here is a severe crisis of underfunding, precisely because this is a new entity. I think there was some hesitation to fund it properly. Perhaps people were not sure that it would get off the ground, but it most certainly has now gotten off the ground. So, I think we have a responsibility.

Everyone in this House who likes to say that they think that we have to secure our borders more effectively, and they think

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that should be a priority, now actually has a responsibility to ensure that the Border Management Authority is properly capacitated.

The truth is, Chair, you might say that something is a priority, but if you don't fund it; it is actually not a priority. So, if we want to deal with border management more effectively, now is the time to fund it, because without that - without proper capacity - things will not improve. That is the hard reality of the space we are in. Thank you very much, Chair.

Mr E P NOE: Thank you, Deputy Chair of the House. I think I will follow up also in appreciating the Minister for not letting the ball fall to what he found in the office. He is raising the bar to make sure that things continue to run well. Furthermore, Deputy Chair, I want to agree with the Minister that indeed this is a growing baby that needs to be taken care of.

However, I also would like to appreciate the significant strides that are made by the Border Management Agency in pushing back the pockets of lawlessness and criminality at our

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ports of entry within a very short space of time, as the Minister has alluded to, since it was established.

Hon Minister, as you will know, dealing with unlawful entry and exit at the port of entry can be accomplished with ease, but the critical challenge lies with the rivers that separate South Africa and the SADC countries. The countries and the fences that are erected for security, which are unmanned and unsecured, including the mountains that borders where I come from and Lesotho, the neighbouring country.

The follow-up questions that therefore arise, Minister: Are the current human and logistical capacity of the Border Management Guards equal to this mammoth task; and two, what are the investors partnerships with sector departments and the security sector ... [Interjections.] [Time expired.] [Inaudible.] ... on priorities? Thanks, Deputy Chair.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, Chair. I am happy to respond. Thank you again to the hon member for also stepping up and contributing to this space. So, the good thing is that the reason I was not able to attend in person, and again I really do apologise, Chair, is precisely because I have had a very significant engagement with the Border Management

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Authority, on precisely the challenges that it is facing, because we need to move with greater urgency to deal with what is really a huge problem.

I want to be very honest with the hon member who asked, I think, quite pointedly, whether the BMA, as it currently stands, is up to the mammoth task. It is not because the people are not committed or because we are not committed, but because the resources are so lacking. The answer, right now, is no, because we have to actually capacitate this growing baby, as the member says. This baby needs to grow up very quickly, hon Chair, we don't have time for us to allow the kind of things that we see going on at the borders.

So, the truth is that we are in a space where we have hundreds of border guards, but what we need is tens of thousands of border guards. That is the reality. We are also in space, similarly to the Department of Home Affairs, where we can, however, make up some of the shortfall through embracing technology.

The BMA is working on a very exciting concept for the National Targeting Centre, which will really be an intelligence and data processing hub, where they will be able actually to do

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much more than you could with people. You can do that by integrating various databases, by linking technology, like drones for example, into a central monitoring database management system.

One of the things that I mentioned to them this morning is that what we don't want is, for example, to buy some drones, and then the drone is flying around, but what it is able to pick up does not go to a central hub where you can actually analyse that information and act on it. So, we have to be very careful to make sure that we integrate the various aspects of the BMA's work through technology, just like we have to transform the Department of Home Affairs.

The one advantage we have really in this space, Chair, is precisely because it is a new institution. We can really, from day one, embed proper use of data and IT technology into the BMA. I am sure the presentations will come to Parliament, but I can say I am very encouraged by the extent to which there is an embrace of this, precisely, so that we can ensure that we deal with those sections of the border.

It is not the mandate of the BMA or Home Affairs to build a border fence, hon Chair. That is not our space, but what we

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can do, is go out of our way to improve monitoring of some of those vulnerable sections. So, that is exactly where we are moving towards. But once again, it will require very substantial support from this House in order for us to pull that off. We know there is no money growing on the trees, but we will have to simply prioritise the Border Management Authority. It is vital to South Africa's national security interests. Thank you, Chair.

Ms Z N NGCOBO: Thank you, hon Chair, Deputy Chair and hon members. Hon Minister, evaluations have identified several challenges in the BMA's operations, including resource constraints, co-ordination difficulties among different government departments and the need for improved technology and infrastructure at border posts. These challenges have sometimes hindered the full achievement of the BMA strategic milestones. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Well, Chair, I can only agree with that. These shortfalls have indeed hampered the BMA thus far, but I would simply repeat that this is an organisation that is a few months old in the real world. We still very much have the opportunity to put it on the right path. So, I have spoken about technology, and I have spoken about funding. I

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think collaboration is the other important point that the hon member raises. That is collaboration, of course, with other law enforcement agencies.

I think it is important to say that the BMA, when it comes to something like deportations, for example, the BMA's legal framework, defines it as responsible for that, within a 10-kilometre radius of a particular port of entry. However, once someone is further inside the country, which is a responsibility that moves to Home Affairs and the other law enforcement agencies.

So, again, you can see the need for very close collaboration and joint action if we are to solve this process, if we are to solve this problem. There is also the long-standing project of redeveloping 6 really key ports of entry, and that will be done through a public private partnership. That is a really important opportunity for us to actually strengthen border management and revamp, in fact, how that system operates.

So, that is a project that I will be watching closely. I think this House should be watching closely, to make sure: That things they are done correctly; that they are done timelessly; and that we are able to actually make the kind of

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infrastructure changes that will also assist the Border Management Authority going forward. Thank you, chair.

Mr M BILLY: Hon Minister, at least 85% of South African borders remain unprotected. That is the historical damage you have inherited. At least 85% of South African borders remain unprotected and the BMA has got a massive role to play to assist you and your efforts in fixing this. In light of this, Minister, noting the critical role that needs to be played by the BMA: Is the Minister and the South African Government committed to supporting and sufficiently resourcing the Border Management Authority in carrying out its mandate; and how exactly will this be done or is being done, hon Minister?

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you very much, hon Chair. Yes, we have done a lot of work on putting together the business case of the Board of Management Authority. I think one of the important points to highlight is that the BMA is actually a very good investment choice. If we were on the stock market, it would be a stock to buy. The reason I say that is because there are very profound economic benefits that would flow from the BMA being able to properly fulfil its mandate.

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So, just to give you a couple of examples: Imagine the amount of tax revenue that goes missing in South Africa, where people are evading tax through the borders. If you could enhance the efficiency of the BMA to detect those things, of course, in co-operation with Sars, that is money that goes right back into the fiscus.

If you think about goods that are smuggled into South Africa, where those goods are then sold in competition with legal South African businesses - imagine if you could free that market up, for legitimate businesses, so that they don't have to compete with illegal or counterfeit goods.

These are sound economic arguments. They are good economic reasons why we should be investing more in the Border Management Authority. I really don't doubt that if we are able to mobilise more funding, that very soon the BMA will start paying for itself, especially if it can work closely with other agencies in this space because, precisely, of the impact it actually has financially as well on South Africa, to generate more investment.

So that is why I say if the BMA was a stock on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, my advice would be, you should

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buy. We are now going to work very hard to convince the Treasury and other relevant stakeholders of the economic logic of investing in the BMA. Thank you, Chair.

Ms M MAKESINI: Thank you, Chairperson. Let me start by congratulating those officials who are trying their best to work in this complex department, like Sibongile Kunene and Matumo Moleleki. Home Office is an ineffective department, Minister, with a lot of corruption and is not. What measures have you put in place to raise the capacity of the officials at the border posts, except the plan and the investment that you referred to now? What are you doing to make sure, at least, that our borders are protected?

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, Chair. Well, I mean, just to emphasise this point first, again, that the hon member refers to Home Affairs; but it is not Home Affairs that manages the borders. So, these are two different institutions. The Department of Home Affairs inside the country and then the Border Management Authority is responsible for the ports of entry and the borders that the member refers to.

So, I appreciate, first of all, the member's acknowledgement of those good officials. I think she probably knows about

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those two ladies who went really above and beyond with their excellent service because of social media. I make a point of it, to acknowledge these officials and to actually phone them. It is always really instructive, Chair, when you phone one of these officials and they say to you that it is wonderful to get that acknowledgement from the Minister.

It is really one of the best parts of the job because there are very hard working and committed people in this space, and we really must all work together to empower them. So, thank you for the acknowledgement of these officials, hon member. Yes, of course, it goes without saying that there are far too many bad apples in this environment, and what we need to do is root those out both, for Home Affairs and for the Border Management Authority.

The investigations that are being done in, in collaboration with the special Investigating Unit, are making very real progress. We have seen meaningful increase in convictions and there are other 109 cases that are currently under investigation. We will continue to make sure that wherever we find indications of these rotten apples, that they are removed from the bunch, because at the end of the day, they end up poisoning everyone around them,

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So, our commitment is there, absolutely. However, that must be met equally with our determination to reform these processes through digital transformation, so that we make it much more difficult or hopefully impossible for human beings who have ill intent to exploit gaps in the system toward corruption and corrupt ends. Thank you, Chair.

Question 75:

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Hon Chair, this question relates to servicing our residents in, specifically, rural areas or in more underserved areas. And as I said earlier this, really, is a key priority in everything that we do.

So, first of all, the mobile trucks that the department has is a very valuable asset because it enables us to reach some of these far-flung areas and bring those services to the communities. And every month you will see Home Affairs in a different province. For one week rolling out specifically focused programmes, that is in addition to the mobile trucks that are moving around the country constantly as part of the day-to-day operations. So, these trucks are making a difference.

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But again, we need to go much further to actually free up the department so that it can focus and really zoom-in on underserved communities. And that's why I say, at the moment, even with the use of trucks, even with expanding into malls, for example, despite all of these efforts, when you have an organization that is so very understaffed, you are not actually getting to all of those who need you the most. And so that is why we really need to have a better system to manage routine applications for people who don't really need to come to our Home Affairs offices so that we can free up those resources to serve underserved communities.

It's also really important to highlight the work that is being done to ensure that hospitals, for example, have access to early birth registrations and I must thank the Deputy Minister in this regard, he's really passionate about the space and doing a lot of work there to make sure that we get our children registered early on because that is something even in a vulnerable community and perhaps especially there, that serves those children very well later in life because you make sure that they're able to obtain an Identity Document, ID, and that they're able to access economic opportunity moving forward.

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So, these are some of the interventions that we are making. But I would be the first one to say that we have to be innovative and free up more resources to do more of this and the best way to do that is by automating routine processes for people who can afford it, for people who've got access to technology so that we remove them as a burden from the system and we can really zoom-in on our most vulnerable members of communities. Thank you.

Mr V GERICKE: Hon Deputy Chair, can I just rise on Rule 66. On a point of explanation, please. If you allow.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Okay, go ahead.

Mr V GERICKE: the rule says, during a debate in Council, a delegate may be allowed to explain a previous speech, but only when and to the extent that the speech has been misquoted or misunderstood in a material respect.

Now, the Minister has just mentioned that the Border Management Authority, BMA, doesn't fall under ...

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The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Sorry, hon member, this is not a debate, it is a Question and Answer session. So, your ... it's not appropriate. Please take your seat. Thank you.

Mr V GERICKE: Understood. Can I ask you to call hon Badenhorst to order, please ...

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): No, please, I'm calling you to order, hon member ...

Mr V GERICKE: No, but ... [Inaudible.] ... call this man to order, please sir. Thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Take your seat. Thank you.

IsiXhosa:

Mnu M M PETER: Mandibulise kuwe, Sekele Sihlalo, okokuqala...

English:

... when the entire Government of National Unity, GNU, sneezes, the entire group of its members catches cold.

[Laughter.]

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IsiXhosa:

Kutheni ndisitsho nje?

English:

I just want to ask the Minister.

IsiXhosa:

Mphathiswa, ingaba ukufika kwakho kwela sebe, ufike nomkhomandlela wakho kusini na okanye ufike sele ukhona ngaphambili? Ukuba ufike ukhona umkhomandlela, yintoni le intsha uza kuyenza? Ukuba ufike nowakho, ndicela akhawulezise ukuhanjiswa kweenkonzo kuba ezi lori zihamba...

English:

Mr F J BADENHORST: Hon Deputy Chairperson, on a point of order. I think it is highly unlikely that the Minister is receiving interpreting services.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): I think I will leave that to that to the Minister. I'll leave it to the Minister to tell us whether he does or doesn't.

Continue, hon Peter.

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IsiXhosa:

Mnu M M PETER: Sekela Sihlalo, bendiza kuthi xa ndivala lo mbuzo, iilori (mobile offices) bezingena kwezi lali neelokishi zethu nangona bezisilela. Andimva xa ethetha nge...

English:

... monitoring team ...

IsiXhosa:

... eza kwenza umsebenzi. Andimva xa ethetha ngexesha langoku, koko ndimva ethetha ngezinto ezigqithileyo nezinto ezizayo. Mna, ndifuna izinto zangoku, zeli xesha sikulo. Kuza kwenzeka ntoni namhlanje? Enkosi

English:

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Minister, I hope you were able to grasp the import of that question.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, you guide me here but I'm very happy to give it a shot. Because I think what the hon member there is raising is the model and the use of these mobile trucks and he's lamenting that we are talking about solutions in the future while we should be also intervening

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right now in the present in some of our underserved communities. Would that be a close enough reflection for me to give it a shot?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Ya [Yes], I think you have captured it quite well. I see the hon Peter is nodding. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Look, I agree, I don't want to suggest that the access model at the moment is reaching as far as it could. I mean I can ... [Interjections.] [Inaudible.] ... that the model did identify 778 mobile visiting points that would cover 22% of the population across the country in various geographical areas, mostly in rural areas. While the remaining 78% of the population to be covered by 320 front offices of various sizes in line with population concentration.

The mobile visiting points translated to approximately 334 mobile trucks that the department requires in order to cover those 778 mobile visiting points.

So, at the moment we've got, I think, around 210 or 220 of those trucks and they certainly are making a difference. But

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the reality is even on those numbers, and I think that study is very useful, we are not quite there yet.

And, of course, you do have issues like connectivity as well, hon Peter, through you Chair, that hamper the ability of trucks in some of the most remote areas. And, so, we have to look at the sort of broadband, the connectivity solutions in that space to make sure that we are able to effectively serve rural communities. And that includes, even sometimes having more than one SIM card, something as simple as that, so that you've got one provider that comes in when the other isn't working.

But the most critical point for me out of that finding from the access model is the reference to 321 front offices of various sizes. Now, I think what is new in our approach is that we are also saying, but surely we can mitigate the need for so many offices if we're able to deliver services in a way where people don't have to actually go to the office.

I invite you, Chair, to just think about what's possible through online banking. So, through the online banking model, you're able to open an account, you're able to have a verified online profile, and then you can access your account from a

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laptop or a smartphone and you could even order a debit card, for example, or a credit card, which then will be delivered at your home the next day, you scan the bar code so that we the so that the bank can verify that it's you that's collected that particular card and increasingly you are not required to go to visit a bank branch. Of course, there are exceptional cases where that could be required, but that's exactly the point in Home Affairs.

We should free up our capacity to serve exceptional cases and to serve the kind of communities that the hon member is raising in his question.

So, I believe that, very fundamentally, if we get this part right, we're going to boost our capacity in exactly the kind of communities that he rightfully raises as a priority for this department. Thank you, Chair.

Mr O J MOKAE: Hon Minister, considering the importance of providing and enhancing civic services to all South Africans, including the poor, through the Department of Home Affairs: What are the historical challenges that you intend to immediately confront and address in order to ensure that even those who are in rural areas get birth certificates, ID

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documents, passport efficiently and timeously? Thank you very much, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Hon House Chair, well, the need is different in terms of the different categories that have been mentioned there by the hon members.

So, when you talk about something like birth certificates, we are certainly further behind the curve than we would be on something like IDs and passports because this is exactly where I think some of the issues arose in the past where there was a start to the modernization and the digitization process, but it wasn't carried through to some of these other important civic functions and the progress on the visa side, for example, has also been quite halting.

So, what we need to do actually is to go and look at where the system is working better. When you talk about your IDs and your passports in the country, generally, that's more advanced and how we can build on that to deliver those services also in rural communities.

But then in other instances like the birth certificates or really many of the other certificates, you will often find in

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Home Affairs offices that there's one floor where the modernized services are delivered but then you'll find there's another floor where you find the stacks of paperwork and some of these, these really, really outdated processes, often involving certificates, amendments and these kind of things.

So, what we really need to do is make sure that all of these processes are moved forward and that the efficiency is really enhanced.

The key problem we have when it comes to delivering civic services in rural areas, in addition, of course, to distance and communication, which we can all understand, is that the processes take long and then if you're in a rural area it's even longer, and people often have to travel great distances after, then waiting for really inordinate amount of time for the outcomes of the applications.

So, really, if we can address the efficiency with which outcomes are generated, again, going back to the adjudication phase to make sure that this is really a quick, efficient and secure process, then we can invest more time on the other problems like distance and connectivity, rather than actually generating long wait times because the processing of

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applications is slow and manual, and that's where I think we have a lot of gains that can be made. Thank you, Chair.

IsiXhosa:

Nksz N P MCINGA: Mphathiswa, siyeva ukuba uza kuthumela iilori. Thina ke simele abantu basezilalini nasezilokishini. Uqinisekisa njani ukuba ezi lori azisayi kumoshakala okanye zaphuke apha endleleni? Ukulibaziseka kwabantu ukufumana izazisi zabo kwenza ukuba bangaxhamli kumathuba emisebenzi nakwizibonelelo zikarhulumente ezikhoyo. Ingaba akhona na amanye asebe osebenzisana nawo, afana neSebe lezoPhuhliso loLuntu okanye iSebe lezeMpilo, ukuze abantu bangayeli izazisi kuphela? Ingaba alukho na uhlobo oluthungelanayo namanye amasebe ukuze umntu akwazi ukumfumana ugqirha wamazinyo, akwazi nokufumana olunye uncedo akwamanye amasebe? Enkosi.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon Minister, did you get the import of that question?

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, let me see if I can push my luck. So, I think the question there revolves around also integrated services that goes beyond the ID and also involves other areas including grants, etc. if I'm incorrect then I need to really automate my own translating capacity. So, can I

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just get an indication, otherwise I will ask for assistance. But I think the question revolved really around integrated services in rural areas. Is that correct?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Yes, hon Minister. The hon member was asking whether when your trucks go down to these rural areas do you take along other department with you such as the Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and take along health professionals so that you can provide an integrated service.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Chair, well, at the moment I think we have a lot more to gain in the space. I think there's been fragmentation over a long period when it comes to some of these services. But there've also been attempts to address it. If you think about the Thusong Centres, that was really an initiative that focused on doing what the hon member is talking about, so that you actually bring together all of these services.

But I think it's quite an interesting idea and another opportunity, perhaps, for Home Affairs, if we build the capacity we need to actually also then go beyond what we, ourselves, are doing and actually assisting with the rendering

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of additional services. So, I think it's a very interesting suggestion, we'll take it forward in that spirit.

But, of course, as everything that we've been discussing today, I suppose it's really resource constraints that will be holding us back right now.

But I think in principle the idea, the attitude of collaboration and of joint operations in different spaces is really the way to go because we have a lack of capacity, really, in many areas, and if we can work together we can make up that lack of capacity more effectively.

I would also just say that the member, I believe, did reference SA Social Security Agency, SASSA, and the grant system. And I think what's so important there is to say that if we can really transform Home Affairs along the lines that we've been discussing today we can start rendering additional services that will be hugely valuable. Think about the SASSA space, the social grant space, our ability to actually verify bona fide recipients to make sure that there's no fraud when it comes to SASSA. That is one of the huge potential benefits we could provide if we are able to really get our own house in order and able to really move to a space we become a very

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trusted, verifier of information. I think that that's also quite exciting and that certainly would assist other government departments as well. Thank you, Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Hon minister, I think that ties in very nicely with the NCOP's three sphere planning where you also take onboard the local sphere and get local clinics also involved in your programme. Thank you very much.

Ms O D MEDUPE: Hon Minister, the negative socioeconomic impact of lack of Identity Documents and other related documents cannot be over emphasized.

Hon Minister, critical questions that, therefore, arise are: Does the department have a standard turnaround time for delivery of this document as part of performance management? And if so, what is the average margin of the non-compliance with this turnaround time? And lastly, whether there is a standard procedure to notify applicants about delays related to their applications through any convenient medium of communication, in line with the principles of Batho Pele? Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Hon Chair, I must say that this particular follow up does not directly connect with the original question. So, I would not have the kind of specific numbers. I would ask that the member submit that as a written question and we'd be happy to revert.

But I think there is a part that I that I can respond to now, and that is just to say that the communication side that the member references is really important. So, in other words, for people to know the status of applications and especially when it's for critical documents like IDs that that she mentions.

So, really, again, at the moment when you have a fragmented system that is very manual, you actually don't have proper oversight to be able to track everything in an integrated manner and the truth is also right now the way in which we are able to communicate with applicants who need information on the status of their application is simply not efficient enough. There are far too many emails that are flying around where people try desperately to get information, basic information.

So, there must be a better way to do this where we are able to create a platform where someone can input their reference

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number, for example, of their application and they must be able to instantly see where that application is in the process.

And again, it's really not rocket science, it's something that exists. I mean if you try to order something online these days, you will always get a reference number where you can immediately see the status of that particular application.

So, at the moment I'll be honest with this House, I'm not satisfied with the communications function in Home Affairs when it comes to the call centre, when it comes to the website, absolutely not.

And, so, we are not hiding away from very clearly speaking about these shortcomings and this needs to be very urgently addressed because this is not been done correctly and if we can get the communication side right, where people are able to get quick and easy access to information on the status of their applications, I think that will also go a long way to building trust. Thank you very much, Chair.

Question 83:

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The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you very much, Chairperson, I would just preface again by saying that dealing with corruption in the loopholes for bias, I think as one of the members said and for fraud is fundamental to the kind of digital reforms we need to make. Nevertheless, there's important work also underway, specifically when it comes to the counter corruption and Security Services Branch which is located inside the Department of Home Affairs. The objectives are to advise and assist the department in putting measures in place to improve the application of systems, policies, procedures and regulations to clamp down on fraudulent activities. One of the examples that would flow from such a case is a recent official who was recently convicted and sentenced to 12 years in prison, who was able to get around issuing the outcome of passport applications, and that's where the biometric verification before pickup was introduced in that process. So, that is one example of the outcome of this work, where there is evidence that Home Affairs officials or immigration officers have committed acts of misconduct. These cases are handled in accordance with the relevant legislative prescripts, the disciplinary code and procedures. The counter corruption branch has also appointed analysts, and this is quite an exciting area for us that can look at big data, and they are able to detect anomalies not only to prosecute people

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involved in misdeeds, but also to then strengthen our ability to close those loopholes and gaps.

So, Chairperson, I think what is important is that the work that has flown out from the Lubisi report, the work that is being done in collaboration with the Special Investigating Unit is most definitely moving the needle. We are seeing increasing convictions. We are seeing speeding up in terms of people being arrested, but again I must share with this House that we are dealing with massive capacity constraints. Our counter corruption branch is sitting at 28% in terms of the staff it requires. Now I say to you, with tears in my eye, Chairperson, how anyone can be expected to perform at 100% when they've got 28%. Again, it is really emphasising to us the need to embrace things like big data, our ability to build an online integrated digital system, will also generate huge amounts of data for us and we can pick up anomalies then that could point us to possible fraud and corruption moving into the future. Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Mr P A PHALA: Thank you, Chairperson of the session and thank you, Minister for doing something about the challenges which the government is facing. Minister, the department is a critical institution in which the people of this country rely

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on, in many respects, and these challenges which involves sophisticated, domestic, and international criminal syndicates. They have a potential or capacity to compromise the strategic goals set by the department as well as the developmental vision set out by this administration. Minister, as you indicated that your internal anticorruption is at 28%. Can you please try to do more, Minister? We of expect more from you. How long do you think you can be able to reach at least 60% of the work which is expected from you? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, hon Chairperson, and thank you to the hon Phala for the question, if I may just clarify, the 28% is the staff complement, hon member. So, in other words, we only have 28% of the officials that we should be having in the counter corruption branch. They are performing at a level. higher than 28%, but my point is that they are severely hamstrung by the capacity constraints. So, the question should be directed to the Minister of Finance to be really to the point about it, because we continue to do far more than what our resources would suggest. But if this House would assist us in taking this question to the Minister of Finance, I think, we will get the answer, and I would be very happy with 60%, hon member. But as you know, the purse strings are not in our purview. We are certainly putting together, as

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I said earlier, the business case for why investing in Home Affairs and the Border Management Authority etc is a good investment. However, ultimately as a government, we would need to address the particular priority that we want to place on securing our national security and our borders.

I have to say it again, Chairperson, that it's very easy to stand up and say that I want to secure the borders. I want to secure national security, but if you don't fund it, then your words are meaningless. And, we need to really move collectively, all parties in this House, to a space where we not only say that this thing is important, but that we actually put pressure to ensure that the capacity and the resources are also made available. I can assure you, Chairperson, and through you this House that I miss no opportunity to make this argument and do whatever I can in my power along with the Deputy Minister and the department to make the argument that Home Affairs really does deserve more, if we take this issue seriously as a country. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr M M PETER: Hon Chairperson, I have already asked the Minister the question of the day. So, I don't want to kill my GNU. I thank you. [Laughter.]

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The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Thank you, hon Peter. We will then move on to the next question and that is from the hon Gotsell of the DA.

Mr N GOTSELL: Thank you, shame Minister, it seems the EFF breakers are very annoyed with the good work that the builders are doing in South Africa, but as the youngsters say, haters are going to hate. On the lighter note, I just want to report that I was at the Barrack Street, Home Affairs Office today. I received a very efficient and pleasant service, especially from a Mr Nhledi, his service was also followed up by an sms. So, there was some communication. Minister, the digital transformation of the Department of Home Affairs has been recognised as one of the ways that can assist in dealing with corruption. To what extent is digital transformation able to curb corruption and what is required in terms of personnel, budget and infrastructure to immediately embark on this transformation?

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you very much, hon Chairperson, and thank you to the member for the positive feedback. I would ask, if possible, to just send me the details of that official so that I can do what I mentioned earlier, which is to give recognition to officials like that

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who will deliver good service. And again, as I said earlier, we must always seek to differentiate between the good and the bad and. So, that is good to hear.

Yes, Chairperson, I mean the process we are embarking on in terms of digital transformation is certainly not something that will happen overnight. It is also not something that will happen for free, and it is not something that will be easy. So, you know the old adage is about how do you eat an elephant, and it is really one bite at a time. What we are trying to do now is to really focus on priorities and milestones that we can achieve along the way. So, we understand that it will take a long time to get to the end stage that we are envisioning, and I do not want any member of this House to be under the illusion that this will be a quick or overnight process. However, we are committed to taking steps along this journey.

The earlier question that was referenced by one of the members relating to the digital outcomes of whatever applications is a milestone like that. The shift to the trusted tour operator scheme is a milestone like that. And so, we are hopeful that within our existing resource constraints that we are able to build at least a prototype of what we have in mind. So,

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something that we can demonstrate to this House, to say that this is the direction we would like to move when it comes to the digital applications, and adjudications, and indeed communication, as the Member raised now with the sms. But we would have to move from there and I think that is not necessarily something that breaks the bank. But once we have that in place, the real challenge will come in terms of scaling up because ultimately, if we can build something that works, we would like it to cover everything that Home Affairs does, so that we close all the loopholes that we have been discussing today, as it relates to corruption.

So, the questions around infrastructure around financing are all very important and we will certainly sort of calculate and plan properly what those would need to be. But I have also said to colleagues in the department that the onus is really on us to first be able to demonstrate that we can do this, and we have started to make it through some of these small initial changes, like the digital waiver outcomes. We would like to do it in a few more spaces now so that we can ultimately come back to this House, and say right, we have confidence that we can do this and, of course, then report and take you also into confidence once we have put together the plans, for how we would expand. I think that is where the real intensity of

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infrastructure and resources will come into play. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mrs N N CHIRWA-MPUNGUSE: (On behalf of Ms M Kennedy) Thank you so much, Chairperson.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Are you taking the question on behalf of the hon Kennedy?

Mrs N N CHIRWA-MPUNGUSE: Yes, I am taking the question on behalf of the hon Kennedy?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): But the Chief Whip was not informed. So, please remember the rules in future that we must be informed in advance. OK, we will allow you for now. Thank you.

Mrs N N CHIRWA-MPUNGUSE: Yes, absolutely, we will remember in future. Thank you so much, Chairperson. Minister, corruption and bribery have become a common place within your department. Such an environment is therefore very conducive for International Criminal syndicates to infiltrate our borders. What urgent measures of intervention have been put in place to ensure that the dysfunction within your department, such as

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visa backlogs, is cleared to reduce the opportunity for corruption to thrive in the Department of Home Affairs? Thank you so much.

The MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS: Thank you, hon Chairperson and to the hon member. Well, we have put in place a very strong intervention when it comes to the visa backlog, because I think the implication made by the member is correct that when you have these kind of backlogs and basically desperate people who are waiting for the outcome of an application sometimes for years and some of the applications in this backlog go back a decade. Then those are desperate people, and you will find always people and the syndicate seeking to exploit the desperation and inefficiencies. So, that is exactly why the backlog is such an important project, because it closes down at least one of the avenues that leads to frustration and desperation really.

So, what I can report to this House is that we are clear of 50%. This project started out with 306,000 applications in the backlog. As I say, many of which went back as far as a decade and more than half of them have now been cleared. We are also looking at innovation in this space. So, the digital outcomes that have been issued to the ZEP waiver applicants was part of

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this backlog, hon members. So, there is 60 000 people that we have instantly relieved from that insecurity that they have been facing through a simple embrace, in this case of PDF technology. So, we will continue to look at ways like that that we can reduce this backlog and the impact that it has on people's lives because we do appreciate that it is, in fact, an economic destructive force. It creates the seed bed for corruption, and it is also bad for families if people who have legitimate applications have to wait this long.

So, we are working at speed to deal with this. Of course, the other interventions that I mentioned are happening simultaneously. So, we have made a clarion call inside the department that we would like to have no backlog by Christmas so that everyone can have a nice Christmas this year, where we do not have to worry about a mountain of paperwork waiting for us. But in the meantime, of course, are we continuing to use our own counter corruption branch as well as the proclamation that was recently signed by the President, which activated the Special Investigating Unit in this space to continue to clamp down on corruption because there is simply zero tolerance for it. Wherever there is corruption, where the evidence is found, those people will be prosecuted. And I believe you are already seeing an acceleration of that. And then of course finally we

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can close off opportunities for corruption if we remove human discretion and manual processes from the way in which we work. Thank you very much, hon Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, Minister Schreiber, and that brings us to the end of the questions to the Minister of Home Affairs. I would like to thank the hon Minister, for availing himself to answer questions and we do look forward to welcoming him. We will now proceed with the orders of the day and before we go on to the next item, though, I do want to just again, deal with the issues of decorum and the Rules of the House, specifically point out the issue around questions and I want to refer you all to Rule number 226, which specifically deals with the oral question sessions and it states that the heading of the rule indicates that this is questions to members of Cabinet, to emphasize that point rule number 221 subsection 5, specifically states no question may be addressed to any member other than a member of the Cabinet, ladies and gentlemen, Deputy Ministers are not members of the Cabinet, and our questions should therefore always be posed to Ministers themselves. It has however crept in over time that Deputy Ministers have been permitted to answer questions in this House. The Minister is currently in China and has asked for

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specific approval to enable the Deputy Minister to address the House. This has been confirmed and allowed to be in order, but I do want to make the point to the House that in future it will be Ministers that present to this House when we address questions, and unless there are extreme circumstances. Ministers will be requested to be here in person in the House. So having said that, hon members I welcome Deputy Minister, Moraka to the podium to deal with the questions, Deputy Minister.

Question 76:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (Ms T Moraka): Thank you House Chair, and greetings to your good self ... [Interjections.] ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Deputy Minister, can I ask you to take your seat so that we can deal with the point of order from the hon Nzimande?

Mr E J NZIMANDE: Hon Chair, it's just a question, because you've raised the most important point. Does it allow a waiver because you are the one who must protect the legalities of the proceedings. You have raised a point, if there is a waiver, then probably, the legality won't be a challenge for her to

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take the seat. So, I don't have a problem if you can assist me. Thank you.

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE NCOP: Chair, as you have correctly pointed out the practice and conventions in the past, which was in motion and illustrated even yesterday, even last week, even the previous ten years, that has been the practice.

Obviously, it is important that when a matter arises, what we have to do is to ensure that at the right time because if there is any intention to amend the Rules, the subcommittee on Rules and the Rules Committee will be able to deal with the matter. So, therefore, based on the conventions and the practice, I move that the advice that you gave to the House is in order.

Mr V GERICKE: It is a very important point. Let me just understand and if you don't have the answer, can we get some legal advice on this because in terms of my understanding, the Rules are enacted. It became an Act. So, in order for you to circumvent an Act or to amend an Act, you must go back to the relevant authority. You cannot just here in the aisles decide to amend the Act or on previous traits. It doesn't work like that.

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We are on dangerous ground if we do that. We are working with the Acts of Parliament and if the Act states that the Minister should answer, then the Minister should answer, Chairperson. This is our submission is the EFF that, although it has been explained by the Chief Whip and by you as the Chair, to say that it has been approved, it cannot be accepted. With all due respect, to the Deputy Minister. Unless the Rules have changed. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Members, I do think it was important for me to raise the matter of the Rules and to indicate what the situation is going forward. It has however been the convention that this Rule has been relaxed over time. It's not something that's just happened now, today.

It is something that was allowed yesterday and, in the past over time. It has been a decision of the presidium that this relaxation will no longer be permitted going forward, and therefore, as the presidium, the group of presiding officers, we have taken the decision to emphasise the point that the relaxation of this rule has been permitted in the past, it will no longer be permitted going forward.

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However, there has been expressed permission granted by the presidium to allow the Deputy Minister to proceed today, it will not happen again, and I urge you members to accept the ruling from the Chair that we may move forward. Hon Nzimande, I've made a ruling, but if it is a new point, you're welcome to stand.

Mr E J NZIMANDE: Okay, if you exercise your power, it must be lawfully and it must be justifiable. You can't give yourself the power that you don't have to relax the law, that you don't have. And you are saying we must read the law and the that is correct. That is wrong. It can never be correct that these proceedings can never be lawful as long as the empowering provision does not give you such a right to relax the law.

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE NCOP: Allow me to arrive on a point of order in conjunction with the Rule 50, which narrates and states the precedence of the decision of the presiding officer. You have made the ruling and therefore the ruling has to be respected therein.

Ms M MAKESINI: Chairperson, on Tuesday, the Deputy Minister of Monitoring and Evaluation was here in the House, and was not allowed to answer the question. The Minister was in China

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answering the question because we did not wave that Rule. So, what ... [Inaudible.] ... are you doing? In which department because on Tuesday we didn't allow the Deputy Minister to answer the question?

Sesotho:

Ema pele, ke bua ka State and Security.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you, hon Makeseni. Are you done? Thank you very much. Hon members, I have made my ruling. The Rule 50 as clearly presented by the Chief whip allows members to be dissatisfied with my ruling. And it does detail what steps need to be taken if they are dissatisfied and they can take it further. Hon members, the fact remains that there is precedence for this happening, it is convention that this has occurred. We will be proceeding today. It is the ruling of the Chair, and we will be proceeding.

Ms S M MOKOENA: Chair, we don't dispute that you are the presiding officer. However, the Rules do stand, Chairperson. We honestly feel that we are not being taken seriously by this department because in other times where we have allowed the Deputy Ministers to speak, it was because the Ministers were themselves here, either by virtual platform or they were here

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physically. For the Minister not to be here completely, is completely undermining this House and it is not proper for it to continue. Thank you.

Mr V GERICKE: Chairperson, my last point on this before the EFF makes a decision on our presence here. You can laugh but but blood has flowed for this constitutional democracy, blood has flowed, people have died for this constitutional democracy. The law does not allow - hold on, I'm busy speaking. The Chairperson has acknowledged me.

Mr M G MODISE: Well, let me help you.

Mr V GERICKE: You are not going to drown me. The Chairperson has acknowledged me.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Modise, hon Modise, please take your seat and allow the gentleman to conclude. Thank you.

Mr V GERICKE: Mr Chair, with all due respect towards you. No Chairperson has the power to supersede any rule or any law in this country. We are a constitutional democracy, and regardless of flimsy legal advice or whoever whispers in your

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ear, the fact of the matter is, these Rules have been enacted. This has become law, and we may not breach the law if we breach the law. We are acting in contempt of the law and that is that. It is what it is. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. Thank you.

Mr M G MODISE: Chairperson, let's not take it for granted what has been raised here. And in us not taking it for granted, I propose that all of you presiding officers have a five-minute caucus and come back and give us a way forward. Thanks.

Mr J S MAJOLA: Partly covered Chair depending on the outcomes of your caucus there. But I was about to say if the approach from you Chair, using your discretion, we were expecting that you will call the House to vote or you will propose the relaxation of the section and then the House agrees. But Chairperson, we agree that it will be determined by the outcomes of your meeting as to whether we will be able to participate on the unlawful proceeding. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much, hon members and your kind suggestions are well noted. However, you may well have noted as well that earlier the Chairperson

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called the House Chairperson and myself. We had a discussion already.

Mr Gericke, in response to your item, I do refer you to Rule 2. The Rules are important, hon members. And Rule 2 says that the Chairperson of the Council may give a ruling or make a rule on a matter for which these Rules do not provide. The fact is, hon members, that this is an unforeseen issue where the Minister is away ... [Interjections.] ...

Mr V GERICKE: But the Rules do provide. It's only in the event that the Rules do not provide, Sir. But the Rules do provide.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon members, you are welcome, as I said, in terms of Rule 50, to take my ruling further. We will, however, continue with the questions.

Ms M MAKESINI: [Inaudible.] ... executive powers to address us on the issue. Can you read the Minister's apology so that we get what the apology is because we are not even sure whether we have an apology, House Chairperson. With due respect, what you're doing is wrong. We cannot allow it.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon members, it was quite apparent to all of us that the connection from China for an absent Minister two days ago was insufficient for us to conduct our oversight properly. As such the ruling was made that we will accept the Deputy Minister today because the Minister that is supposed to be present today is also in China.

Mr M M PETER: Allow me please. Chair, I want to save you. Whilst I want to save you, I don't want you as the Government of National Unity, GNU to repeat what the ANC government used to do. That Minister doesn't have powers binding her to whatever answer that she is going to give us because there's no Minister that is on the platform.

Where did she get the powers? Your books can protect her, but you are promoting corruption by using your own power to this House. This is the seventh administration, let's change the idea. If there is no Minister, then that Deputy Minister is not allowed to come and answer here. We must wait for the Minister to come and answer. It's my advice, Chair. Thank you.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Your advice would have been held more water had it been consistent yesterday. The Chief Whip has the floor, can we hear him, please.

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE NCOP: You have made a ruling and as indicated in terms of the Rules of the House, your ruling takes precedence. I believe that we have also raised a point as agreed upon that this matter will serve in the subcommittee on the Rules so that we are able to relook at it because it's important and the fact that there is one Parliament.

In the National Assembly, the Deputy Ministers are allowed. In this House, because it has been a practice and convention, we have identified the need to align it with the Rules of the National Assembly. Therefore ... [Interjections.] ...

Ms M MAKESINI: We cannot wrap because if they are wrapping the Rules in the National Assembly, we cannot wrap the Rules here. here. We will never it.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon Makeseni, please take your seat. Hon Makeseni, please take your seat. Hon Molokomme?

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Ms K R MOLOKOMME: Chair, there was a proposal that the hon Modise had made earlier that you should take the five minutes break that you go and caucus and come back to this room before we can discuss further. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you hon Molokomme, that break has been had.

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE NCOP: I think what is important is that we don't collapse this House because there has already been a decision taken, therefore I impress upon the House Chair to continue.

Mr M F MOKWELE: Chair, I should think that you have made a ruling. We must always apply consistency in this House. Yesterday the Deputy Minister of Police was here.

Ms M MAKESINI: We will apply the law not consistency. We will apply the law!

Mr M F MOKWELE: Chair, you have made the ruling. I suggest that we proceed with our proceedings.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Absolutely correct.

Thank you hon Mokwele. We will be proceeding. I have indicated already. Members you've had first bite, second bite, first bite as well. Thank you. We will proceed with the hearing. If you are unhappy with my ruling, you are welcome to write in terms of Rule 50. Deputy Minister, please continue.

Ms M MAKESINI: Chairperson, please note as EFF, we are not going to participate.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you very much hon member.

Mr E J NZIMANDE: As the MK, we are also not participating. You will sit alone.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Thank you Mr Nzimande. You are welcome. Thank you so much. Deputy Minister, you are welcome to continue. Hon members, as you leave the House, please do so quietly.

Question 76:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION
(Ms A T Moraka): Thanks very much, House Chair, and greetings

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to all the presiding officers who are present here. The Chief whip of the National Council of Provinces, the esteemed members of this august House who are present here. Allow me to greet you in a revolutionary manner this evening, as we have entered into September, which is a very significant month to us, where we celebrate Heritage Month.

House Chair, it is really important that we note the fact that Minister Lamula is in transit from China, where he was attending a Forum of Africa and China Cooperation, where it was really impossible for him House Chair, to can connect virtually. And I thought members of this august House would really have the interest of putting South Africans first, will allow me to proceed as a delegated Deputy Minister, by the hon Minister Lamola.

But thanks very much for your indulgence, as I want to attend to parliamentary question that was raised by hon E P Noe, with regard to the bilateral and multilateral efforts of South African government in strengthening regional, continental and international cooperation against the rising levels of transnational crimes, especially in areas of human, drugs and arms trafficking.

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The response House Chair is that South Africa leverages her bilateral relations with partners globally and engages in various global multilateral fora, that are aimed at addressing issues of transnational organized crimes that are complementing our national efforts.

House Chair, it is also worth noting that South Africa is a state party to the three United Nations Drug Control Conventions and is also a party to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crimes and the African Union, AU, Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention that was earmarked for 2019 to 2025. As well as the Southern African Development Community, SADC, Protocol on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking in the region and also implements the SADC/ UN Office on Drugs and Crime, ODC, regional programs on making a SADC region, a place that is free from drugs and criminal activity.

House Chair, on addressing issues of illicit drug trafficking, the country South Africa is a member of the Commission on Narcotic Drug and its subsidiary bodies, the heads of national drug law enforcement agencies, which has enabled South Africa to be a better positioned to address complex and evolving challenges posed by drug trafficking and the misuse thereof,

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including contributing to both national and global efforts to mitigate their impact.

On trafficking persons House Chair, we continue to convene cross-border bilateral engagements with respect member states. Our law enforcement agencies actively participate in the Interpol and also in the Afropol joint operation against trafficking and the smuggling of illicit items, where it has resulted in numerous arrests and identification of potential victims.

House Chair, in conclusion both our multilateral and bilateral efforts have been effective, although more can still be done. Our membership and participation in these multilateral bodies have seen our countries received immense benefits, evidence that various countries, programs and projects jointly conducted with the UNODC Regional Office for Southern Africa. They are aimed at enhancing capacity and also technical assistance and awareness in building socioeconomic benefits for our country. I thank you.

Mr E P NOE: Thank you, House Chair, thank you hon Deputy Minister. According to persistent media reports and of course, even within states intelligence agency of the country. There

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are organized criminal syndicates within SADC. Your response was more broader, just to bring it home, member countries that are ... there is a theft or stealing of vehicles and livestock from South Africa which are smuggled into the neighbouring countries and those that are smuggled illegally, also including high calibre weapons and drugs, into South Africa.

In the light of this, has this matter and other related matters ever received, the attention of the structure of the SADC? And if so, what are the planned partnerships to fight these transitional crimes? And if not, what are the plans of the South African government in terms of elevating these matters to the SADC as part of forging regional partnerships against transitional crimes? I thank you, House Chair.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Thanks very much House Chair, once more and also thanks to hon Noe for that follow up question. It is worth noting hon Noe that the SADC ministerial committee of the organ, which is your MCO on politics, defence, security cooperation, regularly receives reports on SADC member countries efforts to combat organized and transnational crimes in the region.

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Of course, the issue that you are raising, it's really an issue that is affecting our people, especially in the province of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and also in KwaZulu-Natal, KZN, because those are provinces where these criminal syndicates are operating in.

And it is really worth noting that the 26th Ministerial Committee of the organ held on the 11th to the 12th of July 2024 in Lusaka, which I happen to attend upon my appointment, really received a report amongst others on the implementation of the SADC protocol, on the control of firearms, ammunition and other related crimes that have been happening. Some of them are crimes that you just spoke about around issues of livestock and also issues of transmitting vehicles that are stolen from South Africa through our borders to the neighbouring countries.

House Chair, it is worth noting that the SADC region also has a regional strategy to prevent and combat transnational organized crime. It is a comprehensive strategy to identify, understand and also combat transnational crimes within the region of SADC. The SADC has approved the SADC UNODC regional program on making SADC a safer and a place where drugs and crimes are not happening.

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House Chair, South Africa supports the operationalization of the SADC protocol on the control of firearms, ammunition and other related crimes, which provides countries in the region with a framework for combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Regional chiefs of police subcommittees, which South Africa is part of decision to institute crime intelligence joint operations on small arms and light weapons with the view of identifying the trafficking and also the routes and also the sources and the destination and the number and the nature of those involved in those criminal activities.

South Africa as part of the region has prioritized reporting of activities of this nature and also come up with programs that are aimed at relating to the African Union Road Map to silence the gun in the whole region of Africa. With a view of implementing anti trafficking and anti-smuggling loss. And there was the memorandum of understanding, MOU, that was signed to harmonize the region across the whole continent of Africa, with the aim to establish and strengthen cross-border mechanism and task forces to facilitate intelligence sharing, joint operations and investigations. I thank you.

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Mr M BILLY: Thank you, House Chairperson, I just want to check if it's procedural for the Deputy Minister to read a reply to a follow up question? Anyway, Deputy Minister, I want to follow up and ask that; following South Africa's failure to arrest Sudanese President, President Omar Al Bashir in 2015, the country's role in upholding international justice, has been questionable, particularly on the question of global cooperation in apprehending a suspect, accused of human rights atrocities. Both the International Criminal Court, ICC, and South African courts confirmed that the South African, SA government had erred in its failing to arrest Amor Al Bashir.

In light of the above question, is the South African government committed to cooperating with international bodies dealing with criminality, particularly bodies such as the ICC, in arresting wanted criminals and is South Africa still in support of the Rome statute? Thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Thanks very much hon House Chair, and I want to really appreciate the question as it came forth, but I want to request your indulgence in this regard to that House Chair, the matter is raised by hon member that tries to depict South Africa as an organization or a state that does not respect

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international institutions that are aimed at helping us to address any criminal elements. That perception is misleading to this House and also misleading to the general public.

As I've alluded to earlier, that South Africa continues to participate in multilateral forums, where we continue to advocate for peace and stability. And also dealing with issues of criminal elements within the entire region of Africa and also the entire continent of Africa and the SADC as a whole. So, really that perception that is driven here that South Africa is a banana Republic, it doesn't warrant my attention, House Chair. And I will request that I leave it at that. Thank you.

Question 88:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms T Moraka): Thanks once more, House Chairperson. We have structured our reply to the question as follows, one of the principles listed under article 4 of the SADC Treaty is the commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Article 5 of the same treaty outlines that SADC objectives, as among others, is to consolidate and maintain democracy, peace, security and stability. As a member state, South Africa exceeded to the treaty being confident that this apex regional

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organisation is an important vehicle to preserve our shared values and promotes common interest for the regional community at large.

Importantly, the SADC Parliamentary Forum established in 1996 that called the Organ of Politics, Defence, Security and Co-operation with the aim to ensure that close co-operation on matters of politics, defence and security shall at all times promote peaceful settlements of disputes through negotiation, mediation and arbitration. The matters of mediation and dialogue within the members states of SADC are the responsibility of that particular SADC organ. In this regard, the organ is supported by a panel of elders and the mediation reference group and it really worth noting that that panel of elders comprise eminent personalities that include former heads of states and also former heads of government who are really playing a significant role in supporting SADC mediation process and facilitate confidence-building measures as mandated by the summit that is led by heads of states and those heads of governments.

The mediation reference groups serve as an advisory arm of the panel of elders. It formulates recommendations to the panel of elders regarding the need and the nature of specific dialogue,

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specific mediation and also preventative diplomacy initiated within the region of SADC.

Amongst the members of mediation reference group in South Africa we are also represented there as a country. We have someone who is representing us in that particular body.

In support of consolidation of democracy in the region, the SADC adopted principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. The principles and guidelines are promoted through the SADC Electoral Advisory Council and the SADC election observer missions that are deployed from time to time every time when member states conduct elections.

The organ designates the heads of missions of SADC election observers missions and this mission comprise observers from the SADC member states. The SADC structural arrangements made it possible for all member states to input in decision-making processes as report are considered at ministerial meetings where all member states happen to attend that particular meeting.

South Africa utilises these meetings to contribute to issues of human rights, mediation, dispute resolutions with a view of

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finding lasting solution to those conflicts. South Africa has participated and contributed to SADC initiatives that are aimed at chieving issues of mediation, dialogues in the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, Madagascar and the Kingdom of Lesotho among others, just to mention a few. South Africa also utilise its bilateral relations engagements to promote issues of human rights and dialogue and mediation within the affected countries. As I move thank you.

Mr N GOTSELL: Thank you, Chair. Deputy Minister, that was quite a substantial reply. Just last month, a head of the SADC's 44th Summit held in Harare a series of the so-called preventative detention measures were invoked in terms of prodemocracy activists in Bulawayo. Respect for human rights and for the rule of law is not only a cornerstone of South Africa's democracy, but as you have just said it is enshrined in the SADC Treaty. You further said that it is an important vehicle to promote our shared values for the community at large. Why is it then that when South Africa attended the summit our government was silence on this egregious disregard for basic human rights? Why is it then that we have not said a word about the Zanu-PF's move to extend or even abolish presidential terms?

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The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms T Moraka): Thank you very much, House Chair. Let me appreciate that follow-up question from the hon member. But it is worth noting that we as South African government would want to indicate and also affirm that we respect the sovereignty of every state that exist within SADC and also within the continent at large. There won't be any day where the President of this country would wake up and go and speak about matters that concern Zimbabwe as the follow-up question specifically referred to Zimbabwe. We want to stand firm as the government of South Africa and also as the Department of International Relations and Co-operation to indicate that there is a need for all of us to respect the sovereignty of every state that exist globally and also that exists within the continent and also within the SADC regardless of our own individual perspective that we might hold. We must continue adhering ourselves to the issue that South Africa continue to uphold the sovereignty of every state. Therefore, you will expect us to really expect the same to be done to us. Every time where there are issues we don't expect other member states to encroach on the sovereignty of our own country.

Ms S NDHLOVU: Chair, I am rising in terms of Rule 68. I think it is important for this House to note that we are now

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becoming serious in this House. This thing of hon Badenhorst interfering or interrupting the delegate, the Ministers or whoever because he is sitting there, he must be called to order, please.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr D R Ryder): Hon member, the Rules allowance for people to interject provided they don't drown the speaker, and we will continue.

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE NCOP: I rise on a point of order Chair. I suspect that difficult hon Badenhorst is just he is just sitting closer to the podium, and I can tell you it is not a nicer experience. So, I suspect he must reconsider where he could sit. We can discuss this outside this meeting, Chair. Thank you.

Ms J S MANANISO: Thank you, Chairperson. Let me welcome the Deputy Minister as well acknowledge the response that she has given to the question. However, my follow-up question is that, human rights are violated by political conflicts, forced migration, preventable diseases, poverty and unemployment. What concrete bilateral steps has South Africa taken outside the multilateral platforms to advance human rights? What is the impact of these efforts? I thank you.

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The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms T Moraka): Thanks House Chair once more for the opportunity, and thanks to the hon member Mananiso for that particular progressive follow-up question. Indeed, I would like to implore other members to really make follow-up questions the manner in which you are doing. Others are reinventing new questions. Really, they are trying their luck but we will leave no stone unturned and try to address all those issues.

House Chair, South Africa has advocated for the uniform application of the principle of the UN Charter and all international laws including upholding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states. The failure to inform and fairly implement international laws in all conflict situation globally weakens the normative framework of international accountability and makes the world really a safer place for all of us to live in, including issues of fundamental human rights.

As the hon member has alluded to, we really need to continue upholding fundamental human rights of all persons who are living in the entire globe and also in the region and also in the SADC region. We want to assure you that as long as the

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country exist within the broader spectrum of the global community, we will continue from time to time respecting issue of international laws and also issues of human rights because they are fundamentally driven towards helping us to enhance issues of constitutional development and also driving issues of democracies everywhere in the world.

Thank you very much, hon Mananiso, for that particular question. We need to continue emphasising the need for everyone regardless of your position in society to continue respecting human right issues and also abide by all the international institutions that are aimed at protecting our human right issues and also protecting the rights of all persons regardless of religious orientation, regardless of their sexual orientation and also regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds of where they come from. Thank you very much.

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Thank you, Chair. Deputy Minister, surely, the purpose of South Africa to be the member of the SADC would be to advance human rights through economic developments. Are we, however, co-ordinating our needs in South Africa with those of SADC? According to the Statistics SA most immigrants claiming human rights come from the SADC

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regions to find work in South Africa. My question to you is, can we through dialogue and mediation secure more employment for South African citizens, local and even into the SADC countries, also if not yet, how soon?

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms T Moraka): Thanks once more House Chair. Let me appreciate the follow-up question from hon Van den Berg. It is indeed an issue of a serious concern to us to make sure that we safeguard our borders. Of course, you would have seen the government of South Africa in the previous administration, the Six administration, came up with the whole issue of Border Management Authority. Central to that issue is to make it a point that we control entrances through our borders of anyone within the SADC region, especially those that are coming from our neighbouring countries.

With the same spirit hon Van den Berg we are more worried about the levels of inequality, poverty and unemployment that is mainly affecting our ordinary citizens on the ground. Having to put up measures through the Border Management Authority, we are trying our level best to protect our territory from all those illicit people who are entering our country illegally.

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To make it worse we have private institutions within the hospitality space who are contentiously putting these people at the forefront at the expense of our local employees. We really need to look into these measures and try to engage with the Department of Employment and Labour to really put up restrictive measures on employment issue in the country. Employment opportunities that exist within this country are necessarily meant for the people of this country, South Africans, and no one else. Thanks very much.

Question 79:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon House Chairperson, once more thank you for the opportunity and thanks to the hon member Nonkonyana for that progressive question. It is really worth noting that the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, Brics, plus grouping is a partnership of leading, emerging and developing countries namely, Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Russia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. They have a shared vision of a fairer, just inclusive and representation globally where in we need to drive issues of economic, financial and peace dividends to the global South.

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The strategy for Brics Economic Partnership Agenda 2025 was adopted in 2020 by Brics member states to complement and strengthen their existing bilateral relations, while contributing to the increased economic growth and competitiveness of the Brics economies.

As an expanded grouping, Brics will continue to enhance the voice of the Global South and emerging markets and also developing countries in ensuring a more just, equitable, global, financial architecture to protecting the developing countries against the interplay of the powers that be.

The Brics Ministers of Trade continue to call for a predictable, fairer and equitable trade environment consistent with the rules of the World Trade Organisation as crucial for advancing economic prosperity.

The Brics economic partnership underscores the importance of co-operative trade regulations in shaping a more equitable and sustainable global economy that supports the comprehensive development and positive transformation of our country and the continent using instruments like the Africa Continental Free Trade Area that we have just seen happening within the Eastern part of the continent.

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Finally it is worth noting that it is so important to emphasize that South Africa's efforts to reduce inequality domestically and between countries are also active pursuit bilateral relations that we have entered with and as well through multilateral forums such as the World Trade Organisation, the G20 and India, Brazil, South Africa, Ibsa, Forum which is a trilateral forum that is aimed at developing the three countries that are India, Brazil and South Africa economically. Thank you very much.

Inkosi M NONKONYANA: Hon House Chairperson and hon Deputy Minister thank you for such a reply. Congratulations for standing the tide. You have just shown to every one else that our Ministries are governed and managed collectively. You have been equal to the task.

Hon Deputy Minister allow me therefore to express our appreciation of the courageous efforts that South Africa has taken in promoting the agenda of the poor in developing countries in the multilateral institution of which the Brics plus is amongst such institutions.

Based on the South African advocacy and lobby in the Brics: Is there any plan for the strengthening of South African

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relations in the economic, finance and trade relations? If not, why not, if so, what are the relevant details? Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon House Chairperson, thanks once more and thank you hon Nonkonyana for that progressive follow up question that you have just posed. It is really heart warming to see members of this House really are preoccupied with matters that affect our people on the ground which has to do with issues of economic and financial inclusion of every member of our society regardless of the location where they find themselves in.

We want to indicate that South Africa consistently advocates across all relevant foras for the reform of global governance institutions to be fairer, just, inclusive and also more representative with the aim of shaping a global order that delivers economic, financial and peace dividends to the Global South.

Hon House Chairperson, this vision is shared by countries of the Global South and South to South co-operation in groupings such as the group of the 77, G77, the nonaligned movements,

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NAM, that also speaks to issues of Ibsa that I alluded to that it is a trilateral forum that is entered into by India, Brazil South Africa and also the Brics countries as well as North South groupings such as the group of 20, G20, which are more focused on the implementation of sustainable developmental agenda and the urgent need of the tangible reform of the global economic, financial and trade systems.

Hon House Chairperson, for this reasons, the Brics countries have established the New Development Bank as a platform for addressing the challenges faced by developing nations particularly in the area of financing for infrastructure and sustainable development programmes.

South Africa's Presidency of the G20 which is going to commence on 1 December 2024 will build on the efforts and the success of the preceding Indonesian, India and Brazilian G20 Presidencies in addressing the challenges faced by the Global South including poverty, unemployment and inequality in and between various member states that are affiliated to those various bodies.

South Africa's aim to harness the collective efforts of the G20 to confront the challenges as well as to shape a more

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equitable sustainable world order with the focus on sustainable development as a core of its mandate as in when it continues to chair the G20. All of you hon members be on the look out for the chairperson and the Presidency of the G20 because it is going to really help us to unlock all these platforms for the possibility of us to can transform our current structure of our economy in such a way that it can be inclusive and can accommodate everyone regardless of where they are living and where they come from. Thanks.

Mr O J MOKAE: Hon House Chairperson, thank you to the Deputy Minister for the response. My follow up question is as follows: South Africa has often been identified as a gateway to Africa and Brics is viewed as a vehicle that would strategically position South Africa and the continent in a favourite position to benefit in terms of trade and development.

Has South Africa lived up to the expectation of using its involvement in Brics to champion and equitable share of trade benefits for itself and fellow African states or this arrangement has mainly benefitted other members of Brics with exception of South Africa and if so, hon Deputy Minister, can

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you please provide us with some examples. Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon House Chairperson and hon member thank you for that follow up question. It is true that South Africa and in particular the Limpopo province is regarded as the gateway to Africa. Reason being that it is easier for you when you are in Limpopo in South Africa, to can easily go to the rest of the continent Africa either through our ports of entries that varies from the ground transport and also from those that would wish to fly to the rest of the continent.

Having said that House Chairperson, we need to leverage on those platforms and make it a point that as and when we participate within the Brics forums, we must attract more foreign direct investments to come to our country so that as and when those investments are entering the country can easily find the way to get within Southern African Development Community, SADC, and also reach out to other countries that are in the continent of Africa.

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So, really, we are indeed a gateway to Africa and already Brazil through the Ibsa Forum is looking at ways on how we can strengthen our bilateral relations with the government of Brazil on matters that has to do with tourism, agriculture and other avenues that are economic in nature. For as you are in South Africa, you want to go to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe for instance you have to come through our ports of entry and easily get to Victoria Falls for leisure and other tourism activities.

So, indeed, we will continue to be regarded as the gateway to Africa as a country and that needs to be understood in that context. Thanks, hon House Chairperson.

Mr B J FARMER: Hon House Chairperson, in the event that my question might not also be referred to as progressive, let me say the following: I once in my previous life was taught by the stalwart in the trade union movement that you only refer to a deputy as the deputy when the principal is present. Otherwise, that person is the principal. So, forgive me if I from that lesson referred to her as the Minister.

The Institute for Global Dialogue on 12 March 2024 stated that and I quote:

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In a rapidly roading World Trade Organisation global trading system Brics plus nations are thus in prime position to build a new trading and commodity architecture one based on equity and common pathways.

Can the Deputy Minister inform us of possible new contours of a new trading system led by Brics plus nations, please? Thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon House Chairperson and thanks to the hon member for that progressive follow up question posed. Hon member it is worth noting that the only person mandated by the Constitution of this Republic to appoint Ministers is the President of the Republic. No other person. Regardless of your previous orientation where you are coming from. However, we also need to really emphasize that I stand to be appointed as the Deputy Minister for the Department of International Relations and and Co-operations and not the other way round as you are alluding to.

It is worth noting that the participation of Brics countries at the centre of all those initiatives hon member, is to make it a point that we leverage on economic, political and other

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social avenues that are available within the Brics member states. We have felt it that it will not be sufficient that for South Africa, Brazil, China and India to continue to participate alone within the Brics forums. We have then invited other countries that forum.

Now we are being joined by several countries including Indonesia as I have already alluded to. That platform we call it Brics plus forum. It therefore accommodates other entries to the forum in the sense that as we drive the economic developmental agenda, we are not doing that alone. However, we are opening the avenues to those member states who are willing to enter into those kinds of platforms just to leverage on the opportunities that exist within those forums in order to transform and grow their respective member states economic development issues. Thank very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Deputy Minister what I like most in what you have done is to clarify the position that this House is not a union but the preacher of the Constitution. I am very appreciative of that.

Question 89:

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The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): The question from hon Billy from the DA is asking, whether in light of this confirmation on 12 July 2024 that South Africa was still working to implement the Grand Inga Treaty?

This is how we respond to that question, hon Billy, that the 12th session of the SA Democratic Republic of Congo by national commission that was held on 06 July 2023, it has noted that the initial 10 years for the duration of the Grand Inga Hydropower Project Treaty will come to an end in March 2025. It will just happen in a matter of few months to come. We have agreed to extend the treaty and directed the respective Ministers to begin with the process of exchanging diplomatic notes amongst themselves that are related to the extension of that particular treaty.

However, this process has not yet been finalised and we are really looking at avenues on trying to sensitise those respective Ministers to try to adhere to that particular renewal of that treaty. South Africa's obligations are provided for in the treaty and of a particular relevance in Article 4 section 2, which stipulates that the Republic of South Africa will undertake reasonable measures to procure 2,5

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megawatts of power generated by the Phase 1 of Inga 3 Low Head Phase on terms including tariffs which should be agreed upon by the relevant entities from both countries.

In this regard, the DRC government through an agency for the development and the promotion of the Grand Inga Hydropower Project will appoint a developer for the construction of that particular dam. South Africa will be responsible for the transmission line from the borders of the DRC where it must pass through Zambia, where it will go through Kasane border enroute to South Africa through Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. At a cost to be determined through a technical solution and the outcome of the feasibility study that is currently not yet concluded.

This is in accordance with Article 12 section 3 of the treaty which stipulates that the Republic of South Africa shall make reasonable endeavours to establish such transmission mechanism as a necessary way to permit the transport of energy purchased from the delivery point to its ultimate destination which will be for household usage and also to the big businesses that continues to rely on this kind of energy sources for them to be viable. So, thank you very much for that question.

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IsiZulu:

Mnu M BILLY: Sibonge futhi Sihlalo, umbuzo wokuqala ubukade uzama ukuthola ukuthi ngabe uhulumeni waseNingizimu Afrika uyayeseka yini loku okuthiwa ... [Akuzwakali.]. uSekela Ngqongqoshe azange awuphendule kodwa ke asikho lapho. Umbuzo engizowubuza njengamanje uthi: Ingabe uhulumeni waseNingizimu Afrika ukulungele yini ukuhoxa kwi-Grand Inga Treaty, uma ngabe kucaca kuvela futhi ukuthi lolu hlelo lolu asikwazi ukulikhokhela ngezwe laseNingizimu Afrika?

Ngabe njengezwe laseNingizimu Afrika sikulindele lokhu ukuthi sizibophezele ekutheni uma ngabe kuvela ukuthi ngeze sikwazi ukukhokhela lolu hlelo olubukeka sengathi luwuhlelo elizobiza izigidigidi zama randi ukulinganiselwa kumabhiliyoni angama-80 noma kuzwakala uSekela Ngqongqoshe esho ukuthi iNingizimu Afrika yona iyokhokhela ukuhanjiswa izintambo eziletha ugesi osuka eDRC odlula emazweni amane noma amahlanu ukuze ugcine ufikile lapha eNingizimu Afrika. Umbuzo Sekela Ngqongqoshe uthi ingabe sikulindelele ukuthi mhlawumbe lolu hlelo lungagcina selubonakala sengathi luwuhlelo esingesakwazi ukuthi silukhokhele njengeNingizimu Afrika. Sibonge.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Thanks to the hon member of the DA

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for that follow up question. It is worth noting that the expenditure costs to that particular project that you are referring us to, they are not yet known. Hence, my earlier response to that particular question to say that the cost to that particular project are yet to be determined wherein it then makes it impossible for us as a country to say we can afford or we can't afford because roughly we don't have an idea of the cost effect to that particular project.

We are still awaiting the outcome of the feasibility study hon member that will indicate the cost implications. Upon that, we will then take a decision if indeed it is cost effective for us to continue with that initiative or we can explore other avenues that are making some business sense to us. However, central to what we want to emphasise here is the need for us as the government of South Africa to work towards resolving the crisis that the country has been faced with which is the issue of load shedding. If it means that for us to move away from load shedding we need to look into all these avenues, so let it be so that the economy of this country can grow without any hindrance around issues of lack of energy for those businesses to continue to thrive. Thank you.

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Mr P A PHALA: Thank you, Deputy Minister for the elaboration on this matter. However, Deputy Minister, this was a strategic mega project meant to play a vital economic role which will benefit the Southern African Development Community, SADC, countries including the east and central African communities by providing hydropower resources. As you have indicated, Minister, our country had intended to buy some 2,5 gigawatts from the output of that project.

We are aware, Deputy Minister, as you indicate as well about the instabilities there. We encourage the department to assist in resolving the crisis there. The DRC and Africa is endowed with natural mineral resources which can benefit the entire continent. Africa is the future and only the African people can benefit if we stop all the crisis in the DRC and ensure that we all benefit. So, we really encourage our Minister that let the department assist in dealing with the crisis there. Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): A word of appreciation from the hon Phala for that follow up question that is very constructive in nature and really it is forward looking and it is in the best interest of the people of this country, very progressive.

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I think we can't ignore the fact that Africa as a continent, not only the DRC, Africa as a continent it is endowed with the richness of mineral resources. Some of these mineral resources can be utilised towards the energy generation capacity that we all are looking forward to. Indeed, the efforts by our South African government to add the 2 500 megawatts to its national grid through that Grand Inga Treaty power purchase agreement thereby fending off the whole issue of load shedding where we need to create sustainable energy security in line with the 2022 energy action plan.

We really need to leverage on these other four sources of energy that we need to look into. We have to look at the issue of utilising our environment including the temperatures that always regarded that in Africa it is very hot, why are we not utilising those environments to make it a point that we turnaround the situation around the energy availability factor. We need to enter into these renewable energies without any hesitance. We need to look into issues of solar power, the hydropower that I spoke about and all other energy sources that are at our disposal so that we can be able to continue to deal with this challenge of load shedding that is really a having a negative impact towards the economic stability of this country.

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Indeed, hon member, we will leverage more on those endowed resources that we have within the Continent of Africa, especially in the area of DRC and other countries that have those mineral resources that can help us to really come out of this national crisis of load shedding and be in a better position to even attract investment in this country. Whilst there is no assurance that businesses will get a nondisrupted supply of energy, it will be very difficult for us to attract foreign direct investments in this country so that we can be able to grow our economy for the better.

So, thanks very much for that follow up question. We will look into all those other avenues and all those energy resources that are at our disposal and make it a point that we create a more sustainable energy availability factor for the businesses that are continuing in South Africa and also for the utilisation of the households for that particular energy source that will be available for them to use. Thak you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Deputy Minister for your responses to the questions that were posed on you. Nevertheless, now hon members, we were supposed to go to question number 98, which was asked by hon Nzimande, ...

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isiZulu:

Umphephetwa.

English:

... from the MK Party. So, what has happened is that hon Nzimande is not here. According to Rule 228(6) is that if he has not nominated someone to stand in for him that question lapses. As the NCOP we are passionate and we decided that on the issue of the Rules we will apply them rigidly.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Hon House Chair, that Rule 228 also specifies that unless the Deputy Minister decides if she wants to answer the question.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Yes, it does provide for that but I prefer that let's follow the Rules slavishly so and just say sorry to hon Dr ... [Inaudible.] ... and hon Medupe that you will get the next chance in the follow up questions, please.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Chair, Rule 228 is clear. You have to ask the Deputy Minister and she has the right to say that she will answer the question or not.

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The CHIEF WHIP OF THE NCOP: Hon Chair, like as we did earlier on, it is important that the Rules of this House are enforced. Once the Presiding Officer made a ruling, that ruling takes precedence on any other matters. Therefore, let us respect our esteemed Presiding Officer. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Chief Whip, as I said that it's up to the Deputy Minister to do that but as I said that I preferably ...

An HON MEMBER: ... on a point of order, Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Alright, I am still making a ruling and the ruling is very clear. It is wrong that when a Presiding Officer is still attending to a point of order, you must just keep your peace and then wait until he is done, and then number 2 again, what I want to raise again with you is that you cannot make a point of order on a point of order which is already been determined, please. What is critical here is that it is up to the Deputy Minister but - as I said - preferably with the focus here that the members must learn to stick to the rules 100%. It is up to you, Deputy Minister.

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The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Really, it won't serve any purpose for me to respond to the question to the hon member who has disregarded the House as you were making a ruling. I want to emphasise that the rules of this August House they supersedes any other thing, whether you feel emotionally strongly that you want to deal with things in a particular way. So, I will abide myself with the rules of this august House. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Deputy Minister. The next question hon Deputy Minister ... uh uh, hon Farmer ... hay, hon Badenhorst, please, please, you cannot have a conversation with the Deputy Minister. Hers is to come and to respond to the question. She made her response according to the rules. She cannot be challenged. No, Rule 228(6) ... No, no, no, you are out of order. Hon Badenhorst, you are out of order.

Mr B J FARMER: I rise on the point that you will find the rule there somewhere. No, Chair, you said the other day that if I raise an issue that relates to the order you will rule on it. So, allow me, please.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): What are you rising on?

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Mr B J FARMER: I am rising on you engaging with member Badenhorst in a two-way street. That should not happen according to the rules.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Alright, your point of order, hon Farmer, is not sustained because as a Presiding Officer I have all the rights and power in the world to engage with the members of this House. So, it's ... [Inaudible.] ...

Question 80:

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CO-OPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon House Chair, hon Medupe asked the following, whether in light of South Africa's critical role in the mediation of Ukraine-Russian War and also in the Israeli-Palestinian War and other conflicts in parts of Africa, whether there are any plans to intensify South Africa's interventions in such conflicts. I think we have structured our response in such a way that we need to always indicate that South Africa's foreign policy is based on the principles of human rights, solidarity and progressive internationalism. We are of the view that, irrespective of whether the use of force by any country is lawful or unlawful within the prescripts of International Law, the use of force is never in any way a wise decision for any country to embark

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on. There are no winners in wars, and invariably the way wars are waged lays the basis for the next war within the root cause issues being dealt with. I think we must continuously advocate for such to be refrained upon.

Based on this House Chair, we must advocate for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and wars through dialogue and diplomacy measures. This does not therefore mean that we favour a peace at any cost or approach, as this approach can lead to impunity and never-ending cycles of violence and repression that can ensue anywhere in the world. We take an approach that the resolution of conflicts must lead to what is referred to as, a just peace mechanism, that is, peaceful processes that do not neglect justice. Where necessary, reconciliation must always be considered.

We believe that the United Nations and other related institutions of global governance must be at the centre of building that just peace mechanism whenever there are wars and conflicts that are taking place anywhere in the world. Guided by this framework House Chair, we have been actively seeking for that just peace to the institution that is in Ukraine. Currently, South Africa continues to play an important role in defining some of these key principles that may guide the

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framework for peaceful talks between the countries of Russia and Ukraine. This includes negotiating agreements as the G20 that are continuously putting them under pressure, that they need a just peace mechanism.

That will therefore require that, we respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine and that the international legal prohibition on the acquisition of land through the use of force must be adhered to in Ukraine and in all other war and conflict situation. These are the same principles championed by the African Peace Initiative wherein President Ramaphosa continues to play a leading role in trying to bring those peaceful mechanisms for those conflicts that are taking place. Thank you very much, House Chair.

Ms O D MEDUPE: Hon House Chair, let me thank the hon Deputy Minister for your elaborate reply against the background of concrete steps that South Africa has taken in pursuit of mediation, as you have outlined. Deputy Minister, what are the concrete positive results for South Africa's contribution in peace building in Africa and other parts of the world, like the ongoing Israel onslaught against people of Palestinians and Ukraine-Russian War? Also, what has this affected? How has this affected international standing of South Africa? What are

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the benefits of South Africa's role in the peace building globally? Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION
(Ms A T Moraka): Hon House Chair, indeed...

IsiXhosa:

...kuyasetyenzwa apha eNCOP.

English:

We do pay for that follow up question. Hon members, we must take note of the fact that South African government, through our Ministry, which is the Department of International Relation and Co-operation and other relevant Ministries, continue on issues of mediation and conflict resolution initiatives through the institutions, decisions and mandates of the requisite peace and security structures of the Southern African Development Community, SADC and also in the African Union and the United Nations. These are the platforms House Chair that continue to help us to bring peace and security within the continent, SADC and the rest of the world.

The South African government when mandated to mediate in a conflict situation, it endeavours to also engage the affected

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countries through bilateral channels, including high level visits. South Africa would also go to an extra mile of deploying its special envoys and the use of its diplomatic representation to create a conducive mediation environment through confidence-building measures that will, from time to time, continue to achieve through our embassies and our consular that continue to exist within the rest of the world.

South Africa, through Department of International Relations and Co-operations has established several programmes of action to capacitate mediators through training and peer review engagements. In addition, South Africa has also established a very progressive network called the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation. It has also gone to an extra mile of training several women and young people in the mediation areas within the continent to play a more meaningful role in mediation efforts within their own national context.

So, it is really worth noting and applauding that we are trying to bring women and youth on board in matters of resolving conflicts. If you look at how we used to do things, even in the African Union, we are still finding those patriarchal elements where women are not allowed to participate in any mediation efforts. Therefore, Chairperson,

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in terms of the impact of that particular programme, we want to make this clarion call to the rest of the members and the public at large, to look out for that programme that I spoke about, that trains women and young people in efforts of mediation and peaceful resolution to various conflicts. It is now called Getrude Shope Peace Mediation Network. Members must really talk to us so that we can send as many women as possible and young people to those mediation trainings so that in future we can have women and children at the centre of finding lasting peace solution to the conflicts that exist within the continent and also at the rest of the world. Thank you, Chair.

IsiXhosa:

Mnu. M M PETER: Molo Mhlonitshwa omhle. IUDM ithi yona ayikwazi ukuba ingaqhubeka phambili ithetha noSekela Mphathiswa ingamazi ukuba uphi uMphathiswa. Kufuneka sikhumbule ukuba uMphathiswa uhlawulwa ngeerhafu zabantu izigidi zeemali. Ngoko ke, ndixolelele mntwana wasekhaya, andikwazi ukuba ndikubuze umbuzo. Enkosi.

THE HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, hon Peter. You have a right to your own opinion because the Deputy Minister has explained very clearly that the Minister is in

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transition from Beijing back to South Africa. So, he would not be able to connect with us. That is why she was sent here. But it is your opinion and is respected. [Interjections.] No, you cannot answer back to me, alright? No. Thank you, hon Peter.

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE NCOP: House Chair, I just needed to clarify that I have referred the apology of the Minister to the House Chairperson (Mr D M Ryder). So, there is no confusion in this House that the esteemed Minister did submit an apology to this House. Thank you, House Chair.

Mr N GOTSELL: Hon House Chair, Deputy Minister, on 11 December 2018, the Constitutional Court ordered that the South African government acted unlawfully and irrationally when it conspired with other heads of states of the SADC by taking part in the suspension of the SADC Tribunal. This suspension of the tribunal closed the doors of justice to more than 400 million citizens of SADC countries and it negatively impacted on the right to access of justice, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised persons. It also hampers the achievement of just peace.

Hon Deputy Minister, we are aware that you have complied with the Constitutional Court order to withdraw South Africa's

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signature from the agreement to suspend the activities of the Tribunal. However, this was only a first step. The restoration of the SADC Tribunal is absolutely vital. It establishes critical checks and balances on short term political interests that align with the African Agenda 2063, and it will reaffirm the commitment of all governments of the SADC to human rights, regional legal order and justice for all citizens on the SADC region.

So, Deputy Minister, can you outline the steps that South Africa took at the 44th SADC summit, two weeks ago to initiate the re-operationalisation of the SADC Tribunal?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Thank you, Mr Gotsell for the question. But as the rules are very clear that the follow-up question must come from the original question and the original question does not deal with the SADC Tribunal, but the option is with the Deputy Minister to answer or not. But if you feel that you are not comfortable, it is fine. We respect that. Over to you, Deputy Minister.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION (Ms A T Moraka): Hon House Chair, thank you for that moment for us to come and clarify to hon Gotsell on the matter. As

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much as I want to respect the decision of our government as led by the head of state President Cyril Ramaphosa in withdrawing from that SADC Tribunal, I will reserve my comment on that because I believe the President has had the legitimate reasons why South Africa must withdraw from that tribunal. Really, I do not want to delve much on that particular issue as it warrants me, to go back and get proper feedback as to what has led to a situation where South Africa had initially agreed to participate to that particular tribunal. So, I would request that, I be allowed to maybe make a submission in writing with regard to the response of the follow-up question as made by hon Gotsell, with due respect.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr B A Radebe): Hon Deputy Minister, we are coming to an end of this Question Session on the issue of international relations. No, the mic is on, please. Hon Deputy Minister, we really appreciate the input you made this afternoon. We know that it was very difficult when you started, but you stood your mantle to show that *imbokodo* can nowhere. We appreciate your input, but what is critical, hon Deputy Minister, is that members of the House were not fighting. They were just exercising their right to apply the rules, so we cannot grudge them for that. We also appreciate

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your availability as you were deployed by the Minister to come in here. You can take your seat. Thank you, sisi.

Hon members, I also would like to remind you, as I am about to adjourn the House, that, when the black rod is ushered out here, we must wait until the usher of the black rod is out of the House before we move out. So, please, if you can observe that. I like the passion with which we attacked the issue of the rules in this House. So, let us follow them to the latter.

The Council adjourned at 17:52.