

MEDIA STATEMENT

Issued by Chief Directorate: Communications Enquiries: Zara Nicholson: 066 0183 395

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STATEMENT BY MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE

MINISTER DE LILLE THANKS MPS FOR OVERSIGHT VISIT AND CONFIRMS DISCIPLINARY PROCESSES ARE WELL UNDERWAY

I thank the members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) and the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure as well as the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs for undertaking their oversight inspection to the Beitbridge border fence project this weekend.

I thank all members for their statement supporting due process to be followed in implementing the report recommendations and assure them and the South African public that the initiation of the disciplinary processes are already well underway.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVESTIGATION AND REPORT

The Beitbridge Border Fence project was initiated by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure in mid-March 2020. Due to my concerns over the project, on the 20th April 2020 I requested that the Auditor General conduct an independent audit into this project. On the 25th April, I requested that the Department's Anti-Corruption Unit, assisted by members from the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), to additionally investigate the project and I instructed project payments to be stopped pending the investigation outcomes.

These investigations revealed that a series of procurement and other irregularities were perpetrated, and possible acts of fraud may have occurred. The investigation report recommends a number of disciplinary and criminal charges against those involved to be pursued.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Action is underway by the Department to give effect to the report recommendations. The Department's Legal Services Unit has referred this matter to the Office of the State Attorney to:

- Draft the charges,
- Appoint the initiator and
- Appoint the chairperson.

The initiator and the chairperson have been appointed, allowing the drafting of charges to commence. These steps are being undertaken in consultation with the investigation team and in accordance with Section 8 of the Public Service Act 1994, as per the terms of employment of twelve of the 14 implicated officials.

For the Director-General and Ministerial Advisor, separate disciplinary processes are required because these two persons are employed under section 12 and 12A, not section 8, of the Public Service Act 1994.

The Ministry has already initiated a disciplinary process related to the charges recommended against the Ministerial Advisor.

The Director-General is already suspended related to findings from a Price WaterHouse Coopers investigation on allegations of irregularities related to state funerals and a Public Service Commission investigation on irregular appointments within the Department.

I appreciate that South Africans are hungry for justice to be done, but I remind the public that all allegations of wrongdoing must be tested and the rights of the implicated be upheld during the disciplinary processes.

I wish to assure that public that any official found guilty of any wrongdoing will be held appropriately accountable.

ENDS

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