

IRREGULARITIES

New forum launched to keep closer eye on infrastructure corruption

A NEW forum to monitor infrastructure projects more effectively and put systems in place to detect and prevent corruption has been launched.

This new Infrastructure Built Anti-Corruption Forum (IBACF) was launched in Parliament yesterday by Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille and Special Investigating Unit (SIU) head advocate Andy Mothibi. They were joined by Deputy National Director of Public Prosecutions Rodney de Kock, and Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, head of Infrastructure South Africa.

The value of alleged irregularities in the infrastructure build investigations amounts to more than R10 billion to date, Mothibi revealed.

According to Mothibi, the SIU identified sectors vulnerable to corruption, which include the health sector, local government, infrastructure/construction, state-owned entities, transport, energy, financial sector, mining and border management.

Mothibi said that it was important that integrity and transparency was maintained in all the infrastructure projects. He noted that about 80% of irregularities in the infrastructure build stemmed from the procurement process.

"The current value of alleged irregularities investigated by the SIU in the Infrastructure Built investigations is to date totalling over R10 billion.

To this end, it will be very important that transparency is introduced in the Infrastructure Built procurement process and effective corruption risk prevention framework introduced."

He added that the forum had its specific terms of reference which would ensure collaboration with various stakeholders in the fight against fraud and corruption, and identify areas of co-operation to enhance the prevention, detection, civil litigation and prosecution of fraud and corruption in the sector.

"This will bring a greater level of transparency and will give credibility to the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan. Transparency and collaboration is key if we are to wage an effective fight against corruption. The IBACF consists of diverse stakeholders coming with respective mandates, which will assist in resolving corruption allegations speedily. These stakeholders include law enforcement agencies, civil society, regulators, government departments and private sector."

De Lille emphasised that corruption had run rampant in the country for far too long.

"The state has structures in place, but government cannot do this work alone and that is why we have brought private sector, public entities and civil society together in this forum so that we can work together on more effec-



PUBLIC Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia De Lille together with the head of the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) launched an Infrastructure Built Anti-Corruption Forum (IBACF), an initiative aimed at monitoring infrastructure projects and detecting corruption. | ARMAND HOUGH African News Agency (ANA)

tive ways to detect, prevent and act against corruption.

"Our people need better roads, hospitals, schools and generally better infrastructure for better services, we need better and more government buildings. We cannot allow the crooks to continue to steal billions meant for infrastructure. People, no matter

who they are, cannot be allowed to continue to steal and stifle progress at the expense of the most vulnerable in our country," said De Lille.

She added that the mandate of the forum in summary was to collaborate, consult and support and co-operate with one another to fight fraud and corruption in the sector through crim-

inal prosecution and civil litigation, as well as through prevention initiatives such as corruption risk assessments, awareness programmes, the identification and detection of corruption, controls improvement, and systemic recommendations, monitoring and reporting.

"The forum will have oversight of investigations and will see various agencies working together to investigate any reported and alleged corruption so that we enhance accountability in the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan's projects.

"The forum agreed that one of its main and immediate areas of work will be to look into how whistle-blowers can be incentivised and rewarded for coming forward with information on corruption that leads to successful prosecution."

The initiative comes at a time when the country has embarked on the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan approved by the Cabinet in May last year which forms an integral part of the country's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

The Cabinet also approved the establishment of Infrastructure South Africa (ISA) as the administrative arm responsible for monitoring the implementation of the plan, which is made up of projects from all three spheres of government, state-owned enterprises and the private sector.