

Expropriation Bill opens access to land and addresses stalled land reform

MAFIKENG MAIL – MAHIKENG: The Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure was informed that the Expropriation Bill was a necessary tool to expedite the stalled land reform process and to ensure greater access to land by the landless majority of South Africans.

The committee concluded last Friday the North West Province leg of the public hearings on the Bill, and it will from May 06-09 2021 proceed to the next province which is Gauteng Province. The committee was informed in Mahikeng and Rustenburg that the majority of South Africans remains denied access to land. The North West residents also told the committee that there are large tracts of unused land in the province that, they said, through the Expropriation Bill which envisages open access to land, could be utilised productively.

Furthermore, the North West residents emphasised that the money intended for compensation as a result of expropriation of the land, should rather be channelled towards the capacitation, empowerment and development of the small-scale businesses.

Although the residents agreed on expropriation of the land, there was a clear disagreement among them regarding its custodianship. Traditional leaders argued that custodianship of the land belongs to them on behalf of their people, there was a counter view however that the state is a correct custodian of the land for the people.

While the Bill was supported by an overwhelming majority of participants, there were participants who opposed it on grounds of the anticipated Bill's threat to food security and foreign direct investment. Furthermore, they highlighted unclear definition of the terms such as public interest and property as reasons for their opposition of the Bill. Also, according to those who opposed the Bill, the state attempts to create lifelong tenants out of South Africans.

A strong view was reiterated in the North West Province that the current process to repeal the Expropriation Act of 1975 is unjustified and diminishes the overarching process to amend Section 25 of the Constitution.

The committee is satisfied with the quality of inputs it has received from oral submissions and is of the view that it enhances the Bill. "We have heard what the people of the North West have said and will incorporate those views as we process the Bill. The committee wishes to reiterate that this process is not meant to distract the Section 25 process. Both processes are important and necessary in their parallel ways," said Nolitha Ntobongwana, the Chairperson of the committee.