

**Comments by the Minister on the occasion of the Farewell Gala Dinner to
Former Minister, Thoko Didiza**

Venue: Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre, Boksburg

Date: 27 October 2008

Programme Director

Honourable Deputy Minister, Ntate Kganyago

Former Minister, Honourable Thoko Didiza

Guests of Honour, Mr Sangqu, Ntseuba and Motsoeneng

Invited guests

Ladies and Gentleman

After the welcome that was extended to everyone this morning, I hope that everyone who has been attending this seminar, no longer feels at home in this part of the country. I hope you are now at home. I just want to extend the warmest of welcome to our honoured guests that we are bidding farewell this evening.

I had a great opportunity of listening today to all that the Department is doing in the area of Audit control and good corporate governance. It is greatly heartening that all the four people that we are bidding farewell today has had a lot to do with the great financial performance of this Department in the past couple of years. The fact that this Department has had only one audit qualification in the last five years, is really praiseworthy.

Minister Didiza, I have been told and I also know that I have inherited a Department that is in good shape. I want to pay tribute to your own hard working ethic that has seen this Department performing as well as it has done in the last couple of years when you were in charge. I want to thank you for a great

management team that you put together, which is geared for hard work that lies ahead. Your legacy will live on in programmes that you initiated and championed with great enthusiasm.

Minister, I want to commend you for a very firm stance you took regarding fraud and corruption in this Department. I have been told that you urged managers at your very first meeting with them to embrace the new ethos of public service, patriotism and selflessness. As innocuous as it might seem, the call was inspired by the realization that unless political leadership surrounds itself with the public service that was willing and ready to make sacrifices, we shall continue to harbour in our midst government officials devoid of these virtues instead driven by greed, selfishness and little regard for the common goal of all. Such individuals are the weak links in the chain, and are susceptible to corruption, fraud and malice. I am happy to confirm that what I have seen so far, is indeed, heartening. The commitment is there to serve. The promises that were made to me today regarding the issues of financial management are indeed sweet music to the ear.

Minister, you have done well.

Another notable guest that we are bidding farewell is Mr Andile Sangqu, who has been the chairperson of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. As management of the Department, we all know the vital role that the Audit and Risk Management Committee play in the financial well-being of the Department. If this committee is diligent and well led, it provides vital guidance to the Department for prudent and responsible financial management of the Department. The fact that the Department achieved a clean audit is attributable to a large measure to the Audit and Risk Management Committee that has been chaired by Mr Sangqu. I also thank you Sir, for a job well-done.

I am told that Mr Zingi Ntsaluba is not only the former Chief Financial Officer of the Department, he also acted as the Director General of the Department for some time before this DG took over. I understand that he was able to juggle these two demanding roles with great aplomb. I want to say thank you Mr Ntsaluba, your great work is certainly obvious and we appreciate it very much.

The only problem that I have with you Mr Ntsaluba is that you decided to also nick Mr Thapelo Motsoeneng to the Johannesburg Metro. In fact I have been told that many of our capable and gifted managers have been lured to the Joburg Metro over the last couple of years. But be that as it may, you are still working for our government and our people and we hope that you will make a difference to the lives of our people wherever you go. To Thapelo, thank you too, Sir, for holding the fort after Zingi had left. We appreciate your financial management skills that kept the ship afloat.

Earlier on this afternoon, Zanele Mxunyelwa, voiced his amazement at the prospect of this function this evening. She said it was the first time that a function like this, whereby we bid farewell to a Minister, has ever been held by this Department. I must say that I am also amazed at the resilience of the Department at being able to absorb such body blows of losing a number of high-calibre people and still maintain its high work ethic. I want to thank you all for the work you have done for this Department and our government in general. Today we have come to say a big thank you to all of you.

Go well and continue to make a solid contribution to bettering the lives of South Africans.

I thank you all.