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MS FATIMA CHOCHAN, M.P.
**CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND
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21 April 2006

Mr. Dumisane Lubisi
Investigative Reporter
Sunday Times

Fax: 011-280-5115

Dear Sir,

Re: Response to your "urgent media inquiry"

Your urgent media response dated and received on the 19 April 2006 refers. My secretary immediately informed you that one of the pages were illegible. However a legible copy was only submitted to my office yesterday, 20 April 2006 for response by "close of business". Notwithstanding the short notice, I respond as follows to your urgent query:

- (1) The budget hearings of the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development took place prior to the end of the financial year on February 7, 2006. The financial year ends on the 31 March 2006. At the time, the department was able to present projected figures. A savings of R600 million was projected to the period ending 31 December 2005. The Department did indeed convey that it "planned to reprioritise" R400 million for court security and upgrading of courts, IT network deployment and digital court recording equipment for all courts.

Had you been present at the Portfolio Committee, you would have known that I expressed my doubts about whether such spending could be achieved in the short period of time left before the end of the financial year. I sought full reports on inter-alia the **final figures** relating to the under spending, the reprioritizations and any request

the department intended to advance to Treasury for "rolling-over" into the next financial year.

A report was made available to me on the 10 April 2006, as part of a package to be delivered to members of the Portfolio Committee in response to my above request. This report contains some of the information you detail in your inquiry and seems to be more comprehensive than the information you supply in your urgent media inquiry.

I cannot comment on the report you claim to have in your possession dated the 27 March 2006, as you have not seen it fit to let me have a copy of it. I cannot comment particularly on its status, authenticity or accuracy.

- (2) As to your specific question (and I feel compelled to repeat it here), "Do you consider laptops, luxury, specialised vehicles, new office furniture, new buildings and other luxuries, as '*important to the optimal functioning*' of courts'?" I respond as follows:
- (2.1) My press statement of the 10 April 2006 reads in part "court security, IT connectivity and digital recorders are important to the optimal functioning of courts, but have previously not been able to be adequately funded".
- (2.2) It is notable that the word "luxury" or "luxuries" does not appear *once* in the report in my possession, but appears *three* times in your urgent media inquiry. Items such as office furniture, office equipment, computers etc. are standard items found within the budget vote of each state department it may be worth your while to check whether the Auditor Generals' office regards these items per se as "luxuries". It may not be obvious to those who don't know the public service, but just like journalists need offices, furniture and vehicles to function, the Justice Department and the various Justice institutions such as the Legal Aid Board, National Prosecuting Authority, Public Protector, Family Advocates etc. require office-space, furniture and yes, even specialized motor vehicles for purposes of Witness Protection, for instance, to function at all, let alone optimally.
- (2.3) The specifics of the report, in my possession, will be the subject of discussion at the Portfolio Committee during the next Parliamentary term, when the Director General, the CFO and



Ms. F. Chohan, MP

Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development