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public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTER DIDIZA'S OPENING REMARKS ON THE 2005/06 ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTATION TO PUBLIC WORKS PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE: 01 NOVEMBER 2006, PARLIAMENT

Honourable Chairperson and members let me thank you for affording us the opportunity to engage with you on our Department's annual report for the previous financial year.

Allow me to introduce the delegation that has accompanied me for this presentation; Members have last week already met with Mr. Ntsaluba in his official capacity as Acting DG of the Department particularly during the presentation by our entities. I take this opportunity to introduce him.

The Acting DG and the team will afterwards give you more detail account on how the programmes have performed during the previous year including the financial statements. This will enable members to appraise how the Department has utilized the resources that were appropriated by the Parliament during the year under review.

Members will recall that on our previous interaction on the 20th June 2006, I was requested to deal with three key issues namely, (1) The vision of the Department and where it will be taken in the future; (2) Departmental programmes, although time did not allow you to look at each and every programme; (3) Interdepartmental and intergovernmental relations.

Today's presentation will partly cover some of those areas. In the same token, the inputs that we are receiving from key stakeholders including the Portfolio Committee are receiving attention in helping us to put a strategic focus on how the Department should deal with its challenges going forward.

By way of recap, members have in the previous occasion raised range of issues that include the following, (1) a need for the Department that really works, one which can market itself and has its own committed civil servant that is patriotic (2) Our vision on skills retention (3) Our ability to transform the property market on the ground, (4) Importation of engineers from abroad and ensuring that the Council for the Built Environment promote the engineering field locally, (5) what my view on 2010 was as well as our role in NEPAD.

Members further pleaded with us to make sure that public assets were in "good health within the context of GIAMA and also to ensure overall image is improved immediately. Hence, I wrote to the Committee last week pleading for the fastracking of processes around this legislation.

The committee also reminded us to deal with the challenge of conflict of interests with other departments as well as the challenge of managing assets which had been looted;

We note your concerns with how the Department carried out its contracting process whereby members are anxious to know how contractors were appointed and evaluated; the asset register was among such concerns.

The committee stressed that our vision should include corporate image which go hand in hand with working according to timeframes and preventing backlogs on the maintenance and repairs of state properties.

Chairperson, I want to assure members that the inputs received were constructive and form part of our strategic focus during this phase wherein as the Department we need to have another look at ourselves. We are planning for the Public Works Lekgotla scheduled for 10-11 November 2006 to basically deal with this aspect of self-introspection.

We take cognizance of the fact that the Committee is interested to know how as a Department we are dealing with transformation issue. The signing of the Property and Construction Charter on 17 March 2005 is a milestone for promotion of growth and the transformation of

construction industry. We are currently considering the extent to which the Charter satisfies Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) legislation and the role of the Executive in this content. In this regard, both the Construction and Property charters have been forwarded to DTI for compliance consideration.

In the Annual report itself, I have made reference to the importance of this committee to pass the GIAMA Legislation this current financial year as a milestone in the management of state's immovable properties. I want to thank the committee for giving us a hearing in the previous meeting regarding this legislation and we will cooperate fully in the due processes around this matter.

The reporting period reflects some 'pockets of excellence' in the Asset management Branch: Management Plans, Enhancement of Asset Register, acceleration of disposal of unutilized property disposals, prioritization of maintenance and capital projects, property industry research and the devolution of budget and the introduction of accommodation charges

Members will note that from 01st April 2006 we have introduced the process to devolve the remainder of the other budgets to clients; we will constantly monitor the impact these changes will make in the service delivery aspect. The Department also launched Zimisele nationally on the 23 March 2006 to improve service delivery.

The Department also launched the Re Kgabisa Tshwane Programme in November 2005.

Our flagship programme called EPWP has been at another level of implementation in the government-wide sense and across all sectors. It has seen further expansion in the infrastructure and social sectors.

As you will observe, one of the challenges emanating from the report is around the vacancy rate in the department. In this regard, there are a considerable number of vacant positions on critical skills. This is in the main due to the aggressive recruitment drive and incentives that the private sector provides to individuals in possession of such skills.

The department is currently working on concrete solutions to not only recruit individuals with such skills but also retain these.

Furthermore, we also wish acknowledge the observations on the emphasis of matter raised by the Auditor-General such as rental debtors, intergovernmental balances and information systems audit. We wish to indicate that already the department is responding to these observations systematically with concrete timeframes. The committee will accordingly be provided with a report on matters raised by the Auditor-General.

Chairperson and members, we welcome your contributions towards the performance of the entities reporting under my department particularly during the interactions with them last week.

We acknowledge the concerns and challenges members have raised with regards to the reports by these entities. We hereby commit that we will report back to the committee on a quarterly basis regarding progress made in responding to the challenges raised.

The Department's strategic plan for the medium term, starting from next year including that of our entities will put a clear indication on how we intend addressing these immense challenges confronting us.

I will now allow the officials to take you through the slides which we have put together summarizing the Annual Report that was tabled in Parliament in September 2006.

Thank you