

Remarks by the Honourable NN Mapisa Nqakula, RSA Minister of Home Affairs, on the occasion of the presentation of the DHA Support Intervention Task Team report to the Home Affairs portfolio committee, National Assembly, 14 March 2007

Chairperson

Honourable members

Members of different Media Houses present here

Colleagues

Friends

From the onset, allow me to thank the Portfolio Committee for your indulgence and your patience in allowing us time to process the report of the Support Intervention Task Team through the Executive before presenting it to you. I am aware of your own anxieties given the number of issues you have raised with us regarding matters that the task team has, in part, been dealing with.

Today we present to this Committee the outcome of the work of the Support Intervention Task Team that has been working within our department for a period of six months during last year.

As Honorable members will recall, during my previous Budget Vote speech to the National Assembly, I had raised concerns over the problems inherent in our systems and structures that were frustrating the efficient functioning of the department as well as service delivery priorities. Some of these problems had been highlighted in the report of 2004/2005 report of the Auditor General as well as in the observations by members of this Committee.

In my view, it was always clear that, as serious as the issues raised by the Auditor General were, they represented symptoms of much more deep rooted problems in both the organization and operational systems of the department. Thus the issues raised in the Auditor General's report needed to be addressed as part of comprehensive transformation of the Department of Home Affairs.

As I have said before, in my addresses to this committee and elsewhere publicly, the transformation process we envisaged would need to cover all aspects of our work, ensuring integrated solutions and clearly determining which of these were quick wins to be achieved in the short term; and which ones were more medium to long term. It would cover areas such as capacity, both human and infrastructure, business processes, organizational design, service delivery models, supply chain management, as well support systems, including technology.

It was, however, necessary that before we do this work, we needed to be sure ourselves about what it was that needed to be changed or improved in our current systems.

It was for this reason, therefore that we invited the Support Intervention Task Team from DPSA, National Treasury and the Public Service Commission, to come into the department and conduct an investigation of our systems and business process.

Of course this was not the first time that support teams have come within the department of Home Affairs. For this reason, it was necessary that this particular intervention had to be different, both in terms of its focus and the impact its work will make within the department.

What we required, chairperson and Honourable Members, was an intervention that will not only help us to deal with some of the immediate problems, but one that will provide us with sustainable solutions covering our entire organization.

The support intervention was categorised into five focus areas that needed to be strengthened. These focus areas and their specific objectives were as follows:

- (a) *Leadership and management*: To establish a stronger and cohesive management team.
- (b) *Human Resources*: To provide focused support to particular human resources management issues.
- (c) *Information and Communication Technology*: To provide support in Information and Communications Technology management matters.
- (d) *Service delivery*: To strengthen service delivery improvement initiatives.
- (e) *Financial management*: To improve financial management and internal controls.

Additional to these, the team has also looked at some of the current challenges that the department faces with regard to systems and process in each one of the areas of the Terms of Reference.

As per our undertaking, the Team presented its initial observations to this committee a few months after stating their work in October last year and

we further committed ourselves to come back and brief the committee and parliament on the outcome of the work of the team at its conclusion.

Before we make a detailed presentation of the report, I need to state the following broad points on the transformation of the department.

Firstly that due to its role in the success of government's programmes as a catalyst for access to services, there is always a need for the department of Home Affairs to function as an efficient machinery that ensures that this mandate is not frustrated.

Ours is one of the government departments that, despite major changes to its mandate under a democratic government, its organizational structure and design have remained unchanged. It is a vast organization with all its processes centralized at national level with inadequate operational capacity at regional and local level.

As we assumed the leadership of the department, we found that the department lacked strategic leadership and input, with over 70% of the then establishment comprising of clerical officials up to level 6.

The infrastructure of the department was never improved or increased to ensure more convenient access to services by all its clients, particularly those in the rural areas. Technology infrastructure was virtually non-existent with a lot of key systems being old and needed urgent upgrading or replacement.

This is the environment within which transformation of the department needs to happen.

Ours is an attitude that recognizes that as the current leadership of the department, we are the ones shouldered with the responsibility to address these problems. It is not important for us to deal with who created them when, but that the leadership of the department should take collective responsibility to find solutions. This we owe to the public we serve.

In looking at the report of the support intervention, therefore we will want to take those recommendations that will ensure that impact of service delivery improvement is felt in our front line offices.

I have already indicated that one of the things that we need to do urgently is to appoint the new Director General for the department.

I have also decided to bring a team of experts from outside the department to come in and help with the implementation plan for the recommendations emanating from this report. The work of this team, working under the new DG, will also help to further streamline the business plans of the department going into the next Medium Term Expenditure Framework periods, in line with these recommendations..

One of the key things that we shall require the team to focus on in the immediate is the feasibility on the reconfiguration of the department, including the finalization of the necessary organizational model and structures.

The governance issues with regard to the financial management within the department also need to be addressed as a matter of urgency and the recommendations around changes in our budget programme structures will be discussed with the National Treasury.

We will need to bring in further capacity to assist us in the implementation of the HR related recommendations, including most urgently, the filling of funded vacant posts in the establishment.

Let me say, chairperson that I have noted reports in the media about what we are going to do with the outcome of the competency tests that were conducted for senior managers within the department.

I have received the report on the competency tests as well as a number of other observations regarding the state of management in the department. All these reports require that the proper corrective actions be taken. The nature of the actions that we shall take will obviously differ from case to case. Members are aware that we work within specific legal and administrative frameworks guiding the nature of corrective measures that can be applied in different cases. What I can assure you however, is that in all cases, proper corrective measures that we have at our disposal will be utilized. Whatever we do, at the end of it all, should assist us to gain the necessary capacity required at leadership level to turn the department around. This principle we cannot compromise. We will obviously provide reports in this regard as when we are required to do so.

The challenge that now remains with us is the way forward now that we have a report.

We have now received these recommendations from the team and we are appealing to you to give us time to implement them. We will come back to you by the time of our Budget Vote to report on the progress we have made in implementation.

Members of the task team are here with me to assist with the presentation of the report and some of its key recommendations.

Before I hand over to the task team, I need to thank members of the portfolio committee for the support you have given us during the work of this team and for the sharp manner in which you have raised your concerns each time you have interacted with our offices and the people on the ground. We believe that this continued support will also be necessary as we proceed with implementation.

I must also thank both the ministers of Public Service and Administration and Finance as well as members of the Support Intervention task team for the work they have done and the support they have given us. I must also thank officials of the department for the cooperation they have given to this work. I am aware that would not have been easy for them.

Allow me to introduce, Ms Odette Ramsingh, DG of the OPSC and Mr. Freeman Nomvalo, Accountant General from the National Treasury who will make presentations on the report.