

MEDIA STATEMENT

Update on the meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Vuwani

The Inter Ministerial Committee on Vuwani, chaired by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Mr Des van Rooyen, met in Cape Town yesterday, 13 September 2017.

The IMC noted that the situation in Vuwani in the Vhembe District is still volatile and unstable as shutdown continues to rage in some parts of LIM345. The IMC deliberated on all key issues presented at the meeting and welcomed progress made towards implementing the decisions taken to stabilise the situation and return life to normalcy in LIM345

The Meeting emphasised an urgent need for services to be provided in all wards of Lim345. To this effect, the IMC commended the Limpopo Provincial Government for having ensured that a technical team made of all departments is in place and stationed in Vuwani to assist with the implementation of services in LIM345 and all its 36 wards.

As per the stakeholder engagements agreements, the Vuwani office was opened on 07 September to render services to communities. Of concern is that even though there is progress being registered as agreed, the shutdown still continues in some parts of LIM345 and this is disappointing.

The meeting also noted an extensive stakeholder consultation process that has been undertaken by the Province. The IMC urged all the stakeholders to continue working together to address the issues raised in this consultation. A concern was raised that some stakeholders do not take the process seriously as they fail to attend these important meetings.

"The non-attendance of meetings by some stakeholders, like the Pro-Makhado Demarcation Task Team, flies in the face of efforts aimed at resolving challenges and this might suggest that they are negotiating in bad faith," said Minister Van Rooyen.

"As the IMC, we recognise an important role that all stakeholders play in the process of finding an amicable solution to the challenges raised, hence we are sounding a clarion call for more fruitful engagements", he added.

The meeting noted that a shutdown which is currently ongoing in some parts of LIM345 negates the progress being made including the opening of the offices in Vuwani. Despite the office being opened, the shutdown still continues, with learners being the most affected, especially those in Grade 12 as they have

missed their preliminary examinations. This will further affect their ability to finalise preparations for the end of year examinations scheduled to start in October 2017. On the other hand, businesses in the Vuwani areas are also feeling the strain as a result of the shutdown.

The IMC condemns this continuing shutdown as it denies communities their right to access services that they deserve.

To this effect, the IMC calls on all parents and community members to take a stand against this senseless, destructive and unnecessary inconvenience caused by the shutdown of services. The Security cluster will continue to ensure visibility in these areas, protecting communities and their property amid these challenges with the shutdown.

The meeting was also briefed on the progress made in the implementation of the Vhembe Development Support Package. The package outlines various projects that will be undertaken by various government departments and non-government structures.

The projects from national, local and provincial partners include the provision of basic services and social cohesion programmes. To ensure proper implementation and monitoring, progress on the implementation of this package has been included as a standing item on the Provincial HOD Forum agenda.

In addition, the National DCOG has been assigned the responsibility to coordinate national progress reports and report on a monthly basis.

Social cohesion is another important part of the interventions that requires all stakeholders to come together to reflect on these challenges in LIM345.

The IMC noted that eight (8) social cohesion dialogues in Vuwani have already taken place and the Ministry of Arts and Culture committed to continuing with this project and even doing a study to understand the challenges better. Once these programmes are implemented, the IMC believes that communities will come together and ensure that life goes back to normalcy.

From these Social Cohesion dialogues, it was clear that social co-existence in LIM345 is possible. Some of the communities in that area have been living side by side for years.

The IMC resolved to challenge and dismiss any perceptions or suggestions of tribalism in Vhembe which seek to suggest that people cannot stay together.

“Ours is a caring government that will always strive and stop at nothing in bringing to life the words of former President Nelson Mandela, “that no one was born hating another person because of the colour of their skin or background or

religion. People learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to human heart than its opposite," said the Minister.

The IMC is therefore calling on all communities to unite and contribute to move LIM345 forward.

The IMC made it clear that any form of discrimination, whether it masked itself as tribalism or any form of intolerance is not acceptable and it will not be tolerated in a democratic South Africa. The meeting noted that some of these challenges are the remnants of the legacy of apartheid which sought to divide communities, but that behaviour has no place and space in a democratic South Africa.

"Whilst a temporary solution will be implemented for now, a permanent plan is being sought to deal with all matters amicably", said Minister van Rooyen.

The IMC agreed to monitor the situation and also engage all stakeholders and communities in the affected areas of LIM345.

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