

Accountability is severely lacking in DIRCO

By Mergan Chetty MP – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of International Relations

Honourable Minister,

A year has gone by and still the shenanigans of the infamous R118 million New York Pilot Project still haunt us.

You came to this very house, grudgingly conceding that the DA was correct when our investigations revealed that South Africa was swindled and has nothing to show for the R118 million squandered – no land, no building, no title deed, not even a piece of paper to say we own anything.

You promised that action will be taken and monies recovered from those found guilty, with criminal charges to follow.

To date, it's only the former DG Kgabo Mahoai and the main culprit, former CFO Caiphus Ramashau, have been fired whilst Mrs Benice Africa, a senior official responsible for property management, very conveniently resigned while on suspension.

Minister, can you inform this house whether there are any plans to recover the R118 million from these officials who have been found guilty and dismissed?

While on the same subject of accountability, can the Minister also inform this house if she will ask the President to take action and hold former Ministers of her Department, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and Lindiwe Zulu, together with former DG Ambassador Jerry Matjila, accountable for allowing this R118 million swindle to take place on their watch?

We know that you have always hidden behind the excuse that holding the aforementioned comrades of yours to account does not fall within your mandate or even your paygrade.

But surely, in the interest of accountability to all South Africans, you can make a request to the President to consider taking the appropriate action against these three errant comrades.

Minister, a similar scenario is going to play itself out in Namibia – this time under your watch – where we have 20 properties that are earmarked for refurbishment, renovations, or to be sold.

I must add that the redeployment of High Commissioner Archie Whitehead from Namibia to the Central African Republic has the signs of another scandal relating to property misappropriations that this Department can ill afford.

The delay in the processing of the Foreign Service Bill seems to be deliberate, designed to give an opportunity to the next deployee to Namibia to oversee this multi-million rand transaction. Some unscrupulous cadres are already circling like vultures to get their dirty paws on this transaction.

We will be watching the appointment very closely, to see who heads off to Namibia, as the timing seems very opportunistic.

Minister, despite the current plight of South Africans who are facing starvation due to rising food prices, your Department saw it fit to challenge the 'R50 million donation' to Cuba ruling. Believe me, the audacity and arrogance displayed by the Department in the face of the recent floods in KZN and the EC, isn't wasted on those impoverished citizens.

You should advise your Department, who miraculously made a sober decision to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and called on Russia to withdraw its troops, that it is time for another sober decision – this time to place the interests of our impoverished citizens ahead of Cuba.

For far too long, this ANC government has taken our long-suffering citizens for granted. The chickens have finally come home to roost and the ANC will pay dearly for this arrogant use of taxpayer money.

I thank you.