**Motion of no confidence cannot be limited to a single incident**

Speech by **Annelie Lotriet MP, Deputy Chief Whip of the Official Opposition**

Deputy Speaker

A motion of no confidence is no trivial matter. It means that the confidence between, in this instance, the National Assembly and the Speaker, has reached a point where there is no other remedy.

It is in the light of this that such a motion cannot be limited to a single incident.

The question we have to ask in discussing this motion and specifically the content and argument put forward in the motion, is whether this is sufficient grounds.

Our view is that the gravity of such a motion has to be preceded by a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the performance of the Speaker regarding a number of critical matters that have an impact on the functioning of Parliament.

First and foremost a deep understanding of the role of a Speaker is required. In depth knowledge of the Rules, procedures and conventions of Parliament. An understanding of the way in which this position determines the direction, the tone and functioning of Parliament.

It requires a deep and even intuitive knowledge and understanding of the unique working space of members of Parliament.

Within this context the Speaker should allow every party, regardless of its size a fair opportunity to be part of the debate. Allowing each party to be heard and to be respected and at the same time be firm but fair.

It is important that we do not limit our scrutiny to what we see in a sitting of the National Assembly, that is but one part of what Parliament is.

The true test of the Speaker relates to the engine room of Parliament. The committees. The question we should answer is to what extent does the Speaker ensure that the fairness, respect and opportunity to debate and ask questions are enabled in the different committees?

To what extent is an environment created and allowed for the executive to be held accountable? Is this Parliament one where the Presidency can be held accountable, do the chairpersons allow all parties to question and interrogate the executive? What has the Speaker done to ensure that this multi-party democracy functions optimally and that proper oversight is done? Is a system allowed and even promoted where all parties have the opportunity to serve as chairpersons of committees to enable impartial oversight and accountability?

This can only be achieved if there is a healthy distance between the Speaker and the Executive. When the interest of the country and its citizens are placed above that of the party. When a Speaker serves Parliament and not the party.

This is when trust and respect is created. The essence of confidence in the presiding officer.

It is therefore clear that a motion of no confidence cannot be limited to a singular incident. Before a motion of no confidence can be considered the totality of performance must be evaluated and the questions I set out answered and only then can you determine whether there is confidence in the Speaker or not.

The motion as it is tabled today does not satisfy this requirement.