# 2. Portfolio Committee on Public Works: Report on a study tour to the federAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, DATED 31 OCTOBER 2018

The Portfolio Committee on Public Works, having undertaken a study tour to the Federal Republic of Germany from 9 to 13 September 2018, reports as follows:

**Members of the multi-party delegation:**

1. Mr HMZ Mmemezi, MP (Chairperson and Leader of the Delegation)
2. Ms EKM Masehela, MP
3. Ms PE Adams, MP
4. Ms L Mjobo, MP
5. Dr M Figg, MP
6. Mr D Ryder, MP
7. Mr KP Sithole, MP

**Support personnel**

1. Ms N Jobodwana (Committee Secretary)
2. Mr S Denyssen (Content Advisor)

**1. Introduction**

**1.1. Reasons for the study tour to the Federal Republic of Germany**

The study tour to the Federal Republic of Germany was an opportunity to observe and learn how the German government interrelates with one another at multiple levels, namely municipal, federal state, and national. This system of government is practically similar to that of the South African system that consist of municipal, provincial, and national government.

The Portfolio Committee wanted to interact with entities that work with the German government across these three levels in the built environment and construction industry, and property management and maintenance sector.

The Committee aimed to gain insights into how private construction and professional built environment companies and government entities cooperate with one another to ensure well-maintained buildings.

It also wanted to learn more about the involvement of private entities that use agriculture to create employment in rural areas. It specifically wanted to visit agricultural projects that could possibly be replicated in South Africa’s rural areas.

As a developed country, the German example could assist the committee with insights into innovative developments in the sector of public works that encompasses the built environment professional, and construction and infrastructure spheres. In addition, learning about the successful implementation of agricultural projects could assist with the on-going challenge to ensure employment in urban and rural areas.

**1.2. Strategic objective**

The study tour to Germany held the promise of gathering insights into intergovernmental cooperation between the three levels of government with regards to planning, construction, and maintenance. The committee was specifically concerned with the need to plan and construct buildings that were sustainable and that used bulk services such as water and electricity in efficient ways.

The committee wanted to gather such knowledge to strengthen and deepen its oversight activities over the Property Management and Trading Entity (PMTE) and the regional offices of the national Department of Public Works.

**2. Focus areas**

The committee delegation endeavoured to discover existing good practices and innovative approaches in the built environment and construction, and public works sector.

The delegation focused on, amongst others:

* The relationship between the public and the private sector in the construction and built environment.
* The manners in which innovative building material and built environment systems were developed and used.
* A visit to Stuttgart, more specifically, the German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB[[1]](#footnote-1)) to learn more about the manners in which built environment professions such as engineers (civil, electrical, mechanical), quantity surveyors, architectural professions, project managers, and designers, collaborated and how their work was regulated in terms of planning, designing and constructing sustainable buildings.
* A visit to explore climate neutral buildings that were certified by the DGNB, namely Vector Campus, and the Blocher and Partners Head Office in Stuttgart.
* The inspection of maintenance of immovable property of the government of South Africa – Embassy Building in Bonn.
* A visit to farming communities, in Brodowin, close to Berlin.

**3. The study Tour - 9 to 13 September 2018**

**3.1. Meeting with the Consul-General and staff in Munich on 9 September 2018**

The Consul-General and staff briefed the Committee on the unique relationship that exist between Germany and South Africa. He referred to the “German Swallows” who escape the cold German winter months in South Africa during its summer. The drought in the Western Cape therefore was well known by the German citizens who are very aware of the importance of living in ways that saves water to ensure sustainability.

The Consul-General further informed the delegation of the role of the Mission to enhance business relationships between the German and South African business sectors. This include the automotive industry, academic, scientific, and the professional built environment and construction industry.

The delegation further heard of the changes that took place after the fall of the Berlin-Wall when Bonn stopped being the capital city and government offices and the embassies of most countries moved to Berlin. During this period, embassies of countries like France and Belgium proactively turned their embassy buildings in Bonn into residential units that they rented out. Through such measures, they were able to turn unused immovable assets into much-needed monthly income for those governments. The Consul-General informed the delegation that this was not done by China, who decided to keep the Bonn and Berlin Embassy buildings in full operational status.

The Consul-General further informed the delegation that, unfortunately, the South African government did nothing to utilise, maintain, rent or dispose the former embassy building and the former ambassador’s residence in Bonn. Because of this, complaints were received from neighbouring residents that the South African Embassy building in Bonn was causing problems. The Office of the Mayor in Bonn informed the mission and the South African Embassy in Berlin that these buildings could be sold, as there were offers to that effect.

**3.2. Visit to the German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB) in Stuttgart on 10 September 2018**

**3.2.1. Presentation and discussion on sustainability and the mandate of the DGNB**

The Market Transformation Manager of the DGNB, Ms Pascale Klaunig, presented on environmental challenges and the effect of the process of construction and functional buildings that has to be addressed across the world. She informed the Committee that buildings across the world consumed 40% of bulk service (water and electricity) resources, 30 % carbon dioxide, and 30% of the total consumption of general resources and was a significant contributor to noise pollution. All these factors had negative influences on human performance that may drop to up to 60%.

The mandate of the DGNB was twofold:

i) to contribute to necessary transformation in the building and construction sector so that ecologically affordable buildings can be constructed, and

ii) to develop a global benchmark for sustainability.

**3.2.2. Brief history and accomplishments of the DGNB**

The DGNB has been operating for eleven years. It is the largest European sustainability certification organisation in Europe. Built environment technical professional such as engineers, architects, interior and landscape designers, and project managers manages it. The organisation has not only focused on establishing a benchmark, but also made a significant contribution to an auditing and certification process with a very strong network that stretches across the Europe and China. It has relationships with Green Building Councils in countries such as India and Brazil. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that while the organisation did not have formal working relationships with the South African Green Building Council, he knew some of the sustainable building specialists in South Africa who often communicated seeking advice on relevant issues in the sector. The CEO and Market Transformation Manager emphasised that the DGNB focused strongly on networking across the sustainable building and construction sector as the main driver of its business.

**3.2.3. The DGNB Certification System**

The presenter introduced the certification system by raising the hypothetical question of why it was necessary to issue certificates for buildings constructed in ecologically sustainable ways. The answers assisted the committee to understand the following components of the certification system as:

* Planning and optimisation tool;
* Quality assurance tool across the important construction phases of planning, design, construction, and eventual occupation and use;
* Placing the focus on needs, avoiding risks;
* Placing the focus on transparent quality control due to the independence of the certification process - independent jury panellists drawn from technical expertise across the sector;
* Final certificate acting as an award and marketing tool for architects, contractors, planners, designers and project managers involved in the certified project.

The certification system is offered to both government and the private sector as it opened the global market to technical professionals who participate in the process.

**3.2.4. The DGNB network is more vibrant through its Academy**

To date, the DGNB issued over 3600 certificates. The DGNB informed the Committee that it trained over 3000 technical professionals worldwide in its certification system. The trainees included architects, engineers (civil, electrical, software, chemical etc.), project managers, quantity surveyors, and designers. Personnel from large multinational companies such as Daimler Benz also participated in the certification training process as it assisted with the scheduled building maintenance management programmes that was needed to keep immovable properties in good shape so that its value increased, and value can be continuously added to the annual accounts and in the performance reports. The presenters also stated that 33 countries were DGNB system partner members.

The certificate was useful across different phases that makes up the sustainable construction and building maintenance management sector. It addressed the needs of future occupants/users of the building for whom interior design and building maintenance management issues are crucial. The entire construction process as well as the wider district within which the building may be situated. Together, these are multiple processes from site clearance, environmental impact assessment, local planning approval, to the actual construction phases from foundation, to windows, roofing, plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC), as well as Information and Communication Technology, and virtual building sensors and controllers that enables communication of users with buildings. The latter is especially interesting as it promises to make buildings more responsive to the needs of users throughout the lifespan of the building. It also holds the promise of further increasing the value of immovable property as well as assisting with fault reporting in HVAC, plumbing, gas, ICT and other sub-systems.

**3.2.5. A framework that assists compliance with environmental sustainability**

The health and happiness of people who work and live in and around buildings is the focus of the new DGNB certification system announced in 2018.

The responsible and environmentally sustainable use of resources is an equally important principle. This means that the planning, design, sourcing of building material, construction, and future maintenance of buildings are done following different processes. There is a stronger focus on keeping the future in mind when considering what building material, products, and systems to use. It includes considering what they are made from with regard to their application. It also means taking into account possible structural modifications during the use of building material, products, and systems.

The DGNB certification system keeps a focus on what happens at the end of the lifespan of a building. Already at the planning stage, the building's eventual demolition is kept in mind when choosing building material, products and systems. DGNB have systematically developed this topic and established it more firmly in the system. With its new certification system, the DGNB is therefore committed to ensuring that material cycles exist for subsequent recycling or reuse in line with the cradle-to-cradle philosophy, by means of new business models coupled with responsible, forward-thinking product development. This makes the DGNB system one that allows circular economy solutions at building level to be assessed and measured. To promote new approaches in this respect, these solutions are rewarded with suitable incentives (in the form of bonus points), which have a positive effect on certification results.

**3.2.6. Matters observed**

* The delegation was pleased to hear that the DGNB certification system placed emphasis on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the top of the agenda 2030. The SDG describes a pragmatic approach to further developing our world, involving a long-term shift in the way we think, in turn enabling us to live in a more sustainable world.
* The DGNB supports these objectives and seeks to encourage a concrete step in the right direction by means of certification.
* In order to firmly establish the concept of sustainable building in compliance with the SDGs and make this transparent, the DGNB ensured that all the criteria in the 2018 version comply with the objectives of the UN, and have provided the necessary information so that this can be verified accordingly.
* Every project that obtains DGNB certification will, in future, also be issued with a statement regarding the extent to which it complies with the SDGs. This will also provide motivation to users and facility managers to strive to act in accordance with these goals when using and running the building.
* To provide additional impetus, for selected criteria, the DGNB awards an "agenda 2030 bonus" for projects that are particularly noteworthy in terms of their efforts to protect the climate and their implementation of the extra UN sustainability goals.
* Through its Academy, the DGNB is presents courses in sustainable building methods, design, planning and certification. Built environment and construction professionals such as architects, quantity surveyors, engineers, designers, building material and system developers, constructors, and any technical or interested parties in the built environment and construction industry, may apply to do courses that DGNB offer.
* The delegation noted the DGNB’s self-assigned task through its Academy courses, to *turn construction professionals into sustainability experts.*
* This aim is particularly important for the study tour and the delegation highlighted that there is a dire need for technical planning, design, and construction professionals in local municipalities that has to implement legislation such as the Spatial Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA). At the same time, at national government level, in the DPW’s PMTE there is a similarly crucial need for qualified and experienced property professionals.
* In the national, provincial and local levels of the South African government, construction professionals who are sustainability experts would assist with the aim of using South Africa’s immovable property in ways that add value to ensure sustainable growth economically as well as socially.

**3.3. A visit to Blocher and Partners – the first example of a sustainably developed building in Stuttgart**

**3.3.1. History and background of Blocher and Partners**

Jutta and Dieter Blocher founded the company in 1989 in Stuttgart, Germany. The first projects were done from home employing a staff of six. Later in the year, the company opened its first office building in Stuttgart-Möhringen.

In **1994, the** office was moved to Lessingstraße, number 13 with a staff component of 28. Later, the architect Wolfgang Mairinger became a senior partner. After employing designers such as Jürgen Gaiser as partner, the company’s multi-faceted approach found effect in the creation of Blocher shops that specialized in the Blocher monobrand. Later this approach took the company into brand communication, corporate design, management systems and publishing. By 2006, the architect Anja Pangerl became a partner and in 2008, the Blocher India branch was opened in Ahmedabad, in the State of Gujarat. A year later, in 2009, the company employed a social scientist as a partner.

The transdisciplinary approach of Blocher and Partners and the company’s involvement with the DGNB, made it important for the delegation of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works to visit its head office. The focus on planning and designing buildings as living spaces that is part of broader society that requires protection, was particularly attractive to the delegation. This was in line with many of the Sustainable Development Goals that has as aim the improvement of the living standards of people.

**3.3.2. Observations**

**i) On the transdisciplinary approach of planning and designing living spaces**

* The transdisciplinary approach **means that multiple disciplines work together in the same company so that the result is a new discipline emerging out of collaboration of multiple expertise that focuses on sustainable planning, design, and organisation that improves the lives of people.**
* People who work at the company do not restrict themselves to only practicing their own discipline in ways that hold up their own fields of expertise as having the only answer. This would restrict the planning and development process and cause separation between members that often lead to a fragmented team. Instead of butting heads, they join their different kinds of expertise in a harmonised process that remains focused on improving living and working spaces in and outside buildings.

**ii) On the company’s motto:**

* **Blocher and Partners create complexity.**  
  For the company, architecture offers structure, orientation, and multi-faceted environments. It sees its work as designing and opening spaces for people to have encounters and exchanges. It creates both residential and public buildings, administrative and industrial buildings, buildings for residential care, as well as multifunctional hybrid buildings.
* **Diversity is the motto.**  
  The spectrum of its work ranges from residential homes to high-rise buildings, shopping areas to office complexes, and from convention centres to parliament buildings. Blocher and Partners bring out the uniqueness of each space and translate its qualities into palpable situations, or as they put it in their own words: “into an invitation to converse”.
* **A focus on diversity in the design approach - all people’s needs and motivations remain at the forefront of planning, design and construction.**  
  People are the incentive, the benchmark, and people have the final word. Whether in Asia or in Central Europe, whether big or small: architecture comes about both with and for the clients. The commitment to people and their environment is palpable within the company’s own offices, rooted in the knowledge, commitment and passion of its staff that originates from 23 different countries.

**iii) In terms of Blocher and Partners’ Sustainably Developed Office building in Herdweg, Stuttgart:**

* The Blocher and Partners Head Office Building received the Platinum Certificate for sustainability from the DGNB.
* The office building consists of three full floors, a garden, a roof and a cellar.
* The interior design includes sandblasted and exposed concrete surfaces and cement screed flooring that works in harmony with the outside walls.
* Open floors make the boundaries between working areas disappear. In spite of this, Blocher and Partners were able to ensure designated workspaces for each group or individual staff member.
* A furnished patio is next to the generous cafeteria on the garden level, flanked on one side by the single-story wing of the building.
* The other side opens out onto a two-story atrium, separated from the cafeteria only by a sliding glass wall.
* From the ground floor, the atrium opens into an impressive open space graced by a light-installation inspired by the pick-up-sticks game.
* There are also manifold visual perspectives to be enjoyed from the open-designed steel staircase, which leads from the garden level to the uppermost floor.
* The building incorporates a broad range of sustainability measures. As per the DGNB certification cycle, amongst the sustainability measures are the careful selection of building material and the reduction of the life cycle costs of the building.
* With a view to the future, it was also important to create dividable floors to be able to implement several offices or apartments in the future.
* The intermingling of ecology and economy also shows within the fusion of building construction and technology, which includes a thermally comfortable room climate as much as energy saving at the maximum.
* The lighting concept, which relies on daylight and LED technology, is part of the effort to ensure air hygiene and serve to enhance the aesthetic of the work environment.

**3.4. A visit to the Vector Campus – the second example of a sustainably developed building in Stuttgart on 11 September 2018**

**3.4.1. History and background of the Vector Software Company**

The Portfolio Committee delegation was taken on a tour through the vast company buildings of the Vector Software Company. Mr Eberhard Hinderer, one of the founding members of the company, informed the delegation that the company was founded on April 1st, 1988 by himself, Mr Martin Litschel, and Dr. Helmut Schelling. In 2011, the ownership of the Vector Group was transferred to the non-profit Vector Foundation and the Vector Family Foundation.

Vector had developed into an increasingly internationally diverse workforce. The company had more than 2000 employees worldwide and showed revenues of more than €500 million.

The rapidly expanding workforce made it necessary to extend the buildings that housed the business. The new Vector Company building was unique in terms of planning, building material that was used, the use of bulk resources and environmental sustainability. This was the result of the collaborative work that the architectural, quantity surveying, construction, and interior design, and exterior design and horticultural teams undertook. It resulted in a unique environmentally sustainable building because it followed the processes as set out in the certification system that was discussed in the section dealing with the DGNB.

In September 2017, the campus was rewarded with the DGNB Platinum Certificate for sustainable building and the DGNB Diamond Award for outstanding architecture with excellent design and cultural qualities. This makes it the only building in the world to hold both of these awards.

As a follow-up on the delegation’s visit to the DGNB, to witness and observe buildings that were awarded the highest award for sustainable buildings, the delegation visited a number of the completed buildings that the Vector Company uses as a campus.

**3.4.2. Observations**

* The delegation witnessed that Vector, as an innovative technology company, called on state-of-the-art building methods and concepts for the design of this project. Strict requirements were defined for all the ecological, economic, functional and technical aspects.
* At the same time, the company achieved its self-imposed aim of combining a high level of employee satisfaction, an attractive appearance and successful integration into the urban environment over a usable area of more than 20,000 m².
* The delegation observed that the campus placed a prime focus on its people's health and happiness. The workspaces were spacious and pleasant. Corridors between building sections allowed free flow of movement. Using glass and steel as corridor structures between main building sections, made it possible for personnel to easily access buildings and amenities. Doors were electronically controlled with sensors detecting movement and opening without people having to open or close them.
* Card identification systems cordoned off areas where secure access was needed. This was also used in lifts, making it possible for designated staff and management to sue particular buildings designated for their specific projects only.
* The buildings were cladded in ceramic clay tiles and cedar wood strips to ensure a cooler ambience in summer time and a warmer working atmosphere during wintertime. Mr Eberhard Hinderer explained that in front of the building, trees were planted to resemble original woodlands that functioned as a climate control as well as sound barrier to ensure a pleasant work environment.
* The carefully selected building material was proof that using environmentally sustainable building material, products and systems, makes for attractive, people and environmentally friendly buildings.
* The delegation experienced the largest of the Vector buildings at the company's headquarters that was completed in August 2016. It is a modern and very attractive new complex consisting of office space, a canteen, large training and physiotherapy area, and very clean and well-lit underground car park.
* The building helps to save resources in different ways. Already during the construction phase, attention was paid to connections to the local urban transport systems and e-mobility. The building materials were chosen because of the DGNB-stated criteria of sustainability.
* Resource efficiency was boosted by the use of Cobiax[[2]](#footnote-2) reinforced lightweight concrete slabs during construction. The Vector campus was built with as little concrete as possible; flat lightweight slabs were used mostly, with solid concrete slabs constructed only in statically relevant areas to ensure secure structural support.
* Furthermore, compared to a conventional office building, considerable energy savings were achieved using geothermal and solar power, which cut natural gas consumption, by approximately 70%. The solar power system and the intelligent building control system also reduced electricity consumption. Mr Eberhard Hinderer explained that the geothermal energy required vast use of underground piping and heating condenser systems. This meant that the initial cost outlay for the construction was higher than for conventional buildings. He further stated that the energy generated through the geothermal system was enough for the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system of the building, but that it was not sufficient to replace energy required for the rest of the campus buildings. It therefore still relied on the city’s solar and gas powered grid.
* On enquiring about the recovering the cost of the geothermal outlay, Mr Hinderer explained that the cost would be recovered in about 10 to 20 years. However, it was important to also factor in the element of clean energy into that equation and that if this was done; he calculated that cost recovery was closer to 10 to 15 years.

**3.5. A visit to the Bundestag, 12 September 2018**

**3.5.1. The** delegation visited the Reichstag Building or Bundestag that houses the German Parliament. The tour guide, Dr Wirth, informed the delegation that the Reichstag was opened in 1894 under the German Empire. The building was damaged badly several times in history and was even set on fire. After World War II the building was ruined and fell into disuse.

In the 1960-1990 the plans to rebuild the old Reichstag started. The British architect Norman Foster was given the task to reshape and bring to life the modern Bundestag. The building is a unique balance of the old Reichstag with new glass and metal structures.

The actual German Parliament is situated directly under the metal and glass dome. The delegation was afforded the unique chance to enter the parliamentary gallery for fifteen minutes during the debate on the national budget for the new financial year. It was even more spectacular for the delegation to walk up the dome while continuing to gather glimpses of the German Parliamentary session that was debating the allocation of the budget in the chamber below.

The security arrangements were strict. In spite of this, the use of electronic scanners and the well-trained security staff made entrance into and out of the building easy for visitors and dignitaries. The flow of human bodies of up to 4000 per day[[3]](#footnote-3) did not hamper the work of parliamentarians.

This manner of arranging and operating security is an important aspect that need the attention of the security personnel of parliament and the South African Police Service. Specifically the high level of training of the security personnel requires attention. The delegation can report that they experienced personnel that operated the security equipment and secured the German parliamentary buildings in manners that are effective and efficient.

**3.6. A visit to the farming community at the eco-village of Brodowin**

**3.6.1. History**

**“Dutch and German farmers who were brought to the sparsely populated Uckermark region by the Ascanians (a Swabian-Franconian princely family) initially founded the Brodowin eco-village**.

In 1335, Brodowin belonged to the estate of Chorin monastery. On the way to the eco-village, the delegation travelled through the indigenous forest area and glimpsed the buildings of the old Chorin monastery that was secularised in 1542.

Since 1557, the inhabitants of Brodowin consisted of the chairman of the farmer’s cooperative, a priest, 10 full farmers and 19 peasant farmers of which 7 were potters. The present day success of the co-village is built on this cooperative arrangement with its functional agricultural background.

The current eco-village was founded and registered and has been operational since 1991.

**3.6.2. Matters observed**

* More than 100 permanent employees work on the farm, with about 50% being women.
* More than half of the employees live in Brodowin or in neighbouring villages.
* In season, up to 25 temporary workers from the region support the staff with extra help. More than 35 jobs have been created in recent years.
* Young people and students use the farm for training and practical purposes in the dairy and other agricultural applications.
* Brodowin eco-village and farm are active in youth environmental education and it endeavours to intensify the relationship between the youth and nature. Every year about 40 pupils from the Berlin Waldorf School complete an agricultural internship on the farm.
* In co-operation with the University of Applied Sciences in Eberswalde and the Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture at the Humboldt University of Berlin, the village offer students the opportunity to finish their Masters and Bachelors theses as well as completing internships.
* As there not many job opportunities in the region, the farm also actively creates jobs for older people and the disabled. It has a stated objective to produce high quality, ecological products for its customers, in harmony with nature.
* Due to the positive business development of the farm and cooperative, it is in the position to be seriously committed to the growth and well-being of the broader community and region. As a long-time member of this community, its main responsibility is to create job opportunities with long-term perspectives. The view is that this benefits the whole community, region, city, state, and country.
* A diversity of jobs brings different manual skills to the farm and helps to produce high quality products and care for the animals, nature, and society as a whole.
* Added to this, the cooperative also feels the need to leave its regional borders and distribute food in times of surplus. Hence, for many years it supported the Eberswalder Table as well as the Bahnhof Zoo’s soup kitchen. In this way, many people have enjoyed the organic products. In this way, it also means that people from far and wide have access to the produce.
* The delegation interacted with the animals on the farm and visited the cheese-making section. Unfortunately, it was not allowed inside, as the processing of cheese did not allow for anyone other than the staff to be inside the factory area.
* The delegation bought lunch from the eco-village shop and enjoyed home cooked meals in the rural setting of the farm.
* Members of the delegation robustly engaged the owner of the eco-village on the manner in which the land for running the cooperative was obtained. It was happy to hear that as most people did not have the requisite knowledge to use the land optimally, the cooperative allowed young people, adults and older people to benefit from products produced and sold to neighbouring markets in Berlin.
* The philosophy of using resources and the land by applying relevant horticultural, husbandry, and agricultural knowledge and skills in order to benefit the broader community, rather than driving for narrowly described profits, was highlighted as the foundation of the success.
* The delegation further wanted to know about whether South African interns would be welcome to gather knowledge and skills through internships. The owners stated that they would certainly take people on, but they would have to be at least at undergraduate university level, would have to show an attitude of dedication, and an interest in hard work. This was useful for members of the delegation who was interested in replicating was learnt in their rural constituencies.

**3.7. A visit to the South African Embassy, Berlin, 12 September 2018**

**3.7.1. The location of the Embassy Building:**

The South African Embassy Building is situated on Tiergarten Street in the affluent district of Tiergarten that is situated in a central part of Berlin, the capital of Germany. The neighbourhood was incorporated into the City of Berlin in 1861. Soon after the 1871 Unification of Germany, it developed into an affluent residential area and later, after the fall of the Berlin Wall that separated old Soviet-controlled East, from the Western controlled West Germany. The Tiergarten District is known as the German Capital City's diplomatic quarter.

The South African Embassy has the Indian and Turkish Embassies as its immediate neighbours.

**3.7.2. The architectural and design team of the South African Embassy in Berlin**

The building was planned and designed by four young South Africans, Ghandi Maseko, Luyanda Mpahlwa, Alun Samuels, and Mpheti Morojele.

They were attending a South African embassy party in Bonn, sometime in the early 1990s, and heard that the soon-to-be-formed, first-ever democratic South African government was looking at putting out tenders for the design of the country’s new embassy on the piece of ground that it had owned in Berlin.

In spite of the fact that none of them had ever designed an embassy before they undertook the task, in spite of a number of setbacks and false starts completed the planning and design, and managed the construction of the Embassy building as the delegation found it on its visit.

**3.7.3. The Berlin Embassy - Home away from home**

The Embassy building boasted South African imported granite and sandstone, and oozed Africa with light and air flowing freely through the building. At the entrance, the delegation walked under a silkscreen glass print that reproduced San rock art that originated from the Drakensberg Mountains that depicts images made in the places of protection (caves) from the dangers of the unknown world. Using the glass etched print at the entrance welcomes visitors to South African Embassy as a symbolic place of protection where the delegation felt they were home away from home.

Inside the building South Africa was present in examples of its rich beauty and earth-rootedness. The well carved out wooden doors by the artists Nhlanhla Xaba, Brett Sher and Robert Lugupi welcomed the visitor to the meeting rooms on the ground floor. Upstairs, the massive oil painting on canvass called “if you scratch” by Patrick Mautloa was well placed outside the Ambassador’s office. The painting signified the movement of known and unknown faces of newcomers looking for work in a city like Johannesburg. The fine touches of copper, bronze and iron embossments into the hand railings, and the framed Ndebele beaded headdress usually worn during the wedding ceremony, and other paintings by South African artists on the walls made the point to any visitor that this is an embassy representing a proud African nation.

**3.7.4. Observation and findings**

The embassy building was in a reasonable state although there are aspects that require improved maintenance.

The delegation noted the following matters that required attention:

* The gate to the building had to be redesigned to ensure safety and a better fit-for-purpose gate.
* The gate was operated with a motor that did not serve the purpose, as the gate was too heavy. It broke down often and replacement cost money that the Embassy could not continue to afford. The gate further posed a security risk, as it did not close soon enough when it is in operation.
* Discussions with the Ambassador and Embassy staff revealed that the design of the gate was not well thought through – while aesthetically it fitted the theme of the South African Embassy that was evident throughout the building, the heavy material used in construction meant that the motor was not strong enough to operate it safely.
* The Embassy informed the delegation that the replacement of the gate was priced at €25 000 (R450 000) at one stage. Another quotation came in at € 6000 (R108 000).
* The Embassy’s maintenance budget was reported to be € 65000 (R 1 170 000) and just work on the gate would take a sizable portion of the annual allocation for maintenance.
* While the Government Immovable Asset Management Act (GIAMA) stated that the Embassy could use R100, 000 per maintenance incident, from the point of view of the DIRCO staff, the exchange rate from the South African Rand to the Euro meant that it would pay too much to properly maintain the buildings. The mission staff reported that it took 14 months to access funds with which to maintain the buildings, or purchase furniture.
* The delegation noted that DIRCO staff did not have the requisite technical skills to carry out maintenance to the buildings under their control.
* Staff informed the delegation that it often took 14 months for requisitions to be processed for procurement to take place. This matter needed urgent attention.
* The delegation found furniture stacked in a haphazard manner. The basement was being used to store the furniture of staff that was moved to other missions. The furniture was haphazardly stored. There seems to be a lack of trained personnel that kept an inventory and managed movable assets such as furniture.
* This showed a lack of necessary attention to the consistent management of assets on the movable asset register. It could further be an indication of the risk and compliance unit not being in a proper operational state.
* The staff informed the delegation that the Embassy was far from the two South African-owned buildings in Bonn. This meant that while it paid for maintenance and other services, the Embassy was unable to verify what it paid for.
* The financial delegation for the Embassy of €1900 (the exchange rate was around R18 to the € during the time of the visit which translated to R34 200) was too low for the Embassy to maintain the buildings. The Embassy staff stated that the amount was far too low to do most types of maintenance work in Germany. The staff informed the delegation that any amount above €1900 had to be signed off by the DIRCO head office in Pretoria. This made maintenance of buildings very difficult as the bureaucratic processes between itself and its Pretoria head office, and between DIRCO head office and the DPW and PMTE took very long to get anything done.
* In addition to this, the delegation’s interaction with the personnel showed a lack of accounting for the maintenance budget that should be used to keep the buildings and immovable assets properly maintained.
* In addition to the above matters, the Embassy buildings required maintenance on the glass roof that was leaking above the atrium. If not maintained, this leak would further weaken the laminated tiled floor, and the toilet facilities of the building.
* The maintenance challenge faced by the Berlin Embassy as South African Foreign Mission, is also evident in this example sketching the maintenance procurement procedure: If a German Construction Company quoted €18 000 to fix the leak to the Atrium, it would mean that the Embassy had to spent R380 000 which is R280 000 above the amount stated in the GIAMA.
* Depending on the Rand-Euro Exchange rate this meant that a maintenance incident that cost R100 000 translated into €1 800 000.

**4. A visit to the Official Residence of the Ambassador**

**4.1. Matters observed**

* The Ambassador’s Residence is situated in an affluent district of Berlin.
* The residence is a three-storeyed building, consisting of a cellar, kitchen, and garage below, an entertainment area on the ground floor, and a living area on the top floor.
* The house is tastefully arranged and managed by the staff members who received the delegation in a warm and friendly manner.
* The delegation noticed that a recent flooding caused water damage in the cellar and garage.
* Signs of water seepage caused paint on the lower parts of the walls in the garage to peel as mildew growth started flourishing.
* The garage floor tiling has been severely damaged and require immediate replacement in parts.
* The walls on the ground floor showed signs of mildew at the entrance door and possible water penetration into the wall cavities. This would require attention such as removal of the paint and plaster, and the installation of water proofing material and application of suitable water repelling paint before plastering to prevent further damage in the medium to long term.
* Patterns of water seepage through the ceiling board above the staircase on the upper living floor ceiling indicated a possible roof leak required immediate attention before the winter weather sets in.
* The garden was well maintained and provided ample space for entertainment activities for the family and its Ambassadorial duties.

**5. Meeting with Office of the Mayor of Bonn, 13 September 2018**

**5.1. Observations and findings**

* The delegation discussed the former Embassy Building in Bonn with Ms Victoria Applebe and staff of the Mayor’s Office. Prior to the visit, the delegation heard that residents in the area close to the building was concerned about the building being vacant as it could lead to criminal activities in and around the building.
* Ms Applebe made it clear that from the point of view of the Mayor’s Office, there had been no signs of alleged criminal activity at the residence.
* The representative of the Mayor’s Office informed the delegation that there had been offers in 2014 to purchase both the Embassy and former Residence. The offers were from a property developer and an estate agency, with the former amount being more promising than the latter. The delegation requested the amounts and offers to be sent to the Secretary of the Committee.
* The mayor’s Office made it clear that it had a duty to provide support to property owners so that they could develop, market and own well maintained property.
* The City of Bonn was a well marketed destination for major companies. The Head Office of Deutsche Telekom, with 50 000 employees, as well as the United Nations Secretariat is based in the city.
* It has a large scientific community, with seven universities situated in the city. Amongst these is the 200 year old Bonn Universität with the youngest being the University of Applied Sciences of Bonn-Rhein-Sieg that was started in 1995.
* The city experiences a challenge as the huge science and business community and its employees and students require accommodation, entertainment, and general living space.
* Empty buildings such as the vacant South African Embassy and former Ambassadorial Residence has to be used to assist with this challenge.
* After the fall of the Berlin Wall and unification between East and West Germany, most embassies moved from Bonn to Berlin. Most European countries who were near to Germany, were able to easily renovate and turn its former embassy buildings into residential and business units and were generating income from these. Others, like China, kept its former Embassy Buildings in operational status as it required a presence in both the southern and northern federal states of Germany.
* The Mayor’s Office repeated that the former Embassy building and residence were both in very affluent residential and office areas of Bonn. The buildings were in the immediate vicinity of the United State of America International School that has 800 pupils, and other international communities that needed buildings for accommodation and business purposes.
* This meant that either renovation and renting out, or selling would fetch reasonably high prices. The South African government had to choose whether it wanted to get rid of the problem quickly and make money once off, or spend more money initially to renovate that could be recapitalised through rental and leasing contracts over a longer period of time.
* The Mayor’s Office further informed the delegation that the property was on the banks of the Rhine river, and was outside the flood risk area. The building had planning permission for residential but not office development. It stated that in 2014 a subsidiary of a regional bank (the bank and subsidiary remained unnamed in the session with the Mayor’s Office) applied for permission to commission the development of residential units. It obtained such permission and could build four residential buildings divided into 29 units on three levels on the properties.

**6. A visit to inspect the former Embassy Building in Bonn**

**6.1. Observations and findings**

* The building was derelict, with paving forming the steps into the building on all sides, having fallen into disrepair.
* The garden was not maintained and was overgrown. This was a fire risk, but was also a clear indication that the building was vacant which may cause criminal elements to abuse the building.
* No security was provided which further increased the risk. At the time of the visit, unknown vehicles were parked on the parking lot, which showed that residence, and unknown parties may attempt to use parts of the building without permission.
* The delegation entered the building accompanied by the contracted maintenance-person and the Administrative Head of the Berlin Office, Mr Teka.
* The building showed signs of water damage on every floor. The electricity and water was not disconnected, which means that the Embassy was paying the bill for bulk water services and property rates.
* The water and mildew damage throughout every room meant that the ceilings collapsed, and carpets were rotten. There were signs of rodent and other small wildlife living throughout the building.
* Staircases between the floors had loose wiring and loose panelling that were ripped off and lying around.
* The delegation encountered numerous examples of evidence that the building was hazardous to enter.
* The outside deck leading from the former office of the Ambassador on one of the upper floors provided an amazing view of parts of the City of Bonn and the Rhine River running below it.
* The building was situated in a well sought after area, which would fetch a good price if it was put up for sale.
* The building had planning permission for residential but not office development. The representatives of the Office of the Mayor of Bonn stated that in 2014 a subsidiary of a regional bank[[4]](#footnote-4) applied for permission to commission the development of residential units. It obtained such permission and could build four residential buildings divided into 29 units on three levels on the properties.

**7. A visit to the former official residence of the Ambassador in Bonn**

**7.1. Observations and findings**

* Although it was dilapidated, the former residence was in a slightly better condition than the former embassy building. The garden was recently maintained and the outside paving area remained in a good condition.
* Two main water leakage areas were noticeable in the large living area, close to the fireplace, and further in one of the corridors leading to the bedrooms, where the current carpeting and floor covering was damaged beyond repair.
* The large kitchen contained a stove, dishwasher, a fridge and a goods and food lift to upper and lower floors.
* The electricity in this building remained switched on which meant on-going cost being incurred by the Embassy.
* Plants penetrated the cellar and grew on the balcony of the building.
* There was evidence that the maintenance contract had to be looked at as the reported €60 per hour charged by the maintenance person could be spent in vain.

**8. Recommendations**

The delegation recommends that the Minister instructs the Director-General and his senior management team, and the Chief Executive Officers and Board Chairpersons of the built environment and construction entities to:

8.1. Ensure future public works legislation and policy that enforces closer interaction between the Green Building Council of South Africa, and professional built environment and construction companies in South Africa so that spatial land use and construction planning at all levels of government gives effect to the sustainable use of land and building material.

8.2. Ensure the proper management of the Immovable Asset Register so that land is available to future land users who can cooperatively organise themselves so that the resources on the land is sustainably exploited through the application of horticultural, husbandry, and agricultural knowledge and skills that benefit the broader community, rather than driving towards narrowly defined profits.

8.3. Urgently initiate an investigation with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and the National Treasury into what caused the former Embassy Building and Ambassadorial Residence in Bonn to fall into its current state of dilapidation. A report on the result of this investigation to be submitted to this committee in March 2019.

8.4. Initiate a review of the user and custodian model that is currently in operation between the DPW and the DIRCO. The review should:

8.4.1. Include the responsibilities of DPW and DIRCO as client department as described in the GIAMA;

8.4.2. Make provision for the unique circumstances related to the effect of foreign currency of the countries in which various foreign missions are situated;

8.4.3. The DPW and PMTE to report on this review to the Portfolio Committees on International Relations and Cooperation and Public Works during the third quarter of 2019.

8.5. Instruct the DPW’s PMTE to consult with the DIRCO so that suitably qualified and experienced technical built environment professional teams are appointed in both departments that can collaborate effectively in the maintenance of immovable property in foreign missions. This may be necessary, not as a measure of diluting the mandate of either department, but as a necessity to address the unique characteristics of both departments in terms of the security, financial sustainability, maintenance and enhancement of South African properties abroad.

8.6. In consultation with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, and in consultation with the Office of the Mayor of Bonn, investigate the current value of offers made for the buildings, and initiate the disposal of the unused former embassy and ambassadorial residence buildings in Bonn by no later than 2019. This process should be preceded by a thorough scoping exercise by suitably qualified and experienced technical built environment professional teams to ensure that the highest possible value is achieved through this disposal.

**Report to be considered.**

1. The abbreviation DGNB is used as abbreviated in German as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Nachhaltiges Bauen [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cobiax Technology uses a system of reinforced concrete slab with specific hollow areas formed by synthetic void formers inside. This replaced the use of massive solid concrete slabs. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [https://www.bundestag.de/en/documents/textarchive/summer2017/516024](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiCg4Xt4q3eAhWkJMAKHde4CNwQFjAJegQICBAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bundestag.de%2Fen%2Fdocuments%2Ftextarchive%2Fsummer2017%2F516024&usg=AOvVaw0zAgLZ3-fFsgMRFLUF3GBa) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The bank and subsidiary remained unnamed at the time of the visit. The information is accessible from the representatives of the Mayor of Bonn’s Office. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)