MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY REGIONAL OFFICES BATTLE LICENCE APPLICATION BACKLOGS

The Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and Limpopo regional offices of the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy are battling with licence application backlogs in four categories: mining and prospecting rights, mining permits, and licence renewals and cessions, in terms of section 11 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act. The department was briefing the Portfolio Committee on Mineral Resources and Energy yesterday in a follow-up to a meeting in March this year.

The backlogs in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape offices increased from 1 699 and 811 respectively in March, to 1 802 and 1 105 respectively in July 2021. Limpopo regional office backlogs decreased from 1 204 to 877 in the same period.

The department has attributed backlogs to a number of challenges, including disruptions caused by Covid-19, inability to move staff members around due Covid-19-related fears and logistical arrangements, lack of appropriate tools of trade to allow staff to work from home, and insufficient manpower to attend to the volume of work.

However, members of the committee welcomed the department’s presentation and noted some progress in Eastern and Western Cape, Free State, North West, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal regional offices.

Responding to a question from committee member Mr Matthews Wolmarans about plans to address the high backlog in the Northern Cape, Deputy Director-General for minerals and petroleum regulation Mr Tseliso Maqubela said that additional manpower will come from the Eastern and Western Cape regional offices.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Sahlulele Luzipo, said that the department should fast-track licence applications in order to ensure greater investment in the mining sector.

**Justice Molafo**
**18 August 2021**