NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

# QUESTION NO. 138

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## INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 3 OF 2019

**138. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

In light of his statement that he intends to revamp the Department of Home Affairs, what steps does he intend taking to address (a) long queues at Home Affairs offices, (b) the effectiveness of the Home Affairs IT systems which are often offline and (c) the country’s porous borders that have led to the mass influx of undocumented illegal migrants? NW966E

**REPLY:**

1. In order to address long queues, the department has partnered with several stakeholders including, Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS) wherein causes of long queues were identified and the following strategies are to be implemented:

* Continue to increase the footprint through e-channel, mobile offices, roll-out additional modernised offices to ultimately phase out the manual process, come up with kiosk counters (in future) and lastly consider a booking system at local offices.
* re-open negotiations with organised labour as well as DPSA to allow the department to work on Saturdays through the introduction of a shift system as this will assist in reducing queues as most clients found themselves not able to visit DHA offices during the week.
* Engage with SITA and other role-players to continue with the stabilization of the IT system. In addition, the department will improve system functionality through the introduction of an “offline” mode facility which will continue rendering services to clients even if the system is offline and
* the department is in the process of prioritising filling of critical positions even though the department has not been in a position to fill vacant posts due to budget cuts.

1. The department is on a journey to modernise all the back end legacy systems and automate all front end processes to issue vital documents. To date the department has automated front end processes of issuing IDs, Passports, Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates. The system development programme is ongoing and back end legacy systems are still to be completed to ensure full integration rather than the current multiple interfaces which are not ideal and causes intermittent downtimes.

The network infrastructure in which all the DHA systems run on is provided for by the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) and is often a cause of system downtime. A comprehensive assessment was done by SITA in the last financial year and produced a new network architecture and implementation plan which will provide a fully redundant and high availability network throughout the DHA footprint.

(c) The department has been mandated by Cabinet to establish the Border Management Authority (BMA) as a strategic intervention aimed at circumventing the challenges which prevail in the border environment that enable illegal migrants access into the country. As Parliament is aware, the BMA Bill is presently in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). The intention is to fast-track this Bill for finalisation in 2019.

In the short-term, the BMA Project Management Office (PMO) in the Department of Home Affairs is responsible for the coordination and management of organs of state in the border environment. In this regard 17 Directors-General/Accounting Officers have signed a Multi-Party Agreement on Enhanced Border Coordination.

**END**