**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**1574.Mr A C Roos (DA) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**:

1. (a) What is the average return period when a diplomatic bag is sent by a mission to the Republic and when it returns to that mission, (b) what measures are in place to ensure that if a diplomatic bag does not fill up, it is sent after a maximum time period to avoid indefinite delays in receiving Home Affairs documentation applied for at a foreign mission and (c) what tracking mechanismis in place between the period when Home Affairs delivers documents to her department and when they are delivered to a South African mission abroad;
2. By what date will the passport of Tama Leigh Guthrie (ID: 9407060225081) that was delivered by Home Affairs to her department on 15 June 2020 arrive at the South African Embassy in Beijing China? **NW1957E**

**REPLY:**

1. (a)The average return period for diplomatic bag sent by a Mission to the Republic and when it returns to that mission vary between seven (7) to fourteen (14) days during normal periods. During the Covid-19 lockdown, it takes more time depending on the country of origin, availability of flights and other contingencies.
2. The Department sends diplomatic freight bags to Missions everyday from Monday to Friday by following a schedule as part of the measures to ensure a diplomatic bag does not fill up. In terms of this schedule, diplomatic freight bags are sent to some missions fortnightly and weekly to other missions categorised as big and busier. For incoming diplomatic freight bags, Missions are required to send diplomatic freight bags at least once-a-month. Missions, however,were informed through a general circular dated 03 July 2019 that they could send a diplomatic freight bag to Head Office more than once-a-month where there is a need and the volume of mail items justifies so.
3. The courier company has a real-time track and trace system and regularly provides the Department with the status and proof of delivery. In addition, the Department has its tracking mechanism.
4. The date of delivery of Tama Leigh Guthrie’s passport cannot be determined. The Department can only confirm that the last diplomatic bag to the South African Mission in Beijing was sent on 18 June, and the next batch of diplomatic bags to Missions will be sent on 23 July 2020.