**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION: 1835**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: 19 May 2023**

**QUESTION PAPER No: 18**

 **Ms T Bodlani (DA) to ask the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies:**

Regarding employees of his department working from home since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, what (a)(i) total number of officials are still working from home and (ii) is the reason for this and (b)(i) total number of officials in the entities reporting to him are still working from home and (ii) is there a reason for this? **NW2086E**

 **REPLY:**

(a)(i) None. All officials of the Department are working from the office.

(a)(ii) Not applicable

(b)(i) All employees at USAASA, FPB and zaDNA are working from their offices.

SITA, SABC, ICASA, NEMISA, Sentech and Postbank indicated that they are applying a hybrid model which allows employees to combine in office and remote working, that is, 2 or 3 days working in the office and the other days working from home.

50% of the employees at BBI are allowed to work from the office at a time. SAPO has indicated that 201 of their employees are working from home.

(b)(ii) BBI stated that it moved offices from Woodmead to Radiokop and due to the office capacity only 50% of the staff complement can be accommodated at a time. All employees are fully equipped with data and laptops to work productively from home.

SITA stated that the decision for the hybrid model was based on their commitment to ensure that employees have a healthy work-life balance and excel in their performance within the organisation.

ICASA stated that an opportunity had risen to make ICASA more adaptable and find new ways to still deliver on its mandate while promoting employee wellness through creating flexible working arrangements. The employment of the hybrid work model was in line with government guidelines on managing exposure to occupational diseases in the workplace. The hybrid model is in a form of work rotation plans that is enforced for all employees. The employees are on site to ensure that customer facing services are not adversely affected in terms of service delivery.

Currently, the Postbank occupies a SAPO building that is not conducive to housing employees due to poor maintained such as lifts not functioning, poor hygiene and space constraints. Postbank is seeking its own suitable premises that are conducive to housing employees, for those who prefer working in an office.

NEMISA indicated that remote working was as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, it opted to implement hybrid work requiring employees to work from the office and from home on certain days. This was done based on the observation that employees remain productive when they work either from the office or from home. NEMISA recognises that the correct use of technology enables work to be carried out at any given location. Thus, the merely availability of technology and work tools enable hybrid work.

Sentech adopted to implement a hybrid working model which is a combination of office and remote working. It determined that this was the most sufficient way in managing resources and output. Further, it found that this was the best way in creating a healthy work environment. This model will be reviewed from time to time.

With effect from November 2021, SABC employees returned to the office and implemented a new way of working wherein employees work on a hybrid model. Employees are only required to come to the office three days a week and each division utilises its own discretion to determine the rotational roaster. This is to promote a productive working environment for employees.

SAPO has provided the following as the reasons why these employees are working from home:

* • Building not hygienic (non-compliance to OHSA), presents a health risk
* • Lifts and air conditioning defective
* • Employees have tools of trade to work from home.
* • Most sites are affected by loadshedding with no alternatives available.
* • Outdated tools of trade i.e., computers, printers, etc.
* • Nature of work does not require employees to be in office to perform functions.

Thank You.