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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION: 1996**

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**Dr M J Cardo (DA) to ask the Minister of Economic Development:**

(1) How many tonnes of gypsum does the phosphoric acid plant owned by the Industrial Development Corporation (name furnished), discard annually into the ocean;

(2) whether any feasibility studies have been conducted to determine how much sulphur could economically be extracted from the discarded gypsum; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW2307E

**REPLY**

1)   Foskor’s acid plant discards approximately 2.0 Million tons of gypsum annually at the current acid production level of 500 000 tons per annum. In general the acid plant produces approximately four tons of gypsum for each ton of acid production. FOSKOR believes that there are no negative environmental consequences of dumping gypsum into the sea and FOSKOR advanced the following reasons:

a.   The chemical formula of the gypsum is “5CaSO4•2H2O” which is Calcium Sulphate in its di-hydrate form. It dissolves in the sea water and formulate Calcium and Sulphate ions which are natural elements constituent of soil and not harmful to any marine life at the level of concentration it is dumped.

b.  The volume and concentration of the gypsum discarded into the sea, is managed by Mhlathuze Water Board through the Nsezi Water Treatment Plant which removes sludge and add sea water before disposing industrial waste from six industrial uses including Foskor into the sea. This disposal is undertaken under a license issued by the Department of Water Services in November 2002 to Mhlathuze Water Board which is responsible to ensure that disposal is undertaken within the required quality and quantity specified in the license condition.

I have taken note of FOSKOR’s assurance on the matter. I am in addition requesting an independent opinion on the environmental aspects of the current discharge of gypsum.

2)   I am advised that, to date, no feasibility studies have been conducted to determine how much sulphur could economically be extracted from the discarded gypsum because the technology required to extract does not exist at commercial level.

Based on the state of the sulphur market, the likely capital cost of the investment, and the limitations in terms of technology, the IDC believes that it remains questionable whether the extraction of sulphur will be commercially feasible. However, Foskor will continue to monitor developments in technologies and will conduct a feasibility study when warranted.

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