**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY QUESTION 2049**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 28 AUGUST 2020 (INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 34-2020)**

**2049. Mr A G** **Whitfield (DA) to ask the Minister of Police:**

1. Whether the National Forensic Science Laboratories are accredited by the International Organization for Standardization; if not, why not; if so, on what date was each laboratory accredited;
2. whether the ballistics section of the National Forensic Science Laboratories is affiliated to and/or is registered with the Association of Firearms and Toolmark Examiners; if not, why not; if so, on what date was it registered and/or affiliated? NW2611E

**REPLY:**

(1).Internationally, the accreditation of laboratories is a voluntary scheme, which is open to any laboratory performing testing and/or calibration. No current legislation exists, which requires accreditation as a prerequisite, for acceptance of scientific test results in legal proceedings when the credibility of the results can be proven according to full traceability of processes and materials, used to produce a result or finding.

Currently, the South African Police Service (SAPS) Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), is not an accredited laboratory, as per ISO 17025:2017. However, it is working towards obtaining accreditation, as a laboratory testing facility. Such accreditation status only provides a benefit, in terms of the Accreditation for Conformity Assessment, Calibration and Good Laboratory Practice Act, 2006 (Act No. 19 of 2006).

The FSL has a developed a Quality Management System (QMS), which is in line with ISO 17025:2017, through which the credibility of the results can be proven. Forensic analysts in the environment, are subjected to forensic training and mentoring programmes, prior to performing duties independently. Cases are subjected to peer review, as part of quality control. The FSL also participates in a proficiency testing programme, to provide confidence in test results and to monitor the performance of analysts.

The methods employed for analyses within the FSL are internationally accepted and have been used for many years. The methods are largely based on a qualitative comparison analysis, using certified reference materials, which are fully traceable.

The accreditation status does not prevent the FSL from providing forensic services, as Courts of Law will evaluate all the evidence and decide, on a case to case basis, the acceptability of the scientific evidence submitted.

(2) The Ballistics Section of the FSL is not registered with the Association of Firearms and Toolmarks Examiners (AFTE). The AFTE registers individuals and not institutions. It is not compulsory to be an AFTE registered member, to conduct forensic ballistics examinations, in South Africa. The fact that the Ballistics Section of the FSL is not registered with the AFTE, has no impact on the duties conducted by the personnel of the Ballistics Section, nor their testimony in Courts of Law.

Reply to question 2049 recommended

**GENERAL NATIONAL COMMISSIONER: SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE  
KJ SITOLE (SOEG)  
Date**: 2020/09/13

Reply to question 2049 approved

**MINISTER OF POLICE   
GENERAL BH CELE, MP  
DATE**: 27/09/2020