**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2020**

**DUE DATE: 23 OTOBER 2020**

**2257. The Leader of the Opposition(DA) to ask the President of the Republic:**

1. With reference to his decision to sanction the Minister of Defence, Ms N N Mapisa-Nqakula, by docking her salary for her error in judgement to use a SA Air Force plane to ferry a delegation of the African National Congress to attend party-political meetings in Harare, Zimbabwe from 8 to 9 September 2020, on what statutory grounds did he rely (a) in this regard and (b) when determining that no further action should be taken against the (i) specified Minister for allowing a delegation of the specified political party to use the SA Air Force plane and (ii) specified political party for abusing taxpayer-funded State resources for party-political purposes;
2. whether he intends referring the matter for further investigation to the Special Investigating Unit and/or the SA Police Service in respect of (a) any of the officials from the specified political organisation for contravening any of the applicable regulations and (b) the Minister pertaining to the prohibition on international travel during the national State of Disaster; if not, in each case, why not; if so, what are the relevant details in each case;
3. whether he is satisfied (a) with the Minister’s calculations of the amount owed by the political organisation as reimbursement to the State for being ferried on the flights and (b) that the political organisation has reimbursed the State; if not, in each case, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details in each case?

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**REPLY**

The Constitution provides that Ministers serve at the pleasure of the Head of the Executive. Section 91(2) of the Constitution empowers the President to appoint and dismiss them. Assignments to Ministers and decisions on their performance are within the President’s discretion.

I made clear that I disapproved of the Minister’s decision and actions, and therefore I applied the sanction in a manner that I deemed fit for her error in judgment.

As the President of the Republic I have no authority to sanction a political party for their actions. Decisions made within the political party are for the political party to communicate.

I understand that the Public Protector is investigating this matter.

The Department of Home Affairs is responsible for the entry and exit of persons to and from the Republic and for investigating if anything untoward occurred with respect to their responsibilities.

As the Honourable Member would be aware, not all international travel was prohibited during the period in question. Repatriation flights, travel by diplomats, travel by investors or business persons (after seeking due permission) was allowed.

The account of the costs involved was submitted to me, and to the Public Protector and made public, as was confirmation of payment by the political party in question, and I have no reason to doubt their accuracy.