QUOTE

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 2583(NW2958E) AS PUBLISHED IN IQP NO.24-2015 OF 24 JULY 2015**

**PQ NW2958E, Mr RA Lees (DA) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

1. Whether, with regard to a South African citizen, Stephen McGowan, who has been held hostage in Mali since November 2011, the Government has taken any steps to secure the specific person’s release; if not; why not; if so, what (a) steps have been taken and (b) are the reasons for the specific person not yet having been released?

**REPLY:**

1. Yes.

The Government continues to pursue diplomatic channels to secure the release of the South African hostage, Steven McGowan.

1. A Task Team chaired by DIRCO was established comprising security departments to oversee this case. The Task Team meets regularly and informs the McGowan’s family of developments. In Mali, the South African Embassy is part of the Troika comprising the Netherlands and Sweden. The Troika holds meetings and engages with the Malian government to get updates on developments regarding this matter. This Troika has since been reduced to two members following the release of the Dutch hostage by the French security forces. Furthermore, a Special Envoy was sent to Mauritania in February 2015 specifically to establish more information on the kidnaping and raise South Africa’s concerns on the continued kidnapping.
2. The political and security situation in North Mali makes it difficult for the Malian government to engage with the kidnappers but efforts continues from both the South African and Malian governments to secure Mr McGowan’s release.

UNQUOTE