**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2766**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 29 – 2022**

**2766. Ms H S Winkler (DA) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

(a) What plans has his department put in place in order to combat fraudulent South African passports, (b) what are the (i) deadlines, (ii) timelines, (iii) time frames and (iv) milestones in this regard, (c) what number of fraudulent passports have been identified in the (aa) past three financial years and (bb) since 1 January 2022, (d) how were the fraudulent passports identified in each case and (e) what number of charges were laid in each case? NW3353E

**REPLY:**

1. & (b),(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)

The Honourable Member is referred to the Statement made by Minister on 11th August 2022 in this respect, wherein Minister announced the first of three steps to be taken by the Department to secure the integrity of the South African passport, and make it foolproof against fraudulent acquisition. The Department thus has plans in place to combat fraudulent passports by intensifying the security measures in the South African passport and these plans will be implemented in phases. The following measures have been implemented:

* A passport can only be collected strictly from office where it was applied for, whereas previously you could collect from any office in the country.
* Only the person who applied for that passport can come and collect it by activating it through a fingerprint.
* For minor children, their parents or guardians who helped them to apply for that passport will be the only ones allowed to come and collect it and activate using their own fingerprints.
* The Director-General of the Department of Home Affairs has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Interpol on 29 July 2022 on reporting lost and stolen passports.
* South Africa is a signatory to the Convention on International Civil Aviation Origination (ICAO) and is subjected to regular audits including on how it handles including on lost and stolen passports.
* The Department has also revised its Standard Operating Procedures, Manuals and Policies regarding lost and stolen passports, and these are being implemented.

Further measures are also underway at our Government Printing Works facility to continue to secure our passports. The Department will make a determination and will make further announcements on the implementation of the further plans to be implemented in due course, when the ABIS programme has been completed.

(c)(aa) In the past three financial years, 500 passports were identified as fraudulent. Each time an investigation uncovered a fraudulently issued passport, they were referred for blocking of the passport numbers on the National Population Register so that the holders thereof cannot be able to use them. These were also referred for V-listing on the Movement Control System, which means that should the holders thereof attempt to use them at a Port of Entry, an Immigration Officer will be alerted.

(c)(bb) Since January 2022, 185 passports were investigated and the passport numbers were blocked on the National Population Register and also placed on the Movement Control Systems’ V-Stoplist.

(d) Whistle-blowers reported allegations pertaining to fraudulent passports. The Department then conducted investigations on those allegations and also profiled the User IDs of the implicated officials which uncovered that more passports were issued fraudulently.

(e) Twelve (12) officials were charged with misconduct with eight (8) dismissals and the remainder are still pending disciplinary hearings. The officials and members of the public involved have also been charged criminally for fraud, corruption, money laundering, racketeering and contravention of the Immigration Act with the cases still pending in court.

**END**