**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION: 3330**

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**Mr M L FILTANE (UDM) TO ASK THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LAND REFORM:**

With regard to the current land grabs, which have now spread to rural areas like Zazulwana Village in Butterworth in the Eastern Cape, what steps will she take to prevent the illegal land grabs? **NW3805E**

**REPLY:**

While the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform is administratively regarded as the owner of the bulk of land in rural areas, the day to day management of such land, including land allocation, is mainly in the hands of communities that occupy such land. This impacts on the Minister’s ability to pass immediate judgment whether new occupation is lawful or not, unless members of such community or other interested parties bring the fact of unlawful occupation to the attention of the Minister.

Land grabs violate rights of owners, constitute an affront to land use laws and are criminal in nature. An effective response to land grabs in rural areas therefore requires collaboration with, amongst other stakeholders, local government, organised agriculture, traditional leadership and law enforcement agencies. The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has already commenced with bilateral discussions with each of the abovementioned sectors with a view to, amongst other things, develop prevention mechanisms as well as develop a monitoring system for land grabs, land invasions and land related criminal acts.

Whilst the engagements discussed above are happening, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform routinely intervenes in clearly identified or reported cases of land grabs. Such interventions take the form of direct engagements with unlawful occupiers, advice to lawful occupants to report cases to the South African Police Service and direct litigation in those instances where it is in the interest of justice to seek the eviction of the unlawful occupiers.