QUOTE

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR ORAL REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 3331(NW3932E)**

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**MRS C DUDLEY (ACDP) TO ASK THE MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION:**

(1) Whether the Government has ever discussed or intends to discuss at a diplomatic level with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the issue of religious freedom in Iran;

(2) Whether she is aware that Christians in the country are frustrated to know that the Government has good diplomatic relations with Iran and yet does not seem to consider the issue of religious freedom and the persecution of Christians in Iran as a serious matter or even a concern;

(3) has she taken any steps with regard to this issue; if not, why not; if so, (a) what steps has she taken and (b) are there further relevant details in this regard? NW3932E

**REPLY:**

(1). Yes. South Africa and Iran are in the process of concluding a Modality Framework Agreement for the establishment of a Structured Dialogue Forum specifically focused on Human Rights. Once concluded, the Dialogue Forum will convene regularly and constitute a platform for both countries to hold frank discussions on issues and concerns regarding domestic human rights.

(2) The Dialogue Forum will allow the two countries to engage on all issues of human rights as contained in the United Nations Charter on Human Rights. South Africa and Iran already discuss human rights issues within the Joint Commission and the Dialogue Forum will provide a further platform for deeper engagement and cooperation.

(3) (a) During the 12th Joint Commission between South Africa and the Islamic Republic of Iran held in Tehran on 10 to 11 May 2015 the two sides agreed to strengthen their bilateral cooperation in the field of human rights in international fora among others. My Department, together with our Iranian counterparts are in the process of finalising a Modality Framework Agreement to establish a Structured Dialogue Forum.

 (b). Not applicable.

 UNQUOTE