**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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**National Assembly**

**Question for Written Reply:**

**407. Mr W F Faber (DA) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

Whether against the background of record high unemployment figures and persistent levels of poverty in the Republic, she has found that the Government’s R50 million donation to the government of the Republic of Cuba for special intervention purposes, could have been put to better use at home; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details? NO459E

**REPLY:**

The Cuban government called on South Africa and other partner countries in their hour of need in July 2021. Cuba’s worst economic crisis in 30 years was caused by the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic and further exacerbated by the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba by the United States. Cuba as a result is experiencing chronic shortages of food, fuel, medicine and electricity.

South Africa responded to this call for humanitarian assistance in the context of reciprocity and its historical friendship and solidarity with Cuba which was cemented though Cuba’s sacrifices during our struggle for freedom. Cuba also responded without hesitance to South Africa’s call for medical professionals to assist during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

The African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF), which is located within DIRCO, and which is legally constituted to implement humanitarian assistance of this nature, is coordinating the project with relevant stakeholders, following all necessary legal prescripts. .

The required concurrence to release an amount of R50 million from the African Renaissance Fund was provided by the Minister of Finance, after which the Acting Director-General of DIRCO approved that the request for humanitarian assistance by Cuba be implemented through the supply chain management processes as regulated by the Public Finance Management Act (Act No. 1 of 1999).

These processes were concluded by December 2021.