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OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

STATEMENT BY PEYA MUSHELENGA MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE STATE OF AFFAIRS AT THE TOWN COUNCIL OF REHOBOTH

15 MARCH 2018

Good afternoon to you all

In keeping with the oversight role assigned to the Minister in terms of the Local Authorities Act (Act no. 23 of 1992) as amended, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development has been pre-occupied with and dealing with concerning state of mismanagement, lack of accountability and poor service delivery at the town of Rehoboth for some years now. In this regard, the Minister and Ministry in general has intervened on many occasions and in many ways with the hope of bringing about the needed change and leadership on the part of the Council.

The specific interventions done are:

- Issuance of several Ministerial directives in line with the powers of the Minister as provided for in the Local Authorities, 1992 as amended;
- Convening of face-to-face meetings with the Council (Councillors and management);

- Commissioning of an investigation and fielding of a team of officials from the Ministry from 21 February 2017 to 23 June 2017 to conduct a detailed investigation into the affairs of the Council and to provide on-the-spot guidance and advice to management and Council on identified shortcomings and remedial measures to address such;
- Presentation, to the Council of Rehoboth Town, of the investigation report that has been compiled by the Ministry's team detailing identified irregularities and recommended corrective measures, for implementation and report back on the action taken or planned;
- Holding of a face-to-face meeting on 26 February 2018 for Council to present to the Minister proof of any action taken to correct the situation and specifically the issues raised in the Investigation Report. This meeting was attended by all the members of the Rehoboth Town Council, the former Minister, Hon Shaningwa and current Minister, Hon Dr Peya Mushelenga and Ministry's officials.

The situation in Rehoboth can be summed up as a case of a Council failing to exercise the powers and perform the duties and functions assigned to a local authority Council in terms of Section 30 of the Local Authorities Act, 1992 as amended. The key identified causal or contributing factors are:

- Poor or lack of leadership in general as well as a division or lack of teamwork within the governing Council and between the Councillors and Management;
- Persistent non-adherence and compliance to the provisions of the Act in almost all aspects and areas of the affairs of Council including compliance to basic governance requirements of holding Council meetings and submission of minutes of Council meetings to the Minister ;
- Mismanagement and lack of accountability for public resources entrusted to Council (monies paid to Council by residents and/or allocated from the Central Government).

The combined effect of the above-mentioned instances of non-compliance, poor management and maladministration is that the Town Council is failing to serve its purpose and role as set out in the governing Act and more importantly the provision of requisite services to the residents

In the public interest and having considered the following:

- a) The persistent disregard of Ministerial directives by the Council of Rehoboth;
- b) The failure of Council to implement corrective measures that have recommended by the Ministry, even when the Ministry stationed a team of officials for over a month providing hands-on or on-the-spot guidance and assistance;
- c) Visible division among the Council members with a negative consequent effect of the Council not being able to effectively function and operate as a united Council and to execute the role and duties assigned to it. I wish to point out that this divisive at the political leadership level of the Council has unfortunately filtered or cascaded down to the operational levels of the Town Council and has resulted in conflicts and confrontations and a compromise or lack of service delivery and accountability to the members of the public who are supposed to be served by this Council; and
- d) The obvious failure of Council to show and provide leadership and steer the affairs of the Town Council even with or despite the various supportive interventions and guidance that have undertaken and provided to the Council by the Ministry on several occasions,

I am here to announce my decision as published in Government Gazette Notice 6546 issued on 15 March 2018, which reads as follows and I quote:

“SUSPENSION FROM OFFICE OF MEMBERS OF TOWN COUNCIL OF REHOBOTH

Under Section 92(2) of the Local Authorities Act (Act no. 23 of 1992), I –

- (a) declare that all the powers, duties and functions of the Town Council of Rehoboth vest in the Minister; and**
- (b) suspend all the members of the Town Council of Rehoboth from office. ,**

with effect from the date of publication of this notice in the Gazette.

In view of the suspension of the Town Council of Rehoboth as just announced, I am also hereby announcing my decision to set an interim Council governance structure at Rehoboth as follows:

- The appointment of Ms. Natalia /Goagoses to exercise all the powers, duties and functions of the Minister;
- Ms /Goagoses assumes duty with immediate effect and will be supported by the Council’s Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Christoph Uirab, whose suspension from office by the suspended Council is hereby withdrawn with immediate effect, as well as a team of officials from the Ministry who have been seconded to the Council to a defined period.

I wish to take this opportunity point out and emphasise the following:

Firstly, that this country running a governance system guided by policies, laws and regulations, which must at all times be complied with, failing which there is will be consequences and the culprits will be called upon to reckon.

In terms of the Local Authorities Act, 1992, I, as the Minister of Urban and Rural Development have a duty and obligation to ensure that the above-mentioned legal instruments are implemented and adhered to the later at all levels of local government. Where these legal instruments are violated, ignored or contravened, I, in the public interest, am duty bound to ensure compliance, including through penal actions.

For the Ministry, it is immaterial what political party belongs to or what party has the majority of councillors in an area. As it is self-evident, my action in respect of Rehoboth is therefore not based on any political influence but merely aimed at ensuring order and compliance and to protect the public.

It must be clear to all local authorities that the Ministry and I as the Minister in particular will in future take swift action against any local authority whenever discipline, order, harmony and service delivery is at stake and in the interest of the public.

I thank you