**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, NKOSI PHATHEKILE HOLOMISA (AH! DILIZINTABA), MP,**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

**BUDGET VOTE**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CAPE TOWN, 19 MAY 2022**

Honourable House Chairperson,

Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Ronald Ozzy Lamola,

Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr John Jeffery,

Chairperson, Members of the Portfolio Committee

Honourable Members

Members of the public

South Africa’s National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) calls for, *inter alia,* the building of safe communities and promotion of social cohesion. To this end, in contributing towards Safe and Empowered Communities through Sustainable Economic Development, one of the strategic focus areas of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is the social reintegration of all those in its care.

DCS regards the effective social reintegration of offenders as the most challenging and most crucial aspect of their rehabilitation. DCS also realises that this is the point at which offenders are at their most vulnerable in their progression to sustainable correction and rehabilitation.

Through the implementation of the DCS Social Reintegration Framework, the Department seeks to create platforms and avenues for active participation and involvement of various stakeholders in the advancement of rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders. The Framework maps out processes to reposition the system of community corrections by professionalising core functions of Social Reintegration, actively engaging the community and relevant stakeholders in the rehabilitation process as well as providing interventions and services that are responsive to the risks and needs of parolees and probationers to eliminate reoffending and improve public safety.

The Social Reintegration programme is expected to spend R3.5 billion over the medium-term, and 89.3% of the total budget of the programme, amounting to R3.1 billion, is allocated to the Supervision sub-programme. Over the medium-term, R141.8 million, which is 4.1% of the total programme allocation, will be spent on leased community corrections offices. The Department continues to facilitate restorative justice by also increasing the number of victims participating in restorative justice programmes from 4 100 in 2022/23 to 5 300 in 2024/25. These dialogues are budgeted for in the Community Reintegration sub-programme, with an allocation of R198.3 million over the MTEF period.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the execution of social reintegration processes, resulting in reduced physical monitoring of offenders and restorative justice processes such as Victim-Offender-Dialogues (VODs) and Victim-Offender-Mediations (VOMs). Integration with district and regional models will be prioritised to ensure accessibility of services to parolees and probationers.

Given the prevailing economic conditions, concerted efforts will be made to engage various partners including sister Government Departments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and relevant community structures to provide after care and support in ensuring successful reintegration.

For the past three years, DCS has recorded a 99% success rate of parolees and probationers complying with conditions of release.

Although those who violated their conditions constituted 1%, some of them committed serious and violent crimes. The rate of recidivism in South Africa is widely believed to be unacceptably high. This deduction, however, is not very reliable, as there is currently no reliable system for monitoring recidivism, or analyzing the trends in this regard, and thus such a system will have to be developed and put in place. It order for us to develop an understanding of the causes of re-offending and the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives, DCS has embarked upon a scientific research programme. The extent to which societal institutions such as the family unit and other community institutions embrace correction as one of their basic functions will have an impact on successful social reintegration, as well as the future rate of reoffending.

The University of South Africa (UNISA) committed to providing guidance on the recognition of prior learning for the educational growth of community corrections officials. The Department of Home Affairs will extend their mobile services to offenders, parolees and correctional officials and will grant access to system reports to down-manage archived absconders (such as death notifications). The South African Police Service (SAPS) will process sample lists at their Criminal Record Centres for system generated reports for absconders. Available community service hubs will be extended to parolees and probationers, including access to economic opportunities, and joint operations with the SAPS will be intensified to trace absconders.

The ageing vehicle fleet, across the 218 community corrections offices, has been a common feature. The national drive to capacitate community corrections offices with an efficient fleet of vehicles has been realized, as 519 vehicles were sourced for community corrections across the country which addressed 98% of the registered national need. This intervention will result in community corrections officials being sufficiently resourced to meet service delivery expectations to communities. Community Corrections has also expedited the supply of other tools of trade, in line with resolutions stemming from the 2019 Community Corrections Indaba. The project to distribute laptops is underway as part of the drive to improve the job effectiveness of community corrections officials.

As per the White Paper on Corrections, the promotion of the spirit and practice of goodwill and sincere interaction between offenders and their communities and families, and within the correctional centre community, is a vehicle through which rehabilitation can be promoted.

The involvement of inmates in caring for their communities within the correctional centre environment, in taking responsibility for their fellow inmates and their families, are stepping-stones to the reintegration of these individuals into society, equipped with the tools necessary to strengthen the moral fibre of society. It is for this reason that Correctional Services is not only addressing rehabilitation from an institutional point of view, but views societal upliftment as the engine for societal transformation processes.

Across South Africa, Correctional Services continues to avail various support measures, including donations from our officials’ own pockets, as well as food donations such as vegetables, eggs, pork and beef from our agricultural farms, abattoirs and production workshops. We also provide assistance on infrastructural work, relating to construction of buildings, electrical work, tiling, painting, plumbing and general labour through our artisans, offenders and parolees amongst others. It is thus prudent for citizens to experience that the skills and talents inmates acquire behind bars are not offered only for the benefit of offenders, but must be utilized in supporting developmental infrastructure projects and community-led initiatives towards ensuring that all people in South Africa are, and feel, safe.

Honourable Members, over the past year, oversight visits to various DCS Management Areas gave us first-hand experience on the challenges facing the staff of the department, who operate at the coalface of our operations, that is, the correctional centres, as well as the opportunity to engage with inmates. Coupled with these visits, we have also undertaken a number of community outreach initiatives in partnership with our social partners who include among others SABC’s Mhlobo Wenene FM,

Metropolitan Life, Avbob and Old Mutual. For instance, on 29 March 2022, together with the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS), we undertook a working visit to the Upington Management Area in the Free State/Northern Cape Region, where we also handed over dignity packs, comprising sanitary towels and boxer shorts (underwear), to young girls, as well as school back packs to young boys, in partnership with Old Mutual and Metropolitan Life, at Oranje Oewer Primary School. A vegetable garden has also been established at the school and, like others elsewhere, is being maintained by parolees and probationers.

During the same Upington working visit the Department entered into an MOU with Marcus Mbetha Sindisa Secure School, under the auspices of the Northern Cape Department of Education. In terms of the MOU parolees will be trained in the manufacture of various wood products, including coffins, as part of their ongoing rehabilitation.

The coffins will be given as charitable assistance to underprivileged families in the Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality.

The relationship between DCS and the community, CBOs, NGOs and FBOs is a *sine qua non* to the successful achievement of the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. In this regard, the department adopted the Mthatha-based Khwezi Lokusa Special School for the Cerebral Palsied and Orthopaedically Challenged Learners. In terms of this arrangement we committed ourselves to continually provide cleaning, gardening and maintenance services, using parolee and probationer labour.

This model has been successfully replicated at Retlametswe Special School in Mahikeng, where we also provided the school with fresh farm produce from the Rooigrond Correctional Centre. We are perforce constantly looking for opportunities in our communities where, within the parameters of the Self-Sufficiency and Sustainability Framework, we can be agents of positive change.

Uppermost in our interventions as leadership is to create a conducive working environment for our employees to be able to discharge their duties unhindered, and motivated. To underline our commitment to the wellbeing of our employees the Department recently hosted a successful 3-day Integrated Employee Health and Wellness Summit in St Albans during which effective strategies were developed to cater for the physical, social, spiritual and financial needs of officials who routinely perform their duties under risky and stressful conditions.

Without the leadership and support of the Chairperson and Members of the Justice and Correctional Services Portfolio Committee, the work of the Department will be constrained and I would therefore wish to place on record my sincere thanks and appreciation to them. I also wish to thank the Inspecting Judge, Edwin Cameron, and his office for their enthusiasm and frankness in our engagements.

A special word of gratitude goes to our dedicated and hands-on Minister, Honourable Ronald Ozzy Lamola, as well as all DCS officials led by Acting National Commissioner Makgothi Thobakgale.

THANK YOU!