

Date: 17 Jan 2011

Title: Media statement on the Declaration of a National Disaster as a result of flooding and other natural disasters in the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media, good afternoon.

We are here today to express a consolidated and integrated government view on the recent floods and other incidents of natural disasters that have afflicted the country resulting in loss of life, injury and destruction to property and infrastructure.

Government would first like to convey a message of condolences to families who have lost loved ones through these incidents which include floods, lightning, storms and tornadoes. To those who have sustained injuries, lost houses, business places and other infrastructure, government expresses its deepest sympathy.

According to reports received so far from the Provinces, a total of 40 people have lost their lives as a result of flooding and incidents of lightning, thunderstorms and tornadoes between mid-December to date. South Africa's disaster management capacity needs to be commended because more lives would have been lost, and further damage to infrastructure incurred had it not been for the capacity South Africa has in dealing with natural disasters. In terms of infrastructural damages, reports received so far from the Northern Cape, North West and KwaZulu-Natal provinces indicate an estimated damage to the tune of R50 million, R6million and R300 million respectively.

Reports received to date indicate that funding will be required for the following broad areas:

- * Humanitarian Relief
- * Repair and upgrading of public infrastructure
- * Agricultural relief (infrastructure, livestock and crops)
- * Repairs to damaged houses.

Reports from the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces are still outstanding at this point. As of yesterday, on January 16th key sectors that have been affected the most are Agriculture, Tourism, Energy, Education, private enterprises and Human Settlements, in addition to directly and indirectly affected citizens.

With regards to dam levels with direct impact on flooding disaster risk, the status is as follows:

- * Vaal Dam (99%)
- * Bloemhof Dam in the North West (98%)
- * Gariep Dam (110%)
- * Vanderkloof Dam (109%)

In terms of the Disaster Management Act, the Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs has recommended that a Gazette be issued to declare a National State of Disaster covering the following 7 provinces and 28 municipalities:

GAUTENG

1. Sedibeng District Municipality
2. City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality
3. City of Johannesburg
4. Ekurhuleni Metro
5. West Rand District Municipality

FREE STATE

6. Fezile Dabi District Municipality
7. Xhariep District Municipality
8. Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality

KWAZULU-NATAL

9. UThukela District Municipality
10. iLembe District Municipality
11. Ethekwini Metro
12. Sisonke District Municipality
13. Amajuba District Municipality
14. Ugu District Municipality

MPUMALANGA

15. Nkangala District Municipality
16. Ehlanzeni District Municipality

NORTH WEST

17. Dr Ruth Sekgomotse Mompoti District Municipality
18. Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality
19. Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality
20. Bojanala District Municipality

NORTHERN CAPE

21. Frances Baard District Municipality
22. Siyanda District Municipality
23. Pixley kaSeme District Municipality
24. Namakwa District Municipality

LIMPOPO

25. Mopani
26. Sekhukhune
27. Waterberg Municipality
28. Vhembe

INTERVENTIONS

To give an effective integrated and co-ordinated response to this unfortunate situation, government's Inter-Ministerial Committee that is chaired by the Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and is composed of the

following Ministers: Finance, Water and Environmental Affairs, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; State Security; Social Development; Defense and Military Veterans; Police; National Treasury; Health; Rural Development; Human Settlements; Communications; Labour and Basic Education has been holding discussions about this phenomenon.

The IMC has adopted a two-pronged approach in dealing with these phenomena: first to declare disaster areas in terms of the Act; and for the medium to long-term, to develop mechanisms to monitor the situation of the weather patterns in South Africa so that in future we will be able to minimize as much as possible loss of life and destruction to property. This is one of the key decisions taken by the IMC at our last meeting last Friday.

The National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) is also in constant contact with Provincial Disaster Management Centres (PDMCs) and other relevant sectors since the outbreak of the flooding situation. The public is being kept up to date about the situation through media and community-based structures.

Various Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Premiers, MECs and Mayors have also visited most of the areas affected by these disasters, to witness the destruction for themselves and advise government on the best manner of interventions required.

We take this opportunity to thank those volunteers and members of the public who have been and continue to work selflessly to assist those communities that have been affected. The role played by non-governmental organizations and other relief organizations in partnering with government and coming to provide humanitarian aid to our communities cannot be under-estimated.

These are extra-ordinary times calling for extraordinary interventions and measures from all of us.

As government we will continue to do all in our power to minimize further loss of life and damage to property and infrastructure. We will work closely with all sectors of society to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach in assisting those affected.

You may have noticed that this is a global phenomenon. We have been monitoring very closely the incidents taking place internationally particularly in Brazil, Sri Lanka, Australia and other parts of the world that have been affected by these natural disasters. We believe that now more than ever before, matters pertaining to climate change require priority attention so that we can continuously improve on our early warning systems. Again, government takes this opportunity to express our solidarity with the international community that have also been affected by the disasters.

South Africa, and in fact the entire global community, is experiencing what is known as the La Nino effect as a result of the warming of the Pacific Ocean which has in turn led to the current out of the ordinary rain patterns, which will unfortunately be with us for the greater part of this year.

For further details on the briefing and requests for interviews with Minister Shiceka, please contact:

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