



environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 78 {NW81E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 1 of 2021

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Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment :

What are the full relevant details of the steps that she has taken with her counterpart in the Communications and Digital Technologies, to ensure that 5G technology can be rolled out in the Republic without harming human health and/or causing environmental degradation, particularly in light of the significantly intrusive provisions regarding the installation and deployment of electronic communication networks contemplated by the proposed amendments to the Environment Conservation Act, Act 73 of 1989, and given the precautionary principle embodied in the National Environmental Management Act, Act 108 of 1998?

78. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

Section 21 of the Electronic Communications Act, 2005 (Act No. 36 of 2005) provides that the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies has the authority to, in consultation with the Ministers of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Rural Development and Land Reform; Water and Environmental Affairs [Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation]; Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and other relevant institutions, develop a policy and policy directions for the rapid deployment and provisioning of electronic communications facilities, following which, the Authority must prescribe regulations.

In response to the above, the then Minister of Telecommunication and Postal Services [now Communications and Digital Technologies] wrote to the then Minister of Environmental Affairs (Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment) requesting that an official from the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) be nominated to be part of an Interim Rapid Deployment Steering Committee and Co-ordination Centre (Rapid Deployment and Coordination Center). The Minister's request was acceded to, and a DEFF official was nominated. The nominated official attended meetings scheduled by the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) wherein discussions were held with regard to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations requirements and possible listed activities that may be triggered by the proposed Rapid Deployment of Electronic Communication Facilities. The nominated official also facilitated engagements between the DCDT and other units within the DEFF that were identified as critical to the process.

The Department also provided written comments on Government Notice No. 43537 published by the DCDT with regard to their proposed Policy and Policy Direction on Rapid Deployment of Electronic Communications Networks and Facilities. The Department remains committed to assisting and providing guidance to the DCDT as and when required.

In relation to reference to *'the proposed amendments to the Environment Conservation Act, Act 73 of 1989'*, it should be noted that the Department is not considering any related amendments to the EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended) or the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 106 of 1998) which is the current legislation guiding the management of environmental impact.

Regards



**MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

DATE: 26/2/2021