Duplicate IDs, Uncollected IDs, Residence Permit backlog, Initial Permit Transformation Plan: progress report by Home Affairs

Home Affairs

14 August 2012

Chairperson: Ms M Maunye (ANC)

Meeting Summary

The Home Affairs Director General said the programme to remove duplicate documents had reduced the number of people sharing the same ID number from 68 872 to 29 677. The Department was waiting for people who discovered they shared an ID number to come forward and have their case resolved, but it was frustrated by the lack of public response. The Department felt it had done everything it could to encourage people to come forward. The number of people with multiple ID numbers had been reduced from 460 000 to 119 114.

There were a total of 427 655 uncollected Identity Documents (IDs) and the Director General acknowledged that it was problematic, but urged the Committee to consider this number in the context of the 32 million people who did have IDs. Home Affairs was trying to rectify this by introducing an SMS notification system, through outreach programmes and by raising the fee for replacement IDs.

The Department was excited to announce that it had cleared its backlog of 46 076 temporary residence applications, and aimed to have cleared the backlog of permanent residence applications by December. The Initial Permit Transformation Plan was also discussed, which involved amongst other measures, centralising and modernizing the permitting process. It was hoped that an electronic process would be faster and less vulnerable to error. A Smart Card was to replace the current paper ID document.

Discussion focused on the modernisation of the system, with members asking when the Smart Card would be rolled out and what the IT contract entailed. Members were concerned that so few people had come forward to have their ID number cases resolved. They offered suggestions on how to reach people and suggested punitive measures for those who did not come forward. Members were worried about the outsourcing of certain functions, arguing that private companies such as SanTech had a bad track record.

Meeting report

Home Affairs on status of duplicate documents, uncollected Identity Documents, permit backlog
Mr Mkhuseli Apleni, Home Affairs Director General, said he would update the Committee on the status of duplicate documents, uncollected Identity Documents (IDs) and to provide feedback to the Portfolio Committee on permits backlog and the on-going Transformation of Permitting in the Department of Home Affairs. He said that a lot of progress had been made thus far.

Duplicate Documents
Mr Apleni explained the legacy of apartheid with relevance to duplicate documents, and the difficulties that had arisen when trying to amalgamate the apartheid system's various population registers. Prior to amalgamation, reference book holders were allocated with identity numbers without their knowledge. A pre-printed list of ID numbers was utilised to allocate IDs. Consequently people applied without using those allocated ID numbers or the pre-printed numbers were misallocated amongst the citizens resulting in duplicates. No fingerprints were taken on allocation of the ID number and there was no verification of fingerprints. In the late Eighties, electronic birth certificates with an identity number were introduced, without fingerprints. Fingerprints were kept manually whilst the identity numbers were kept in the National Population Register.

Under the current process, government continued to issue birth certificates for children without taking fingerprints which was the first point of entry into the National Population Register (NPR). In 2002 the Department developed the HANIS system to store fingerprints; however it was not integrated with the NPR. A conversion process ensued for storing the manual records in HANIS, but due to the quality of some fingerprints, they were not captured. In 2005 the manual records were digitized, revealing 68 872 duplicates where more than one person shared an ID number and 460 000 duplicates where one person had multiple identity numbers. Corrupt officials were able to identify ID numbers on NPR which were not linked to fingerprints and issue fraudulent IDs.

The Department provided a breakdown of the 68 872 people sharing an ID number. 19 639 cases had been investigated and resolved; 2 223 clients had been contacted and their cases were pending; and 29 677 cases had been investigated but a response from the client to a query letter or telephone enquiry was required before the case could be finalised. The 29 677 were of concern for the Department, and it was looking at what could be done to resolve these cases. Their names had been run against the databases, and had been published in the national newspapers. The Department had done everything in its power to contact these clients and felt that there was nothing more that they could do without cooperation from the clients.

A breakdown of the 460 000 people with multiple ID numbers was provided. These were detected during the Back Record Capturing (BRC) period when cards were being scanned into HANIS and 'hit' against another ID number. These ID numbers were blocked, and the impact on the client was only realised when they applied for a service at a Home Affairs office. Of this 460 000, 2 833 were deceased; 51 703 cases had been IDs linked to Foreign Nationals and were now resolved; 49 151 cases were people who were allocated ID numbers without their being aware, they had since been allocated another number which they had used to apply for an ID document; 237 199 cases had been resolved before the duplicate project started; and 119 114 cases remained which still needed to be resolved.

Current initiatives included the publication of the names of the 29 677 people sharing ID numbers in May 2012 in national newspapers. The public was also informed through electronic media, radio and the Home Affairs website. The Department had engaged external stakeholders such as South African Social Service Agency (SASSA), TransUnion, South African Bank Risk Information Centre (SABRIC), MTN and Vodacom; it had created the SMS capability for clients to check if their IDs were duplicated by dialling 32551 followed by D and their ID number; and home visits were conducted by officials from Home Affairs offices.

Through the IT modernization of the Department the following projects were to be implemented: the development of the New National Identification System would include both biometrics and personal particulars; the rollout of the ID Smart Card; conducting a feasibility study of at which age a fingerprint of a child can be taken without a risk of changing and to determine system implications; the registration of birth within thirty days as the only entry point to the National Population Register; and registration of birth will also require the taking of fingerprints of one of the parents and online verification of that parent or guardian would be conducted.

Mr Apleni outlined the progress that had been made thus far in terms of enquiries. They had had surprisingly few responses, and had expected much more due to the gravity of the problem. In total 3872 enquiries had been received from the nine provinces, and 2579 applications had been received. A total of 9895 applications had been processed. This included 9467 cases of one person with multiple ID numbers and 428 cases of people sharing ID numbers.

There was a possibility that the fraudulent people would never come forward. The person that they shared the ID number with would have the problem solved, but they would not. This was residue of people who would never come forward. The problem of the ID book was that it could not be checked against anything. Even if an ID was blocked by the Department, if could still be used at banks, airports or shops. This was why the smart card was being looked at, because if an ID was no longer valid it would immediately be picked up.

The department felt they had done everything in their power to encourage people to come forward, and argued that no one could be unaware of the process.

Uncollected Identity Documents

Having achieved the target of a 55 day turn-around time for ID documents, the Department was turning its attention to uncollected IDs.

The causes of uncollected IDs included the migration of people from one place to the other without updating their address with the Home Affairs, which was being non-compliant with Section 11(1) of the Identification Act; death before collecting the ID; applying for the ID from one office to the other without collecting the document; misplacing one's ID and in the process of applying for an ID and finding the original document. The situation had improved since the price of applying for a new ID was raised, when an ID was only R20, people would get temporary ones if they forgot theirs at homes and then never collect the final document.

There were a total of 427 655 uncollected IDs. This included 43 034 for KwaZulu Natal, 11 432 for Mpumalanga, and 15 639 for the Western Cape. In addition, there were 301 699 uncollected IDs at Head Office. This was a large number and Mr Apleni acknowledged that it was problematic, but urged the Committee to consider this in the context of the 32 million people who did have IDs. The bulk of uncollected IDs were not first issues, but reissues. It was frustrating to the Department, which had been facing the problem of not issuing them quick enough, to now find that they were able to issue them fast enough but people were not collecting them. It suggested that people had not needed to apply for the document in the first place, as it would be difficult to cope without an ID at all.

There were a number of initiatives being run to rectify this. The Department had introduced an SMS capability, which provided clients with three SMS messages reminding them to collect their IDs. Through outreach programmes the lists were submitted to the various stakeholders, such as traditional leaders, community development workers, local municipalities and so on. The impact of the new tariffs had shown a drastic reduction of uncollected IDs. The Department intended to conduct an age analysis to find out how long the documents had been waiting for collection, and would also divide the documents into those which were a first application and those which were re-issues. A disposal policy would be applied based on these criteria.

The challenges the Department were experiencing included a poor response from clients, outdated contact details, misrepresentation from clients, a lack of public awareness about the value of an ID document and the risk of ID theft, migration of clients from province to province, and identity theft by syndicates. A nationwide system was being introduced so that Home Affairs branches could check if clients had already applied for an ID in another province.

Initial Permit Transformation Plan
The Director General ran through the vision for the Initial Permit Transformation Plan, which entailed a number of actions that needed to be undertaken. These fifteen actions were:

• Facilitate the adoption of the new Permitting Functions and Structure
• Rationalise Permit Offices to 10
• Automate Permitting Processes
• Pilot an Application Scanning System
• Develop New Security features
• Clarify the new roles of Permit Offices
• Appoint dedicated Permit Officials
• Restructure permitting to eliminate duplications and shift managers
• Review adjudication processes, systems and capacity
• Develop an enquiry management system
• Consolidate the Postal Receipt and Dispatch system
• Consolidate the work of the 48 hour hub and increase its capacity
• Review applications for functional services
• Integrate applications for Functional Services into existing Permit Application System
• Reposition the Large Account Unit to increase its workload and productivity level

The majority of these had been achieved, those that remained outstanding where rationalising the Permit Offices to ten, automating the Permitting Processes, piloting the Application Scanning System, appointing dedicated Permit Officials, reviewing applications for functional services and integrating applications for Functional Services into the existing Permit Application System. Mr Apleni said he would return to these issues later on in the presentation.

Permitting Backlog and Daily Management
On 18 June 2012 there was a backlog of 46 076 temporary residence permits. The Department was excited to announce that it had cleared that backlog. This had been done without creating a new backlog by creating capacity to deal with the backlog separately from the applications coming in daily. The Home Affairs had a mandate to return temporary residence applications within a certain time frame, so they had had to ensure that this could still be done.

Mr Apleni ran through the data using an average day, that of 2 August 2012, to demonstrate the daily management process, and how each application was tracked and traced. On that particular day 492 applications were received, these were sent on 3 August for adjudication, where there was an additional 275 backdated cases brought forward from the previous day. 555 applications were adjudicated that day. On 4 August, a Saturday overtime shift, those 555 which had been completed were tracked and traced again, were captured onto the system, and placed onto the movement control system in case they had to travel. On 6 August they were dispatched to the localised system for collection.

This was now being managed on a daily basis, there was no backlog. Mr Apleni noted that now that lawyers were aware that there was no backlog for temporary residence applications, they were pushing for the permanent residence backlog to be cleared. The Department was working on this and the backlog would be cleared. He commented that people tended to mistakenly believe that application was the same as approval, and emphasised that status would not be granted if the criteria were not met.

Permanent residence permits: backlog management plan
Mr Apleni explained that temporary residence permits had been prioritised because if one did not have one, one was illegal, whereas it was still possible to remain in the country without permanent residence.

Capacity had been increased to manage the permanent residence backlog, totalling 356 staff who would assist during the evening, Saturday and Sunday. This did not mean that 356 new staff were employed, but just that they were enlisted to work extra hours.

The first step had been to count and list all the backlogged permanent residence applications from 2001 to 2012. These came to 11 239. The approach adopted was to separate backlog and daily applications. This was to avoid creating a new backlog while dealing with the old one, as had been done with temporary residence applications. Two teams were separately adjudicating Backlog and Daily applications The Department's target was to finish the backlog by the end of December 2012.

Outstanding elements of the Initial Permit Transformation Plan
Mr Apleni then returned to discuss those elements of the Initial Permit Transformation Plan which had not yet been applied. The first was the rationale for ten Permit Offices. The idea was to standardise visa and permit applications at front offices, and to develop dedicated capacity at front offices. Front office staff would be retrained on the Home Affairs Compulsory Course and Immigration Services legislation. Permit processes were to be centralised for increased control. The tenth office was to be in Market Street in Gauteng and would deal with applications centrally. Provincial heads would still be responsible for managing the office in the province. Seamless processes would be developed between front and back offices and M&E systems would be developed for visa and permit applications.

The Department had used a strategic approach to rationalisation. The consultative process had started with all Provincial Managers. A list of Permitting Designated Offices (PDOs) was submitted by Provincial Managers. Consultations were still ongoing and would also cover external stakeholders. The Immigration Advisory Board had already been consulted and three meetings had been held with the Forum of Immigration Practitioners of South Africa (FIPSA) in Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal. The provinces were also consulting stakeholders on the rationalisation. A proposed structure for ten offices had been developed. The structure would be integrated into provincial structures as per the Home Affairs operational model.

The process mapping of visa and permit applications would involve developing a clear process for applications, setting targets for processing application and developing systems for monitoring and evaluating applications. Visa and permitting workstations would have to be identified, which would involve confirming existing workstations, redesigning standardised workstations for all PDOs and an audit of infrastructure required for standardised re-designed workshops. The appointment of visa and permit officials was another priority. Home Affairs had never had staff in the provinces appointed solely for permit applications; staff were taken either from Inspectorate or Civic Services in the provinces. The Department intended to develop training modules for visa and permit applications and train appointed staff as a preparation for applications management.

Mr Apleni gave an overview of the applications process. The Front Office Process was two days from the date of receipt. Applications were captured on Track and Trace, checked on the Movement Control System (MCS) and comments were made. Proof of dispatch to the Hub was kept on file and the outcome from the Hub was captured on receipt. Proof of receipt from the Hub was also filed.

Home Affairs Modernisation Project & Automation of Visa and Permits
Once applications were automated, the application would move on an electronic basis, therefore applications could

no longer get lost. Applicant's details would be captured and sent electronically to the Hub, where the adjudication team would look at it and then send their outcome electronically.

Legislative and Policy Issues
The Department wanted to implement a system where it was compulsory to personally appear and hand over applications because Home Affairs would be taking biometrics of applicants as part of e-permitting. First time applications were to be strictly done abroad. This would reduce turn-around times and backlog inland and would drastically prevent irregular migration. The Department was urgently developing a strategy to pilot Corporate Visa applications abroad.

The way forward
Home Affairs intended to continue the cleaning of the NPR and HANIS and to continue with the efforts of tracing the affected individuals through home visits, and link the duplicated IDs with other relevant stakeholders such as banks, the credit bureau, cellular networks and so on. The Department felt that it was very important to strengthen communication efforts to create public awareness about the value of ID documents and the risk of ID theft. The implementation of IT modernisation for Home Affairs was looked forward to. The backlog would be cleared and an improved process of managing permits would be implemented. Finally, the development of the Immigration Policy would be finalised.

Discussion
Mr A Gaum (ANC) asked if the permanent resident permit backlog would be cleared by December, saying that there had been an earlier deadline which had been moved back.

Mr Apleni replied that the earlier deadline had been for temporary residence applications. The December deadline was for permanent residence.

Mr Gaum asked if IDs could be posted by registered mail, rather than waiting for people to collect them.

Mr Apleni responded that for one to give an address to Home Affairs was not enforced by law, and if people moved addresses, this easily became outdated. When the next round of amendments came they would look at this issue. It would be easier to post the smart cards with the new roll out but first they needed to update addresses.

Mr McIntosh (COPE) thanked the DG for a good presentation. Mr Apleni had mentioned that corrupt officials were able to identify ID numbers that were not linked to fingerprints, but that the incidence of this had been reduced. He asked how widespread was it now, and how many corrupt officials were engaged in this sort of activity.

Mr Apleni responded that with the implementation of the new system it was possible to trace the individual who was involved. Therefore there were then less than fifty corrupt employees. The system was not fool-proof but the problem was being addressed.

Mr Vusumuzi Mkhize, Deputy Director General: Civic Services, added that the Department was using preventative measures to limit corrupt officials. There was a search function which syndicates were using to find ID numbers of young people which could be used for fraudulent IDs. The Department had allocated the ability to use this search only to designated people, and it could trace who was making the searches.

Mr McIntosh asked about the intention to link one of the parent's fingerprints to a baby's birth certificate. He asked if there was a workgroup on that and if it could be discussed with other countries. South Africa's problems of identity theft were not unique, though there was a good system in place that was being improved. How much interaction did the Department have with the Civil Service of other governments? The United States obviously had a very efficient system which South Africa may be able to learn from, as well as other smaller countries.

Mr Apleni responded that Home Affairs consulted with other countries a lot. For example, in the first week of September all the African Ministers of Home Affairs were converging in Durban for a conference to talk about the issue of registration as a continent. Other countries did not have registration processes at all, and so as a continent it was important to work towards that. Due to that, no one could even be sure of the population of Africa. The countries were learning from each other. Another area in which South Africa could learn from other countries was that elsewhere ID numbers were not linked to the date of birth. This had caused a problem for South Africa because by changing the date of birth, an applicant effectively changed their identity. Home Affairs was looking at delinking this but it would take time. The issue of linking the family tree and registration of children within thirty days would help a lot.

Mr Mkhize added that Germany was a good model, although it was a federal state. In Germany, citizens could not relocate without notifying the federal authority, so people could always be traced. South Africa was not yet at that level but it was an option to consider.

Mr McIntosh asked for more information on the IT agreement, noting that since cell phones had become so widespread the rural areas were more accessible and communication had been revolutionised.

Mr M Mnqasela (DA) said that the sooner it was possible to block IDs the better, and wondered when the Smart Card would be rolled out.

Mr Apleni responded that the Department was responsible for the development of the systems. The first one was the live capture. No one was going to get a photo from the street and paste it on the application, instead the photo was taken at Home Affairs. This would reduce the possibility for mistakes or for the wrong picture to be on the application. Fingerprints would also be done online. The second one was the National Population Register. In this new national identification system, ID numbers and fingerprints would be linked. Home Affairs was in the process of implementing this and had signed a definitive agreement. They were getting subcontractors to deal with it and then would move. The basis of the Smart Card would be the live capture, so it could only be implemented when the live capture had been rolled out and was complete. The end product would be a Smart Card not a book. In December this would be piloted in Harrison Street and Pretoria. Home Affairs was changing the total layout of these offices and making them paperless. The offices would be ready by December. However, 32 million people had IDs, and they would all need to eventually move from the book to the Smart Card. This would be done gradually. First time applicants would get a card as they applied. It was estimated that the complete changeover would take about five years, based on the experiences of other countries with a similar population size to South Africa. Home Affairs would have to sell the idea to communities and roll it out in a systematic fashion. So the roll out would begin in the next year but it would take an estimated five years to effect the whole population.

Ms D Mathebe (ANC) commented that she was happy the DG was engaging other stakeholders on the outstanding IDs that they still had. Some of them might be fake IDs or IDs that were fraudulently created for foreigners. Although publishing the names in the local newspapers and putting posters in Home Affairs office had brought a poor response, this might not be because people felt the process was not important. It could be that they had moved from their home province and so had not seen their name in the local paper.

Mr Apleni responded that they had published all the names, not only those of that province, in case people had moved.

Mr Mnqasela asked if the poor response could be linked to the language used. Which languages were used to get the message out? Did people understand what a duplicate was?

Ms P Petersen-Maduna (ANC) also expressed her concern about people in the rural areas. Their names were published in the newspapers, but what about those who could not read, particularly the elderly? Using local languages would be useful in that case.

Mr Apleni responded that most local papers were only written in English. Only KwaZulu Natal still had local papers with local languages. Therefore the only way to use local languages was to go to radio stations, and to get someone from the Department who could speak the relevant language. The Department had been doing this.

Ms Mathebe referred to the current statistics for uncollected IDs, noting that there were 301 000 at head office. She asked from where these came and to whom they belonged.

Mr Apleni responded that after six months IDs were returned to Head Office, and these IDs made up the 301 000.

Mr Mkhize added that of the 301 000 IDs, the majority were very old. The Department hoped that if a person came to collect such an ID, the ID could still be returned from head office. 104 000 IDs were returned to Head Office between 2009 and 2011. 127 were from 2008 or older. They had not been shredded despite being so old. The impact of the R140 fee was definitely being felt. In KwaZulu Natal for example more than 50 percent of the IDs were between 3-6 months old; only 6 000 were older than six months. In the Eastern Cape 23 000 were newer than six months. Collection now was far better than in the past. Of the total figure only 17 284 were older than six months. The Department was monitoring the age of the IDs.

Ms Mathebe asked what the reason was for the increase in permanent residence applications from 2008 to date.

Mr Apleni responded that there were more pull factors for asylum seekers. This was why Home Affairs was trying to ensure that people applied from outside the country. The Department also planned to delink permanent residence requirements from the number of years in South Africa, and base them instead on what value applicants were bringing to the country.

Mr Mnqasela said that the Department had done a very good presentation and he was excited by the progress they had made. These had been thorny issues but the DG was always ready to grab the bull by the horns, and he and his team were really committed. KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape seemed to have very high numbers of uncollected IDs in comparison to other provinces, why was this? Could it be related to 'Gate 6' in Kwa-Zulu Natal, where it seemed that many people were getting access to permits through support from principals?

Mr Apleni responded that a thorough analysis had not been done, and the Department would look into it. However he thought that it was because of people migrating to the big cities.

Mr Mnqasela noted that the Department was trying to cut down on the backlog of permanent residence applications and commended what they had done to date. However he still had concerns. If they reduced the number of Home Affairs offices they were going to have more problems. In addition, he had not seen any progress by privatising these kinds of activities. For example, Santech did not give the best service when they ran mobile offices. When the provinces spoke to the Committee it had come up as a problem nationwide. Private companies may not have the country's best interests at heart. He asked if it was not preferable to give capacity to existing offices instead of using private companies. If they were going to be trained, this should be translated into practice.

Mr Apleni responded that it was not only Santech but also the Department of Public Works. Offices were being closed because they were not paid for, but it was the Department of Public Works that paid for offices, not Home Affairs. If the DG of Home Affairs were to pay for offices, then the Department would be charged. The Department could not procure such services of its own accord or this would be considered irregular expenditure. The DG had personally taken the Santech issue to the Department of Public Works, asking for an exemption to this rule, but had been refused. The Department's hands were therefore tied. Mr Apleni said he could prove this with letters that had been written and the response from the DG of Department of Public Service and Administration.

Ms Bothman also discouraged the use of the private company. She said it was difficult to hold people accountable if the job was outsourced. The Department should have a say, and be able to discipline and take action against those who were not performing.

The Chairperson was also concerned about the outsourcing of services.

Mr Apleni responded that a private company had not yet been appointed, this was just what Home Affairs had been thinking of doing. He undertook to reflect how best to deal with this.

Ms Petersen-Maduna was concerned about the staff of the company ADT in Johannesburg. She reported that 90 percent of the people working there were foreigners without permits. Some had been in the country for eleven years, and had been refused permits, but were working.

Mr Apleni responded that there was an Act which said foreign nationals could not be employed in the security industry. The Minister of Police was working on that matter. The security companies had more capacity than the state, and so the Minister was eager to regulate them more thoroughly. Many of the staff at ADT did not have permits but had fraudulent IDs. This was because it was illegal to get a permit to work as a foreigner in the security industry. Nonetheless companies still employed them.

Ms G Bothman (ANC) commended the Department on all the work they had done. She said it was good to see that as the Committee raised issues, people were listening and were doing their level best to bring about a difference to help communities. By saying this, she did not mean they should go back and relax, but go and work harder to clear backlogs.

Ms Bothman said that generally things were centralised until they were working well and then decentralised. They should not be decentralised from the onset. The Department should continue with that approach.

Mr Apleni agreed that they planned to first manage and control the process centrally and then decentralise when it was back on track.

Ms Bothman said that the Department should take a punitive approach to those who were performing wrongdoing. Communities should know that it was a crime not to collect an ID when you had applied for one. It was creating problems and opening up loopholes. The Department should look at all its options in closing these loopholes. She suggested the Department launch a campaign were IDs were blocked if not collected. If within a certain period people did not collect them, the Department should take drastic steps. It was costing the department to produce IDs and so the community should also play its role.

Mr Apleni agreed that if you applied for an ID and failed to collect it, there should be a punishment, as it was exposing the country to problems. He said that a potential response could be to block the ID.

Ms Bothman had a list of people with outstanding cases, she asked the Department to pick it up after the meeting.

The Chairperson asked about the smart card. There had been talk of MPs receiving theirs first as an example. She asked if this was going to happen.

Ms N Mnisi (ANC) said that South Africa was an economic hub, and this was drawing many people into the country. Many were in the country without permits, whether they were temporary or permanent. The repercussions of this affected everyone. Something must be done about it, and South Africa had a long way to go. She asked what measures in terms of security should apply.

Mr Mnqasela said that while temporary permits were now under control, the area of asylum seekers remained a challenge. Would the closure of offices like Maitland and others, lead to a greater risk of people being in the country illegally? Was there a plan to mitigate this risk? What was to be done about migrants who were in the country already and wanted to be recognised?

Mr Apleni responded that the issue of asylum seekers was always a sore point. Rather than responding on the spot, he would prefer to brief the Committee at another date on the issue. The system was going to be modernised and this could be presented to the Committee and if there were gaps in the plan then Members could point them out. Part of the problem was that border points were not taking fingerprints or photos. In other countries it was required to state at what address you would be staying and for how long. Any discrepancies would be investigated. Some countries also asked you to declare how much money you were carrying, so that it could be investigated if it was an unreasonable amount. South Africa did not have these requirements because it was seen as intrusive, but they should be considered.

One of the problems with the permitting regime was that there was little to distinguish between asylum seekers and economic migrants. Instead, they would enter on a visitor's visa, and renew this every 90 days. The asylum seeker's permit was more appealing because it was permanent. In addition, the backlog with asylum permits worked to their advantage, as they could stay in the country while it was being processed. Policy therefore needed to differentiate between asylum seekers and economic migrants, and offer some sort of permit for economic migrants. In addition, the Department needed to clear the backlog with asylum permits, because people could currently hide behind it.

The Chairperson added that while in Russia she had learned of a system able to manage movement especially well. The system they had in Russia was one of the best, like Germany. The government was able to see whenever a person moved from province or district. They knew the number of South African citizens who were in Russia, and the number whose permits were being processed. She asked if South Africa could have such a system to manage the movement not only of foreign nationals into the country but also of citizens from province to province.

Mr Gaum agreed, saying that in Russia there was a screen where they could show you exactly who was in the country and what they were doing there in minute detail. Following their visit there, he recommended that it was a system that the Department should look into.

Mr Apleni responded that the problem was that South Africa was guided by the privacy of individuals. For example, in the past the policy had been that when landing via aeroplane one had to write on a slip of paper where one was going and the purpose of the visit. This had been stopped because it was seen as an invasion of an individual's privacy. For similar reasons it was not compulsory to give Home Affairs one's address. Mr Apleni argued that these measures should be reintroduced. SARS, banks and hospitals required an address, so why should the Department of Home Affairs not do so?

Mr McIntosh commented that Capitec bank's application process was entirely paperless, and perhaps Home Affairs could learn from certain elements of their process.

Mr Apleni responded that Capitec was using a very similar process. The Department would come and present the process to the Committee and demonstrate how everything was done electronically.

The Chairperson thanked the DG and his team for the great work. She hoped that the Department would continue to improve its work. She urged them not to move backwards, but to keep improving, hoping that next time the Auditor General would find a clean audit. The Department was now moving in the proper way and there was light at the end of the tunnel. On the issue of uncollected ID documents, Members needed to look at how policy could be improved. Similarly with registering children within thirty days of birth, although this was the law, it was not done. The Committee needed to consider how the policy could be improved to encourage parents to do this.

The Chairperson said that the Committee had been getting reports that foreigners were receiving ID documents in KwaZulu Natal. She asked for an explanation from the DG.

Mr Apleni responded that in some cases Chiefs on the other side of the border did not consider it to be a border. The community happened to lie over the border but there was no recognition of this from those living there. Often children crossed the border daily to go to school There was a need to determine who lived in those areas. The Department of Defence was in the process of putting up fences, but what was needed was not a border post in the true sense of the word, but rather some kind of permit for children who had to cross the border regularly. The first step was to get an idea of how many people this affected, before deciding how to deal with it.

The Chairperson said that children crossing the border to go to school was occurring in a number of provinces and needed to be dealt with. She thanked the Department for the briefing and closed the meeting.