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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA STATEMENT:

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OVERSIGHT AND INSIGHT – BLOEMHOF DAM

During a recent oversight visit to the flood-affected Bloemhof area, the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Hon. Penny Majodina, accompanied by the Mayor of Lekwa-Teemane Local Municipality, made remarks that were not only frustrating but also hurtful and, frankly, embarrassing.

It is regrettable that an Honourable Minister places such reliance on information from officials who have repeatedly demonstrated an inability to effectively manage water-related issues in the province, and who have clearly failed to learn from previous devastating floods. It is equally disheartening to witness senior officials arriving at a flood-stricken site without the necessary knowledge or experience to grasp the evident realities on the ground. Even more concerning is the Minister's cold and largely factually incorrect assessment, delivered without empathy, understanding, or foresight.

Yes, it is true that some structures lie below the hundred-year flood line. Yes, there are norms and standards. However, these very standards have repeatedly failed to prevent significant losses due to flooding from a dam originally constructed for flood management. The damage to nearly 18,500 hectares is undeniable. Another critical fact is that vast areas currently underwater were flooded due to the Department's decision to increase the outflow from Bloemhof Dam by 50% over just 48 hours — raising the release to 3,000 m³ per second on 9 April 2025, while the Vaal Dam was releasing only 807 m³ per second.

It is also a fact that the Department delayed action until Bloemhof Dam exceeded 112% capacity before releasing such high volumes, despite the Vaal Dam already sitting at 114% capacity. All this occurred while clear forecasts predicted above-average rainfall. We had urged the Department to lower the Bloemhof Dam level to accommodate incoming water and reduce the risk of further structural damage to an already compromised dam wall.

Any honest and objective observer would agree: this situation was once again poorly managed. Misleading reports and arrogant, self-serving officials will not avert future disasters — potentially even more catastrophic ones. It will take real leadership, the kind that seeks insight through oversight, to bring change. It will take collaboration with skilled, experienced, and genuinely committed experts.

We express our heartfelt sympathy to everyone affected by the recent floods and heavy rainfall across many regions. We remain committed to pursuing meaningful engagement with officials who

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are capable of approaching dam management with the critical, forward-thinking mindset that this situation demands.

In an earlier statement, Department spokesperson Ms. Mavasa claimed that the dam remains “stable enough to meet minimum required factors of dam safety” and that “maintenance work” is currently underway. To date, we are unaware of any maintenance activities on the dam wall, either ongoing or completed within the past year. We therefore urge the Department of Water and Sanitation to release the most recent dam wall safety report, the full scope of maintenance activities planned or undertaken at Bloemhof Dam, and the name of the contractor responsible for this work.

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