



OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

MEDIA RELEASE

28 May 2008

Today the Western Cape Cabinet met to discuss the further steps to be taken in the wake of the violence against foreign nationals. The Cabinet meeting was attended by Ministers, Heads of Departments, the Police Commissioner, representatives from Home Affairs and officials directly engaged at the operational level in managing the situation.

Cabinet received reports from those on the ground and in the Disaster Management Structures, from the Premier following President Thabo Mbeki's special meeting between Cabinet and Premiers on Monday, from the Police Commissioner and from the Mediation Teams leading the reintegration of foreign nationals into the communities from which they were evacuated. The Premier also reported on his meeting with the representative from the United National High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr Arvind Gupta.

Arising from these reports, cabinet is absolutely convinced that our three-pronged strategy of dealing with the crisis is the only correct one:

1. Safety and Security for foreign nationals and South Africans.
2. Humanitarian Relief for Displaced People.
3. Reintegration into communities of origin in safe conditions.

We recognized that such a strategy is complex and requires everyone working together. Cabinet expressed its absolute thanks to the many volunteers, NGO's, churches and mosques who have done wonderful work, not only in bringing relief but, in the act of

relief, demonstrated that we are not a xenophobic community. Cabinet tasked the Premier to offer a gesture of goodwill to every local community from the Premier's Relief Fund so as to compensate volunteers for at least some subsistence and petrol costs as the crisis goes on longer.

ASSESSING EACH LEG OF OUR STRATEGY, CABINET RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:-

1. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Cabinet commends the police for their extra-ordinary efforts in preventing loss of life and massive injury. We regret that this province has seen looting, robbery, four murders, one rape, and general acts of criminality against foreign nationals, but we remain thankful that the situation did not degenerate into the acts of wanton murder and violence seen elsewhere.

We regret that two police officers have been seriously injured with one in ICU, but we thank the police for coming off leave, for extending their shifts and working round the clock in a restrained but decisive way.

We thank the police, the metro police, the reservists, the Bambanani Volunteers and Community Police Forum volunteers for their work, especially in arresting 371 suspects who will be processed through the criminal justice system. Cabinet believes that bail should be denied where legally sustainable until the situation in communities is calm and stable enough.

It is comforting that the army is a resource on standby, but we believe the situation is tense, but under control. Calls for the deployment of the army is a distraction and not something required. Those who call for it have provided no proof that the situation is out of control or that the police are not managing. If the situation changes, the army is available.

1. HUMANITARIAN RELIEF:

At this moment there are 19 000 people displaced. Of these, about 5 000 are displaced by virtue of violent evacuations and the rest from the resultant fear of possible attacks.

Capetonians have responded tremendously well to this humanitarian challenge of sheltering and feeding the displaced. The City of Cape Town, as the custodian of civic

We have, thus far, been restrained in expressing our unhappiness about the unilateral decision by the City of Cape Town to remove people from community halls to the remotest, coldest and inadequate beach camps around the City. We rather asked for Mr Gupta of the UNHCR to make his opinion known. He has now described this as a mistake. Now that we are free to express our opinion without fear of accusations of a petty-political fight, we want to say that the beach camps are wrong. Ideally they should be closed because:

- a. They remove displaced people from work and schools; and
- b. They exacerbate potential health problems in mega-camps and created unwanted tensions;
- c. They make reintegration more difficult; and
- d. They are perceived as non-humanitarian and create a perception that we do not care.

In good conscience we cannot support these beach camps and provincial cabinet will utilize its resources to support those shelters (housing about 10000) which are in or near communities so that they are adequately cared for by maintaining an adequate human rights standard towards the UNHCR standards. We are negotiating for assistance in the UNHCR. This will free the City to ensure adequate food and resources for the beach camps.

In managing the overall humanitarian crisis, Provincial Cabinet is tasking the Provincial Disaster Management Centre to prepare urgently an application to the National Government to declare parts of the Western Cape as Disaster areas. Such a Disaster Declaration will allow for adequate flow of resources to assist all Cape Citizens to better manage the humanitarian relief efforts. It is a call for resources, not a signal of panic.

2. REINTEGRATION

As of Friday 23 May 2008, the Provincial Government announced the deployment of 15 Mediation Teams to ensure that maximum reintegration of foreign nationals into

- a. they have gone door to door recovering goods stolen from the foreign nationals
- b. they have apologized publicly to displaced foreign nationals and
- c. they have invited them back to Masiphumelele and more than a 100 have already responded.

Cabinet wants to see whether we can achieve such integration over the next two months. We want to do so under conditions of safety and are urgently recruiting up to 2000 community volunteers who can assist with both peace-keeping and reintegration through mediation. For this we will allocate Extended Public Works Programme jobs.

Cabinet is relatively assured that reintegration can be easily achieved because it is our belief that xenophobia has not been the primary motive. Our countries by and large are united against the criminals and thugs who wrought this crisis and are appreciative of their fellow Africans in their countries.

Already there are signs of voluntary reintegration into communities of origin. Our establishment of community shelters for reintegration will mediate the phased re-entry of foreign nationals into communities.

