

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION 2755

Mrs. H Lamoela (DA) to ask the Minister of Energy:

- (1) Whether the members of the board of the National Nuclear Regulator have (a) been informed of and (b) studied the findings and recommendations of certain specified government and peer reviewed reports, namely (i) *Radioactivity Monitoring Programme in the Mooi River (Wonderfonteinspruit) Catchment* (details furnished), (ii) *Radioactivity study on sediments in a dam on the Wonderfonteinspruit Catchment* (details furnished), (iii) *Tier 1 Risk Assessment of Selected Radionuclides in Sediments of the Mooi River Catchment* (details furnished), (iv) *Uranium and heavy metals in sediments in a dam on the farm Blaauwbank* (details furnished), (v) *Contamination of wetlands by Witwatersrand gold mines - processes and the economic potential of gold in wetlands* (details furnished), (vi) *An Assessment of Sources, Pathways, Mechanisms and Risks of Current and Potential Future Pollution of Water and Sediments in Gold-Mining Areas of the Wonderfonteinspruit Catchment* (details furnished), (vii) *Background Report on Communities at Risk Within Mogale City Local Municipality Affected by Mining Related Activities, with Special Reference to Radiation & Toxicity* (details furnished), (viii) *Impact of the discharge of Treated Mine Water, via the Tweelopies Spruit, on the receiving water body Crocodile River system* (details furnished) and (ix) *Status Report on the Actions Arising from the Study of Radiological Contamination of the Wonderfonteinspruit Catchment* (details furnished); if so, what action has been taken with regard to each specified report; if not,
 - (2) Whether it is the board's mandate to study the specified reports; if not,
 - (a) What is their mandate in respect of the specified reports and
 - (b) Who is responsible for ensuring that the board studies the specified reports

Reply:

The NNR in carrying out its mandate focuses on the radiological aspects of uranium contamination resulting from mining residues that may pose a risk to members of the public and the environment. To the best of our knowledge the above reports do not deal with radiological risk in accordance with the international standards adopted by the NNR.

While the Board has not been specifically informed of all the above reports, the NNR in carrying out its mandate may need to take cognizance of specific matters raised in these reports that are linked to radiological risk in as far as it can be demonstrated to be relevant to the mandate of the NNR. It must be recognized however, that the NNR should not be reviewing reports that are inconsistent with its prescribed methodologies for assessing the extent of contamination. To the best of our knowledge these reports are written and formulated with data that would lead to an assessment of chemical risk posed by pollutants. The NNR does not have the competency to deal with matters dealing with chemical analysis. However, the proposed means of engagement in regard to these reports is that the organizations that have authored the reports engage the NNR in respect to the radiological risk assessed in these reports in the instance that the said risk complies with the NNR regulatory requirements for ascertaining such risks.

- (2) It is not the mandate of the Board to study reports that fall outside of the mandate of the NNR as articulated in (1) above.
- (a) The Board in carrying out the mandate of the NNR is responsible for overall regulatory oversight in regard to radiation and nuclear safety. The reports in question do not deal with radiation and nuclear safety in a format that leads to providing an assessment of radiological risk. To the best of our knowledge the reports deal with chemical risk arising from mining residues in the environment. The NNR is therefore not directly obligated in regard to the specified reports.
- (b) It follows from the above response that the matters are not related to the functioning of the NNR Board and therefore the issue would not arise in this context.