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MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

14 APRIL 2023

HEALTH SECTOR ANTI-CORRUPTION FORUM CLEANING UP THE HEALTH SECTOR FROM CHRONIC CORRUPTION

The Health Sector Anti-Corruption Forum (HSACF) is playing a critical role in eradicating corruption in South Africa's healthcare system. The HSACF has received a report from the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) of over R 1.6 billion worth of civil action matters that have been instituted in the High Court and the Special Tribunal. The value includes approximately R500 million that is linked to an investigation in the affairs of the Office of the State Attorney on medical negligence claims and legal service claims.

Eighteen (18) legal practitioners are being investigated by the SIU that assisted the Office of the State Attorney in rendering legal services in respect of medical negligence claims on the Gauteng Department of Health and the Eastern Cape Department of Health.

One of the legal practitioners being pursued by the SIU is Advocate Hassan Ebrahim Kajee, who served as a lawyer for the Office of the State Attorney. Adv. Kajee was arrested early this month on various charges of fraud. SIU investigation revealed that Adv. Kajee inflated invoices, invoiced for services not actually rendered and overcharged for alleged services rendered. Furthermore, Adv. Kajee would bill that he worked more hours daily than actual hours in the day and invoiced for work on different matters simultaneously. The SIU has instituted civil action in the Special Tribunal against Adv. Kajee to recover approximately R27 million for damages suffered by the State.

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HSACF was established following the Presidential Health Summit in 2018, and it comprises of various stakeholders such as civil society, law enforcement agencies, health sector regulators, government departments and private sector, and it is convened by the SIU under the chairpersonship of the Head of the SIU, Adv. Andy Mothibi. The HSACF was launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in October 2019.

Despite the disruption of Covid-19 in the forum's work, the pandemic tested HSACF's oversight ability to fight corruption in the healthcare system. The Fusion Centre, which was established to coordinate law enforcement activities in relation to PPE COVID-19 investigations, frequently reported to the HSACF.

The Fusion Centre collectively made recoveries on 10 of 76 medical matters with a grand total of approximately R445 million. Furthermore, the Forum has received a report of 51 matters in court, with 45 matters resulting in convictions.

Despite having only 10 meetings since its inception almost five years ago, the HSACF has made inroads in collaborating with international bodies such as United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The partnership with the UNODC aims to implement corruption prevention initiatives in the health sector, which include strengthening whistleblowing mechanism and corruption risk assessments. The collaboration also includes a pilot project that will be implemented on strengthening the internal whistleblowing/reporting channels and National Department of Health where corruption risk assessments will be implemented around procurement. The pilot project has the full support of Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla.

Since 2019, 29 allegations of corruption that were referred to the HSACF resulted in formal investigations. The HSACF investigations has received a report of over 100 officials being referred for disciplinary action including high level officials such as a former Head of Department in the North West Province, who was fired and had his pension frozen. The Forum has made over 30 referrals to the National Prosecuting Authority for further action.

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With just less than three years until the planned implementation of the National Health Insurance, the HSACF will ensure that there is minimal room for corruption in both the public and private health sectors and help ensure that South Africans have access to a functioning and stable healthcare system.

END.

Fraud and corruption allegations may be reported via the following platforms:

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