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MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

18 DECEMBER 2023

SOUTH AFRICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE BUILT ANTI-CORRUPTION FORUM (IBACF) WELCOMES SAPS PROGRESS IN TACKLING CONSTRUCTION MAFIA

The Infrastructure Built Anti-Corruption Forum (IBACF) wishes to congratulate the South African Police Services and law enforcement agencies on their progress in tackling the criminal elements involved in the extortion and threats to construction workers, construction projects and investment in infrastructure of the country.

The IBACF convened its quarterly meeting on 12 December 2023 to discuss the progress that has been made in fighting corruption in the construction sector.

The National Priority Committee on Extortion and Violence at Economic Sites, which is chaired by the SAPS, was invited to engage with the IBACF to identify synergies and areas of interface as both structures are active in fighting various crimes in the construction sector.

There are ongoing investigations in the sector by various law enforcement agencies that have led to consequence management such as asset recoveries, disciplinary actions, and criminal prosecutions. It is against this background that the IBACF welcomes and congratulates the SAPS on their progress in addressing the construction sector mafia in South Africa. The SAPS has confirmed that the 712 cases referred for investigation have resulted in 722 arrests and 52 convictions so far.

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The IBACF was formed in 2020 to assist in the implementation of South Africa's Infrastructure Investment Plan, as approved by the Cabinet in May 2020. The forum is a multi-stakeholder body comprising various arms of government, civil society and the built environment sector and was created to monitor infrastructure projects more effectively and put systems in place to detect and prevent corruption. The forum is convened by the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) and the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), currently chaired by the Head of the SIU, Advocate Andy Mothibi.

The construction sector is one of the most important job-creating sectors in the country. Investment in the sector not only benefits the country through improved infrastructure but creates hundreds of thousands of jobs on construction sites and throughout the construction sector value chain. Research documents published during the last two years have revealed the impact of construction sector mafias on construction projects and investment in the sector. In the period leading up to 2022, up to R63 billion worth of projects were reported and delayed or cancelled as a result of the extortion tactics and disruptions posed by construction mafias.

Construction Mafia refers to extortion groups that typically seek to forcefully extract protection fees from local construction companies and contractors or extort a portion of the cost of an infrastructure project or that specific individuals affiliated with the mafia are recruited to work on the site.

The engagement between the National Priority Committee on Extortion and Violence at Economic Sites chaired by SAPS with IBACF at the meeting held on 15 September 2023 confirms that the fight against fraud, corruption, and maladministration in the construction sector is gaining significant ground. A notable recent arrest has been that of alleged 28s gang boss Ralph Stanfield and his wife, Nicole Johnson. Several Cape Town construction contractors had to abandon government housing construction sites following alleged acts of intimidation and violence. Thereafter, the Western Cape Government's human settlements department awarded Johnson's company, Glomix House Brokers, the contracts for completing these abandoned projects.

The IBACF encourages pro-active community engagement to inform residents of the projects underway in their areas; of possible opportunities for legitimate sub-contractors and workers; and encourages all South Africans who are aware of any criminal actions such as threats of violence or extortion that may lead to the loss of such projects and work opportunities to report these crimes through the following channels:

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1. Reporting criminal action to your local SAPS station; or
2. Dial the toll-free National Anti-Corruption Hotline on 0800 701 701; or
3. Contact the Presidential Hotline by dialling 17737 or emailing president@po.gov.za
4. SIU Hotline: 0800 037 774

As the SAPS report back on arrests and convictions, we warn the public that there are consequences for people who engage in illegal activities within the construction sector. The IBACF thanks the whistleblowers and law enforcement agencies for their bravery and tremendous efforts in tackling these criminal matters.

END.

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