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**MEDIA STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
06 MAY 2024**

SIU WELCOMES THE RECOVERY OF STOLEN GOVERNMENT LAND MEANT FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSING AND A SCHOOL

The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) welcomes a forfeiture order by the High Court of South Africa: Gauteng Division, Pretoria, to the SIU and Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU) linked to the fraudulent transfer of government land to private entities and individuals. The forfeiture order is for the following:

- Farm 33 Zuurfontein, in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng Province was meant for the development of low-income housing and a school in the community. The land is worth R41 million.
- A payment of R12 million representing the property known as Holding Beverley Agricultural Holdings, which was bought by RIC Development from the government land theft syndicate. RIC Development bought land from the land thieves and developed it without knowing that it was stolen.

The total value of the recovery is R53 Million.

The order dated 18 April 2024 orders that Farm 33 Zuurfontein must be transferred to the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development as the original title deed owner and RIC Development to pay the same department R12 million.

The order follows an SIU investigation which revealed that a syndicate of individuals and private entities defrauded the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) and the respective Deeds Registries in Vryburg, Johannesburg and Pretoria by fraudulently transferring government property to individuals and private entities for their benefit.

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The SIU's investigation looked into fraud and corruption committed between January 2008 and February 2022. As part of the investigation, numerous affidavits were obtained by the SIU from internal DRDLR and Deeds Registry staff members, external witnesses and/or transferring attorneys. The SIU was, in terms of Proclamation R 7 of 2014 as amended by Proclamation R 599 of 2015 and Proclamation R 32 of 2017, authorised by the President of South Africa to investigate allegations of corruption and maladministration relating to the transfer of government land to individuals and private entities and to recover the loss the State has suffered.

In line with the SIU Act, the SIU referred evidence pointing to criminal conduct to the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) for further action. The referral resulted in a criminal case being registered with the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigations (Hawks).

This forfeiture order is part of the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy by law enforcement agencies to strengthen its fight against corruption.

END.

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