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**MEDIA STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
09 DECEMBER 2024**

**SIU SEARCHES FREE STATE MUNICIPALITY PREMISES FOR EVIDENCE RELATING TO THE
REFURBISHMENT OF BRANDFORT WATER TREATMENT WORKS AND UPGRADING OF
BRANDFORT SPORT CENTRE**

On Tuesday, 03 December 2024, the Welkom Magistrate Court granted the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) a warrant to search three premises of Masilonyana Local Municipality in the Free State Province and seize evidence that may assist with an ongoing investigation.

At 9: 30 AM on Monday, 09 December 2024, the SIU, assisted by the Directorate for Priority Crimes Investigation, commonly known as the Hawks and the South African Police Service entered the three municipality's premises to collect evidence that is in line with Proclamation 182 of 2024, which directs the SIU to investigate allegations of maladministration of two tenders in the Masilonyana Local Municipality.

The contracts under scrutiny include:

- The Refurbishment of Brandfort Water Treatment Works and Raw Water Pump Stations
- Upgrading of Brandfort Sport Centre Phase II.

The investigation focus also seeks to establish whether municipal officials, service providers, or any other involved parties unduly benefit themselves or others, leading to unauthorised, irregular, or fruitless and wasteful expenditure or financial losses for the municipality.

The search and seizure operation is the SIU's last resort to access documents needed for the investigation and obtain the necessary documentation for its investigation. Since the proclamation was

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published on 13 September 2024, the SIU has made multiple attempts to contact the Municipality in an effort to access the required documents voluntarily; however, these attempts have gone unanswered. This lack of cooperation prompted the SIU to seek the court's assistance in securing a warrant to search and seize pertinent documents and electronic equipment.

During the search, the SIU collected a range of documentation and devices essential for auditing and compliance concerning successful tenders awarded between 1 January 2013 and 13 September 2024, as outlined in Proclamation 182 of 2024. The seized materials as stipulated in the warrant include:

- Company registration documents
- Payment records (invoices, purchase orders, remittance advice)
- Electronic devices, including laptops, mobile devices, and external storage media used by relevant officials and employees.
- Any associated electronic data, including emails and cloud storage information linked to specific personnel.

The SIU is empowered by the Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act 74 of 1996 (SIU Act) to subpoena bank statements and cell phone records, search and seize evidence, and interrogate witnesses under oath to thoroughly investigate allegations brought before it.

The SIU is also empowered to institute a civil action in the High Court or a Special Tribunal to correct any wrongdoing uncovered during investigations caused by acts of corruption, fraud, or maladministration. In line with the SIU Act, the SIU will refer any evidence pointing to criminal conduct it uncovers to the National Prosecuting Authority for further action.

END.

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