

Second Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities with Specific Focus on Access to Services and Employment

Response

by the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to Recommendations/Comments contained in the Report

The recommendations/comments contained in the Report as they relate to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government fall under Paragraph 4.15 of the Report, and speak to the challenges of Persons with Disabilities to infrastructural access to Facilities, including rural areas. The recommendation in the Report is for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, as well as the Ministry of Planning, to review the stakeholder facilities and infrastructural access recommendations contained in Appendix V of the Report (these are highlighted in the attached Appendix).

Local Government is viewed by the Government as key player in the economic development of the country. As such, a re-energised platform for local government reform has begun over the last twelve months, with the objective of creating a modern, efficient and adequately resourced local government system. Some of the key elements of the reform are Corporate Restructuring of the Ministry of Local Government and the Municipal Corporations; Human Resource Development and Institutional Restructuring; Local Area Regional Planning and Development; Information and Communications Technology and Communications; Waste Resource Management; Disaster Preparedness and Management; and Municipal/Community Policing.

The new system will see new areas of responsibilities for the Municipal Corporations that would facilitate more effective delivery of quality services and amenities to burgesses, the fostering of viable and sustainable communities, and balanced regional development. Concomitant with this will be the granting of Executive Authority to Managers of the Corporations; the facilitation of secure funding to Corporations through local taxation; the development and establishment of Standards; and mechanisms for improved Monitoring and Evaluation of implementation. These strategies will require ever closer co-ordination with other Ministries, Governmental Agencies and private sector organizations. The new approach promises focused attention to rural communities in the provision of services and amenities, that would engender optimisation of the resources of these communities, and a better quality of life and opportunity for rural residents. The roll-out of these policy initiatives makes provision for the infrastructural access needs of differently-abled persons and persons with disabilities. The Policy for Local Government Reform was recently approved by Cabinet and redrafting of the legislation to effect local government reform is currently being addressed.