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## FIRST STEP TO IMPROVED CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR THE SANDF

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) hails President Jacob Zuma's announcement of salary increases for soldiers as a critical step in the journey towards improved conditions of service.

The President's announcement of salary increases for Levels Two to Twelve (from Privates to Colonels) follows an intensive consultative process triggered by Minister of Defence and Military Veterans (MOD and MV) Lindiwe Sisulu's promise to prioritise conditions of service in her speech to parliament during the Defence Budget Vote on 2 July 2009.

During the Defence Budget Vote, Minister Sisulu noted that "that the state of readiness of the SANDF depends primarily on the morale of our soldiers ... The first challenge that confronts us is a declining budget where our domestic obligations remain defined in the Constitution, against a backdrop of our growing international responsibilities against a deteriorating infrastructure and, very importantly, against a clear and pressing reality that conditions of service for the Defence Force need our immediate attention ... Having assessed

our options, we are considering making a request for a separate dispensation for the Department of Defence that would allow us to deal creatively with our own needs and the specificities of our own unique security requirements." - Minister Sisulu, July 2009.

Addressing media in September, President Zuma said. "The SANDF may serve the public, but they are not public servants. They may receive a salary at the end of every month, but they are not ordinary workers. The high standard of behaviour we expect from them necessitates that special attention be paid to their working conditions, their remuneration, their pensions and, generally, their place in society." - President Jacob Zuma, September 2009.

Yesterday's pronouncement by President Zuma that "we want to invest in the development of the Defence Force and the young people who are drawn into this noble calling of defending the country", will boost morale and send a clear signal to soldiers that an era of relative military neglect is over. Improved salaries are an important first step towards improved service conditions for

soldiers. Other steps are already gathering momentum. Armed with the Second Report of the Interim SANDF Service Commission, submitted last week, Minister Sisulu will lead a high-level delegation of SANDF commanders on an inspection of military barracks across the country, starting in Cape Town today and Johannesburg tomorrow. Negotiations between the Department of Defence (DOD) and the Department of Public Works (DPW), aimed at Defence taking over responsibility for the maintenance of its buildings, are at an advanced stage.

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