**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE DISPLEASED WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WEATHER SERVICE QUALIFIED AUDIT OPINION**

**Parliament, Thursday, 10 October 2019 –**The Portfolio Committee on Environment**,**Forestry and Fisheries is displeased with the fact that the South African Weather Service (SAWS) received a qualified audit opinion for the 2018/19 financial year. Out of the four entities under the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, SAWS and South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) obtained qualified audit opinions for the year under review.

The department, which should be supporting these entities, also obtained a qualified audit opinion, something that is of concern to the committee. The areas of concern to the committee is non-compliance with the laws that govern supply chain management, which eventually leads to irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

The department incurred irregular expenditure to the amount of R336 million, SANBI’s irregular expenditure is R17 million and SAWS’ irregular expenditure is R15 million for the year under review. The Minister and the board chairpersons of the two entities registered their disappointments and have made an undertaking to the committee to ensure that the situation will not be the same in the next financial year’s audit outcomes.

SAWS has a R68 million deficit in its budget as a result of overspending. This shows that there is lack of proper planning and non-adherence to supply chain management practices, which have resulted in the mismanagement of the limited financial resources. The committee wants the service to improve its planning in order to prevent over-expenditure.

The committee is also concerned about the matter of the suspended chief executive officer of SAWS, whose case is ongoing. The committee would like to see this matter resolved speedily as it is costing taxpayers because the official is suspended on full pay. The previous CEO that was suspended, cost taxpayers R2 million. This was also as a result of board members who terminated the contract of the former CEO prematurely, incurring unnecessary costs in the process.

The committee has committed itself to pay specific focus on SAWS for the next five years, so that the country can benefit from the successful running of the service.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, MR FIKILE XASA.**