**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HOME AFFAIRS AND COGTA COMMITTEES MEET TO DISCUSS CHALLENGES OF UNDOCUMENTED FOREIGN NATIONALS**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 22 October 2019**– The Portfolio Committees on Home Affairs and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, today held a successful meeting to jointly look at incremental and progressive solutions to challenges around immigration in the country, and particularly in Gauteng province.

The meeting followed the recent violent criminal attacks in townships and central business districts in Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg, which led to the deaths of 12 people, destruction of property and the displacement and resettlement of foreign nationals.

The meeting received presentations from the President of the South African Local Government Association (Salga) and the Mayor of Polokwane Local Municipality, Ms Thembi Nkadimeng, outgoing Mayor of the City of Johannesburg Mr Herman Mashaba, the Mayor of Ekurhuleni Mr Mzwandile Masina, and the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi.

“It has become even clearer that we need all spheres of government to cooperate to deal with the impact of undocumented foreign nationals on service delivery and social cohesion.

“The violence that we saw takes place in municipalities and Salga can facilitate engagement with other spheres of government to ensure that the plight of poor and smaller municipalities is not overshadowed by events in the large metros,” said the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs, Adv Bongani Bongo.

The committees asked the Department of Home Affairs to meet with municipalities through Salga to strengthen their cooperation and report back on proposed solutions.

Adv Bongo stressed the need to ensure that government solves the underlying factors which contribute to violence in poor communities, which include fighting poverty, reducing unemployment and enforcing the laws of the country, especially labour laws.

The committees welcomed the work done by the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality to assist foreign nationals who wanted to go back to their home countries, and the majority which opted to be reintegrated into their communities.

It also urged the Department of Home Affairs to continue with its law enforcement operations which saw it conduct 56 raids between July 2019 and September 2019.

These raids were in cellphone shops, retail stores, general dealers, salons, restaurants, hotels, factories, educational institutions and churches. The raids led to the department deporting 11 455 undocumented foreign nationals between April 2019 and September 2019.

“All this work will amount to little if the Border Management Authority (BMA) is not implemented to secure our borders. The BMA is going to consolidate all the seven departments operating in the border posts and border line. It will also simplify the 58 pieces of legislations which are applicable in our borders,” said Adv Bongo.

The Chairperson welcomed the progress which is being made to finalise the BMA Bill in Parliament. The Bill was approved by the National Assembly in 2007 and two weeks back, the National Council of Provinces revived it.

“We trust that the NCOP will be able to finalise its processes in relation to the BMA before the end of this year,” said Adv Bongo.

The Chairperson also made reference to the recently signed African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which South Africa is a signatory, adding that effective border control and management will boost the aspirations of this and other international agreements that seek to boost cross-border trading.

The two committees appreciated the good work demonstrated by the Department of Home Affairs and complimented the department and other organs of state for confronting this challenge. The committees also emphatically dismissed the narrative that suggests that the department was dysfunctional.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, ADV BONGANI BONGO.**