**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**DROUGHT STRATEGY ESSENTIAL TO PRE-EMPTING A CRISIS**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 19 November 2019 –**The Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation is concerned that there is no tangible drought strategy to deal effectively with the drought challenges South Africa is currently facing.

While the committee acknowledges that there is a Disaster Management Strategy in place, the committee has strongly advocated for a sector specific plan that sets out clearly how the country can mitigate future challenges. “We have long heard that South Africa is a water-scarce country and scientists have predicted frequent droughts as a result of a warming globe. What we need is foresight if we are to ensure security of water provision in the country,” said Mr China Dodovu, the Chairperson of the committee.

The unintended consequence of a lack of a strategy is an ad hoc response to challenges within the sector during droughts, which are both expensive and not timeous. The committee has called for the department to urgently consider developing a drought strategy looking at a possible water mix for South Africa, infrastructure to improve rain water harvesting, as well as ways to ensure an efficient consumption culture.

The committee acknowledges the department’s interventions in dealing with the drought in some of provinces, with projects such as the commissioning of the Lesotho Highlands Programme Phase II, and the Mzimvuku Water project among other projects, but highlighted that implementation must be swift.

The committee has also acknowledged improvements in the Department of Water and Sanitation’s financial health. While the process to full financial recovery is long-term, the committee emphasised that improving governance and reducing irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure is critical to solving the longstanding financial challenges facing the department. The committee welcomed the dismissal of 13 officials, but called for civil claims to recover money acquired illegitimately.

Regarding Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, the committee reiterated its concern on the Hammankraal water shortage that continues to afflict the community. The committee is unhappy about the ongoing use of tankers to service the people’s water needs in the area. “While we note and acknowledge the need for the intervention, the running costs of tankering, which are estimated at R1.8 million a week, is unsustainable in the long term,” Mr Dodovu emphasised.

The one mitigating pillar to avoid similar future challenges is forward planning, which has been lacking in the City of Tshwane, especially in relation to infrastructure development to deal with high migration into the city. The committee has committed to working with stakeholder to resolve the plight of the people of Tshwane.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MR CHINA DODOVU**