**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE RESOLVES TO FINALISE DEFENCE AMENDMENT BILL [B18 – 2017]**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 20 November 2019 –**The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans today postponed the intended briefing from the Department of Defence (DOD) on its Cyber Warfare capabilities and developments to deal with the two Bills currently before the committee.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Cyril Xaba, said the Defence Amendments Bill [B18 – 2017] is a long outstanding issue and the Military Discipline Bill [B 21 – 2019] is a lengthy Bill which requires a thorough briefing.

The committee resolved to finalise the Defence Amendment Bill [B18 – 2017] as a matter of urgency. The Bill was passed in the National Assembly (NA) on 11 November 2018, but subsequent changes to section 103 (1) by the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) resulted in the Bill being sent back to the NA. The amendments suggested the number of days of absence of a Member in section 59(3) must be linked to the number of days in section 103 (1), that is, exceeding 10 continuous calendar days of absence.

The committee agreed that the amendment to section 103 (1) will ensure numerical alignment between the two Sections and will have no significant impact on the content of the Bill itself as this is a technical amendment.

The committee also received a briefing on the Military Discipline Bill [B 21 – 2019], which seeks to provide, among other things, for an effective administration of the military court system and maintenance of discipline in the Defence Force. The Bill also seeks to strengthen the military courts system to make the dispensation of justice to the accused military personnel much quicker.

Mr Xaba said that preliminary observations are that the Bill will require additional funding to implement it, in which case the department will have to reprioritise its budget.

In welcoming the extensive presentation made by officials, the committee commended the department for proposing measures to tighten up the maintenance of discipline in the military, while ensuring the observance of human rights. The Constitution demands nothing less than a disciplined military force.

The Bill will be published for public comments during the next few weeks while the committee continues to interrogate the contents thereof.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS, MR CYRIL XABA.**