**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TRADITIONAL LEADERS ASK TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND FOR BUDGET TO DO THE WORK REQUIRED OF THEM**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 26 November 2019 -**The Portfolio Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs today started its two-day Indaba with traditional leaders at Parliament. The Indaba provides a platform for political dialogue on the institution of traditional and Khoi-San leadership and related matters.

The Indaba expects to clarify the policies and legislation that govern both traditional and Khoi-San leaders. It will also discuss whether current policies and legislation aid the transformation of such leadership, and whether they are effective in ensuring community development and transformation in a democracy. The Indaba will also deliberate on the interventions and programme in place within the Houses of Traditional Leaders to promote women’s empowerment, gender equality and the prevention of femicide.

The committee heard from the National and Provincial Houses of Traditional Leaders that they find it very difficult to work with a limited budget and capacity to do what is required of them in terms of the act. They are committed to build a united and democratic South Africa, however, they need to be taken seriously by government.

Each year at the opening of the National House of Traditional Leaders, the President acknowledges the institution of traditional leadership and makes announcements and expects certain responsibilities to be carried out to advance the development of communities in rural areas and for traditional leaders to actively participate in the affairs of their people at local municipalities. However, traditional leaders are not capacitated sufficiently in terms of resources to achieve these tasks. One example is that of Mpumalanga
Traditional Council, which has a budget of R100 000 versus R2 000 per traditional council for North West province. In the Eastern Cape 26 out of 29 wards are led by traditional leaders. Other provinces have also indicated that they are under-resourced.

The committee also heard that a task team must be formed to deal with harmful, misunderstood cultural practices, such as “ukuthwala”. The issue of women’s empowerment, where women amakhosi are given “a voice” to be heard and respected in traditional communities must be addressed. Women must be at least 1/3 of the composition of a traditional council. The provinces without women traditional leaders are KwaZulu-Natal and Northern Cape. This must be investigated. The committee must also look into the cultural practice of initiations where some young boys have died unnecessarily.

The issue of land must be given priority and the issuing of title deeds must be addressed as amakhosi do not have the power to issue title deeds, especially to large companies building malls in rural areas. The traditional leaders also call for greater synergy and coordination of programmes for agrarian reform by the Department of Rural Development and the Department of Agriculture, as they have donated one million hectares of land towards this reform initiative, but it is not being used for agriculture. The traditional leaders also welcomed the Village Feedlot programme where young people are recruited into farming, as the average age of a farmer is 67 years.

These were some of the inputs at the Indaba from the various provincial houses of traditional leaders. The Indaba will continue tomorrow at Parliament as the deliberations today brought to light many of the challenges facing traditional leaders in South Africa.

**ISSUED BY PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**