**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HOLISTIC INTERVENTION NEEDED TO RESOLVE LONG QUEUES AT HOME AFFAIRS**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 26 November 2019 –**The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs has suggested to the Department of Home Affairs that they must look at a holistic approach in dealing with long queues, such as technological advances, the reintroduction of Saturday open days, reduction of downtime and extension of the relationship with banks.

The committee welcomes the announcement that the issue of queues has been taken up as a ministerial priority, which will ensure that the challenge receives attention at the highest level. “The commitment to deal with this matter is appreciated; we will be able to gauge the impact with time. What the committee is interested in is to see the queues decreasing and our people receive quality of services,” said Adv Bongani Bongo, the Chairperson of the committee.

In relation to finding workable solutions, the committee was unanimous in the need to utilise technological advances such as an online appointment system that will ensure that clients arrive at the department when they are expected. While this might be a solution, the committee is cognisant of the challenges caused by the unreliable network provided by State Information Technology Agency (Sita), which must be resolved with urgency.

Furthermore, the committee has called for the extension of the department’s footprint in banking institutions to lighten the load on departmental offices.

Also, the committee has called for a reengagement with labour unions to resolve the impasse on the opening of the Home Affairs offices on Saturdays, which alleviated weekday pressures on the offices. A collaborative effort between the unions and the department is necessary to ensure the department’s effectiveness.

The committee has committed to engage the National Treasury on the issue of departmental funding. The committee agrees with the department that the current footprint is inadequate to service the current population and requires the extension of its services, which will include opening more offices.

The roll-out of mobile trucks, especially to rural areas, was highlighted as an area of focus. The committee emphasised to the department the need to equip these mobile trucks with adequate infrastructure to be able to offer all departmental services.

Training for frontline employees was also underlined as a key area that must be prioritised, as there are areas of concern currently. There are ongoing complaints about the unpleasant attitude of Home Affairs staff, which can be addressed through training, which must be periodic.

The committee has committed to reconvening an engagement with Sita to make firm decisions on the issue of network challenges.

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