**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE CONDEMNS DISREGARD OF PARLIAMENT BY ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 18 March 2020 -**The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology is shocked and perplexed by the disdain and utter disregard showed by the Administrator of the University of Fort Hare, Prof Loyiso Nongxa to Parliament.

Prof Nongxa was invited to Parliament for a follow up engagement with the committee, in his capacity as an Administrator of the university, following the sudden shut down of the university by its management two days ago, after the committee thought it had a successful meeting with the university committee two weeks ago.

Prof Nongxa wrote a letter to the Chairperson of the committee, Mr Philly Mapulane providing what the committee considers to be lousy and frivolous reasons why he was unable to attend the meeting.

“The Committee rejected with the contempt it deserves, the letter by Prof Loyiso Nongxa explaining why he is not the relevant person to come to explain the decision to close the university. Prof Nongxa seems to be completely out of touch with the reality that the university is faced with a serious crisis, and the fact that it is his responsibility to lead the university in its efforts to resolve the crisis.

The Administrator seems to be sitting comfortably in his cushy role, and boasting to Parliament about his previous roles, but doing nothing whilst the institution is up in flames.

The Administrator must decide whether he wishes to help the nation, by rising to the occasion and lead the university to move out of the current quagmire, or ship out of the public role assigned to him by the Minister of being the Council of the University.

“The fact that the university was placed under administration by former Minister Naledi Pandor, and Prof Nongxa being appointed as an Administrator, is in itself testament to the fact that things are not normal in the Committee. To now get a man tasked with a task of rescuing the institution ‘fiddling whilst Rome is burning’ is a great disappointment,” said Mr Mapulane.

The committee resolved to call on the Minister of Higher Education and Training to review the continued role and presence of Prof Nongxa as the Administrator of the University of Fort Hare, given his reluctance to perform his duty (that of assuming the entire functions and duties of the Council of the University) and his insolence behaviour towards Parliament. In the meantime, the committee will employ all the instruments in its disposal to compel Prof Nongxa to appear before Parliament in the next term.

Furthermore, the committee was briefed by its Chairperson, that he was informed by the Vice Chancellor, that the Deputy-Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Dr Parker, instructed the management of the University of Fort Hare to cancel its engagement with the committee.

This action by Dr Parker is viewed by the committee as undermining the autonomy of Parliament, and is considered inexcusable. In this regard, the committee resolved to call on Dr Parker to submit a written explanation of her unacceptable actions.

The committee also had an engagement with the management and student leadership of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, following a march by the students to Parliament on 12 March 2020, where a memorandum was handed over.

After a robust engagement with both the students and management, the committee directed that the University Council should meet within the next 7 working days to consider the memorandum of demands by the students and provide the committee with a written response.

The committee has further requested the university council to consider, and process the report of the Yekiso Commission, and to share it immediately with the committee.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MR PHILLY MAPULANE.**

For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the Committee’s Media Officer:

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