**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON COGTA ASSURES THE MINISTER ABOUT ITS SUPPORT ON INITIATIVES TO FIGHT COVID-19**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 21 April 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs today received a briefing from the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Dr Nokosazana Dlamini-Zuma, on unintended consequences of the lockdown regulations.

Minister Dlamini-Zuma gazetted the National State of Disaster on 15 March 2020 as a measure to curb the spread of the Covid-19. As the virus came from outside the country that necessitated, among other things, closure of all the South African ports of entry to prevent the movement of the people. This was also necessary to flatten the curve, and to ensure that the government has sufficient time to put systems in place to deal with the pandemic.

The committee welcomed the briefing from the Minister and expressed its support to government initiatives to curb the spread of infections. However, the committee told the minister that some of the regulations had unintended consequences as South Africa is a third world country with widening inequality and a high rate of unemployment.

 The unintended consequences of the lockdown which the committee highlighted was the loss of income by families who depended on small business and in the informal economy at large. Furthermore, the committee said, the poorest of the poor especially in rural areas are the most affected by the consequences.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Faith Muthambi said: “Where there is relief for people in the form of food parcels, it must reach those families who have nothing.” The committee heard reports of the allegations of councillors who have taken these food parcels for themselves, and distributing some to their families and friends.

The committee also heard allegations that in one of the provinces councillors sold permits especially for the sale of food. In some instances, donations of hand sanitisers, gloves and masks were not distributed to the people but were taken by councillors for themselves.

The committee said where there is evidence of non-compliance with regulations and corruption by councillors and officials, those found to be on the wrong side of the regulations must be charged and dealt with. The committee urged the public to report without hesitation instances of corruption such as the theft of disaster relief items such as water tankers to the police.

The committee said CoGTA as the custodian of disaster management must ensure that everybody understands the lockdown and its regulations. It also said that it has noted that the interpretation and enforcement of some of the lockdown regulations have not be applied consistently across the country.

According to the committee, there needs to be an aggressive advertisement campaign of the list of essential goods as in some places the sale of sanitary towels was not allowed due to poor understanding of regulations by retailers. “With the winter season upon us, some of the regulations will be uplifted in terms of retail items such as winter clothes, blankets and heaters, and therefore it is imperative that the department use all communication and media tools available to ensure that people in far corners of the country are reached,” said Ms Muthambi.

On the issue of readiness of facilities that were identified as isolation units or quarantine facilities for the purposes of isolation, Ms Muthambi said that process must be finalised. In addition to that, as the province of the Western Cape has identified private hospitals as quarantine facilities, the committee made a call to all the provinces and municipalities to use their own existing buildings which are lying fallow. The committee said these buildings must be renovated and resourced with necessary equipment for quarantine and isolation purposes.

The committee will be holding a follow up meeting with the department as the officials were tasked to liaise with other government departments that have cross cutting issues. The committee also made a call to all South Africans to adhere to the lockdown regulations. “Together we will win this war against this COVID-19 monster,” said Ms Muthambi.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COGTA, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**