**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**INSTALLATION OF TANKS CRITICAL TO DELIVERY OF WATER, SAY PORTFOLIO AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 21 April 2020 –**A joint meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation and of the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements welcomed information that 14 737 of 18 875 tanks have been delivered to all provinces. However, the committees called for the immediate installation of all tanks to ensure provision of water to the people.

While the committees acknowledge the delivery of tanks, it is concerned that only about half of those delivered have been installed. "It is concerning that four weeks since the declaration of the disaster only 7 689 tanks have been installed. While we welcome the extend of the work done up to now, urgency is needed to ensure that all allocated tanks are operational," said Ms Machwene Semenya, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee.

Both committees noted that many Members of Parliament have highlighted various areas, such as UMkhanyakude and QwaQwa, that are still without water, which impacts on the ability of residents to maintain the necessary hygiene. "We are of the view that the installation of all the allocated tanks will ensure that water provision is improved. We will require a weekly update on installation of these tanks, because delivery tanks alone is not enough; people must get water," said Mr China Dodovu, the Chairperson of the Select Committee.

Furthermore, the committees welcomed the assurance that the department is also focusing on infrastructure development that will ensure sustainable water provision after the intervention phase. The investment in infrastructure will also go a long way to ensuring the delivery of quality water to the people in the long term.

In relation to funding, both committees are cognisant that due to the need to reprioritise the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant funding there will be delays in implementing projects initially identified for the 2020/2021 financial year. Despite this, the committee appreciates the fact that budgets cuts have been equitable across provinces, with those that get the largest allocation receiving the largest cuts, which will ensure minimal impact in delivery of projects.

Both committees have called for improved coordination and functionality of command structures across the three spheres of government, especially with local government, where challenges in skills are acute, which might impact roll-out of intervention plans.

Regarding human settlements, both committees called for urgent measures to stop evictions, especially during this lockdown period. "It is unacceptable that municipalities have blatantly decided to ignore directives from national [government] and are continuing to evict people. This must be stopped urgently," said Mr Dodovu. The commitment by the Minister to urgently deal with the issue of eviction is welcomed and must be supported.

Regarding de-densification of informal settlements, both committees welcome plans to make available state land to ensure the conclusion of the process. Furthermore, the committees have called for prudence where land has to be purchased, with the aim of ensuring value for money for purchased land.

Both committees have called for a system of checks and balances to ensure that procurement during this period is above board and unscrupulous people are stopped from looting state coffers. Furthermore, a working relationship with the police will ensure that wrongdoers in relation to procurement are arrested and prosecuted, as provided for in the regulations.

A plan to meet both departments again is being considered to ensure that updates are shared and areas of concern are addressed.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, WATER AND SANITATION, MS MACHWENE SEMENYA, AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, WATER, SANITATION AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MR CHINA DODOVU.**