**MEDIA ALERT**

**COMMITTEE ON COGTA REQUESTS MUNICIPALITIES TO BE FRUGAL DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**Parliament, Monday, 27 April 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) today held a virtual meeting with the South African Local Government Association (Salga) to receive a briefing on Covid-19 and related developments in the local sphere of government.

The impact of the lockdown due to COVID-19 on communities has a direct bearing on municipalities.  With job losses there are reduced incomes in households and therefore a reduction in revenue collections by municipalities for services rendered.  Water and electricity consumption by industries has also been severely reduced which impacts on the coffers of municipalities negatively. Salga on behalf of municipalities is in consultation with ESKOM for a payment holiday for municipalities to not pay ESKOM, as they are unable to service their debt. They are also requesting ESKOM not to disconnect the electricity supply to their consumers if they do not pay up. The Committee however is of the opinion that municipalities must pay for services rendered by ESKOM as ESKOM already has cost recovery measures in place to recoup the funds owed to it by municipalities. This is crucial that funds owed to ESKOM be paid so that the nation is not in darkness again.

Salga has also informed the Committee that municipalities have not received any financial relief from government to execute the directives which were issued. However, an amount of 20 billion rands from Treasury has been earmarked for relief measures for municipalities which will become available in July and the Committee urges municipalities to be frugal and to ensure that every cent is accounted for.

There have been allegations levelled against some councillors contravening COVID-19 regulations and the Chairperson of CoGTA, Ms Faith Muthambi said that, “in this time when our communities are in dire need of aid, that aid much reach them irrespective of party affiliation, people must not go hungry”.  In instances of allegations of councillors distributing food parcels to preferred areas over others, this will not be tolerated. Salga has reported that they are aware of 19 out of 9300 councillors who are alleged to be involved in corruption. Councillors who are stealing food parcels and sanitizers must be severely dealt with, said the Chairperson.

The Chairperson has called on municipalities to act swiftly with the delivery and installation of water tanks to rural communities. Due to the recent drought many communities are still without water. Salga needs to reconcile the number of tanks delivered, installed and waiting to be installed in wards in all provinces, especially the Northern Cape, Limpopo and the Western Cape as those were hardest hit by the drought. The list of water tanks is to be resubmitted to the Committee.

The committee welcomes the draft proposal of SALGA for the contribution of 4% of the increment of its members, staff and councillors for its own Solidarity Fund, however it cautions Salga that some councillors of the various parties have already committed to the Solidarity Fund announced by the President and therefore request that they consider this.

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