**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEES TO ENGAGE THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS ON PROCUREMENT OF BEITBRIDGE FENCE**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 29 April 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs and the Select Committee on Security and Justice have today resolved that there is a need to engage both the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure and the Department of Public Works to ensure accountability on the procurement of the emergency fence at Beitbridge Border Post.

The committees engaged the Department of Home Affairs on various issues around its services during the State of National Disaster. The committees acknowledged that, while the procurement of the fence was not the responsibility of the Department of Home Affairs, but the proper functioning of the port of entry is important hence the need to ensure a secure border area.

Despite the concerns around the border fence, both committees emphasised the urgency in establishing the Border Management Authority to ensure the seamless and coordinated approach in securing South Africa’s points of entry.

The committees have welcomed the plans of the department in rolling out critical services including issuance of birth and death certificates as well as the issuance of Temporary Identity Documents. Also, the committees welcome the department’s backlog eradication plans in relation to the issuing of birth certificates to comply with the Births and Deaths Act of registering children within 30 days of birth.

Furthermore, both committees welcome the fact that children born within the lockdown period will not have to wait for the Late Registration of Births process. “The urgent implementation of the backlog eradication plans is necessary to ensure that children, especially from a poor background, will be able to access much needed social security initiatives by government,” said Ms Shahidabibi Shaikh, the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Security and Justice.

Similarly, the committees appreciate concessions that all documentation by the department that will expire within the lockdown period will be considered valid up to 30 days after the lockdown has been lifted.

The committees emphasised the need to take services of the department closer to the people through the use of its mobile units. “If the department utilised those mobile units to take services closer to the people, that will eliminate the problem of long-distance travel, and will contribute in ensuring that people stay at home,” said Advocate Bongani Bongo, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs.

Both committees note the incident of an employee who tested positive for Covid-19 in Vryheid office and measures taken by the department in complying with the World Health Organisation and the Department of Health protocols of contact tracing and disinfection of the office. “We would like to emphasise the importance of ensuring that frontline employees are given necessary Personal Protective Equipment to ensure that they offer services in a protected environment,” Advocate Bongo said.

The committees have called upon the department to put in place measures to ensure that social distancing is adhered to at its offices for the purposes of compliance with regulations and reduce cross-contamination.

Regarding the budget, the committees acknowledged that the R22 million budget by the department might be insufficient to roll out more interventions during the lockdown.  They urged the department to look at other areas where it can make savings and make money available for the procurement of PPEs.

The committees welcomed the movement of refugees from the Central Methodist Church and outside the Central Police Station. However, the committees expressed their discomfort over reports that there are no measures in place to ensure social distancing at the Wingfield base.

After they were informed that the Minister of Home Affairs has engaged some of the ambassadors of the countries where the refugees come from, the committees welcomed that. Also, the committee noted with appreciation the information that some of the countries have indicated a willingness to receive back their citizens.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, ADVOCATE BONGANI BONGO AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE, MS SHAHIDABIBI SHAIKH.**