**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**EDUCATION COMMITTEES TO SEEK LEGAL OPINION ON WAY FORWARD WITH ADOPTION OF DBE’S APP**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 5 May 2020 –**A joint meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education and the Select Committee on Education and Technology, Sports, Arts and Culture today resolved to get legal advice regarding the adoption of the Department of Basic Education’s annual performance plan (APP), because of the unexpected changes to the plan caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Portfolio Committee Chairperson Ms Bongiwe Mbinqo-Gigaba said that, at this stage, the committees can merely note the APP presented today, as it was tabled in Parliament in March 2020 and drafted much earlier, and does not give effect to the impact of pandemic. “Only a legal expert will be able to tell us the way forward, meaning do we just note or do we adopt the APP?”

The DBE made it clear that although it was presenting the APP, it will have to be reworked, as it was drawn up prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and plans have now changed considerably. The APP was tabled in Parliament in March, prior to the declaration of the lockdown and its implications. The department nonetheless presented the tabled APP to the committee, as it is bound by law to do so and could not divert from the plan, as tabled.

The DBE said when the plans were drawn up for the year, the pandemic was not expected. Funds will now have to be moved and redirected from infrastructure to make schools Covid-19 compliant, including in water and sanitation. The Minister of DBD, Ms Angie Motshekga, agreed with the committee’s decision to take legal advice, as she said the DBE is already spending funds that have not been approved by Parliament, due to the new activities it must undertake to ensure that schools are Covid-19 compliant.

The committees also heard that many programmes will have to be done virtually or not at all, due to the pandemic.

Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba said that a follow-up meeting will be necessary after the DBE has adjusted its plans. “At this point we can just note the report. Covid-19 happened to all of us unexpectedly. Now the DBE is unlikely to implement its plans the way it planned. If it wanted to visit a school, it can’t happen. If it wanted to train teachers or a school governing body, that can’t happen. The DBE will not be able to spend the money as they had planned.”

Several MPs raised concerns about the infrastructure budget, as several schools were vandalised during the lockdown period. MPs also indicated that budget should be allocated to information and computer technology.

Select Committee Chairperson Mr Elleck Nchabeleng said all new and unexpected activities regarding Covid-19 will have to be included in a redrafted plan. The committees will reconvene next week to plot a way forward.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION, MS BONGIWE MBINQO-GIGABA, AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY, SPORTS, ARTS AND CULTURE, MR ELLECK NCHABELENG.**