**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COGTA COMMITTEES CALL FOR PERMANENT SOLUTIONS TO MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY DISPUTES**

**Parliament, Thursday, 14 May 2020** – The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements have called on the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) to find permanent solutions to recurring municipal boundary disputes, as these often pose a threat to local government elections.

The MDB appeared before a joint meeting of the two committees to present its strategic plan and annual performance plan.

The entity told the committees that among its challenges were dissatisfactions over current municipal boundaries, giving the example of some communities demanding that the MDB reverse some of its previous decisions for the amalgamation of municipalities that took effect in 2016.

There are also dissatisfactions with provincial boundaries in several parts of the country that continue to cause strain on the work of the MDB.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Faith Muthambi, said these disputes, which continue to recur when elections were near, are a threat to free and fair elections.

“We can mention past examples of Vuwani, Matatiele, Khutsong. It cannot be a norm that they continue to recur when elections are near. At the end of the day, these matters have to be resolved”, said Chairperson Muthambi.

The Chairperson of the MDB, Mr Thabo Manyoni, told the committees that most of the time the problems occur when communities are not involved in or informed about the demarcation process. Subsequently, this becomes a problem for the Independent Electoral Commission and the election process.

The MDB will not be re-determining any municipal boundaries until after the 2021 local government elections.

Public consultations for the delimitation of wards in preparation for next year’s elections were under way when the country was forced to shut down due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Five provinces are still to be consulted, and the MDB has committed to review its public participation model to adhere to the Covid-19 regulations, which include the prohibition of public gatherings.

The MDB delimits wards for the purpose of local elections after consultations with the IEC. Wards are delimited in all metropolitan and local municipalities. This process is deemed necessary to lay a solid foundation for the delivery of free and fair local government elections

The two committees applauded the MDB for achieving an unqualified audit.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COGTA, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI, AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON COGTA, WATER AND SANITATION AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MR CHINA DODOVU.**