**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**DEFENCE COMMITTEE CONCERNED ABOUT LACK OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY VETERANS**

**Parliament, Friday, 15 May 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans has resolved to engage the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, regarding the lack of strategic leadership, systemic and structural challenges in the Department of Military Veterans.

The committee is concerned that the organisational structure that was approved in 2010, ahead of the founding legislation, vision and mission, has not been reviewed. Of particular concern is that it is not aligned to the department’s service delivery model.

While the department identified the need for visible and stable leadership to sustain strategic oversight as an enabler to achieve the targets set in its five-year strategic plan, the committee said this endeavour will fail if the department does not address the issues related to the organisational structure, vacancies at top management level, as well as policies critical to the delivery of services and the functioning of the department.

This is especially important if the department is to successfully bring about change management and enhance its organisational culture as it posits in its strategic plan.

The committee highlighted the importance of the department establishing a credible database of military veterans across the country. The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Cyril Xaba, said the department cannot provide effective and efficient services if it does not address the systemic and structural challenges.

Mr Xaba told the department that the consideration of its budget is done under dysphoria since the department’s challenges are repetitive. “Several people have written to me about the decisions taken by the department about military veterans,” Mr Xaba said while questioning the number of cases and outcomes of the cases dealt with by the Military Veterans Appeals Board.

The committee has acknowledged the work done by the Acting Director-General (DG), Lieutenant General Derrick Mgwebi and officials in their efforts of improving on services delivered by the department. The committee, however, is of the view that the role of the acting DG is limited in terms of dealing with some of the challenges and the Executive Authority is in a better position to respond to these.

The committee had planned to consider the adoption of the department’s report on 22 May 2020, but will now seek to engage the Minister before doing so. The committee also resolved to invite the Military Veterans Appeals Board to brief the committee on the cases currently under review.

The committee also today adopted its report, having considered Budget Vote 23: Defence and Military Veterans, the strategic plans (2020 – 2025) and the 2020/21 Annual Performance Plans of the Department of Defence (DOD) and its entities. The report highlights a number of the committee’s observations and recommendations as it (the report) relates to challenges in the department and its entities. The report is to be presented to the National Assembly in a date yet to be confirmed.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS, MR CYRIL XABA.**