**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE BRIEFED BY ICASA, SITA, USAASA, GCIS AND SAPO ON THEIR APPs AND BUDGETS**

**Parliament, Saturday, 16 May 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Communications was today briefed by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) on its Annual Performance Plan (APP) and budget for the 2020/21 financial year, and the committee welcomed the report that ICASA will place on auction the current temporary spectrum in December 2020.

The temporary free spectrum that was released in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic will be closed at the end of November. ICASA Council’s Acting Chairperson told the committee that they believe that they will get attractive offer from bidding companies, because those companies would have experienced open spectrum.

ICASA presented five outcomes for the medium-term strategic framework, namely increased access to quality broadband services, enhanced status of social cohesion, protected consumer rights, promoted competition in the Information Communications Technology (ICT) sector and maintained organisational service delivery.

ICASA also presented an estimated budget of R495 million for the current financial year. The committee, having acknowledged that the budget is insufficient, encouraged ICASA to find cost effective ways to deliver on its programmes.

Yesterday, the committee was briefed on the APPs and budgets of the State Information Technology Agency (SITA), Universal Services Access Agency of South Africa (USAASA) and the Universal Services Access Fund (USAF). The Deputy Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Ms Pinky Kekana, said that SITA and USAASA were placed under administration in December 2019, and that they are earmarked for organisational repurposing.

On Thursday (14 May 2020), the committee was briefed by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), together with the South African Post Office (SAPO) on their APPs and budgets.

The committee told the Ministry in the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies to move with speed in filling vacant positions in the post office Board, in order to restore governance stability. Furthermore, the committee encouraged the post office to invest in upskilling and reskilling its workforce in order to prepare it for the planned shift to e-commerce. The post office was also advised to consider working closely with the registered spaza shops in order to retain its national footprint and competitive advantage.

The committee further commended the good work that is done by GCIS to communicate government message on Covid-19. It also appreciated commitment by GCIS to clean governance, even in the middle of the national state of disaster.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Boyce Maneli, said: “We are aware of the budget constraints facing the GCIS, but your work speaks volumes. We appreciate that you are in touch with the National Treasury with a view of resolving this matter.”

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS, MR BOYCE MANELI**