**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION DIRECTS WHOLESALE AND RETAIL SETA TO IMPLEMENT ALL FORENSIC INVESTIGATIONS IT COMMISSIONED**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 27 May 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology, had a follow-up meeting yesterday on 26 May, with Services, Wholesale and Retail (WRSETA), and Construction Setas.

The committee directed the WRSETA to fully implement the recommendations of a number of forensic investigations commissioned by the previous Accounting Authority and the Administrator of the WRSETA.

The committee rejected the decision by the Accounting Authority of the entity not to pursue disciplinary hearings against the 78 employees implicated in the forensic investigations.

The committee was informed that cases that are part of the forensic reports, and that are regarded as irregular expenditure amount to a total value of R1.9 billion. Of this irregular expenditure amount, only a meagre of R1.6 million was categorised for recovery by the entity, however, only R473 773 has been successfully recovered so far.

"It is completely unacceptable for the WRSETA to commission forensic investigations at a huge cost to the tax-payer, and when those reports  implicate certain employees and recommends disciplinary actions, the Accounting Authority suddenly invokes some flimsy excuses, like time-lapse and inadequate record keeping by its own Human Resource Department, to avoid the implementation of the recommendations contained in the forensic reports.

The huge amount of R1.9 billion which constitutes irregular expenditure does not surprise the Accounting Authority. “We disagree with the board in granting a blanket amnesty to all the 78 implicated employees. We insist that there must be consequence management for wrong doing in the entity" said Mr Philly Mapulane, Chairperson of the committee.

The committee engaged with the Services Seta as part of a follow-up meeting in dealing with the allegations contained in the National Skills Authority report. The committee was not satisfied with the responses it received from the entity, and consequently, it resolved to hold another engagement with the entity where Services Seta is expected to present to the committee a chronology of the NSA and other investigative report conducted, and how the entity has implemented those recommendations as well as to submit evidence to the committee on the allegations regarding the lack of the required qualifications.

The committee will be following a litigation case between the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, and the former board of Construction SETA arising from the Minister's decision to disband the board. “At an appropriate time, we will request the Minister to brief the committee,” said Mr Mapulane. In the meantime, the committee urged the appointed Administrator to stabilise the entity and follow-up all the allegations made.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSONS MR PHILLY MAPULANE.**