**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COGTA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON TELLS DEPARTMENT THAT COMMITTEE MUST BE AT THE FOREFRONT DURING CONSULTATIONS ON LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS**

**Parliament, Saturday, 30 May 2020 –** The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Faith Muthambi, conveyed a message of appreciation to the Minister of the Department of Cooperative Governance and (CoGTA), Ms Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and the department yesterday, for the work she described as “sterling”, of consultations with the public for the drafting of regulations for the national lockdown and guiding the country on those regulations.

Ms Muthambi said: “Regrettably Minister, there was no opportunity for us as the committee to be consulted when the country moves to level three and that is a matter that concerns the whole committee, and doesn’t put the committee in a better position to exercise its mandate.”

Furthermore, Ms Muthambi told Minister Dlamini-Zuma that the committee is expected by Parliament and the people on the ground to have a meaningful and insightful contribution to the national lockdown regulations. “That is a justifiable expectation because we are the custodians of the Disaster Management Act, and based on that, Parliament should be at the forefront during consultations for regulations,” added Ms Muthambi.

Ms Muthambi expressed these concerns to the Minister when the department appeared before the committee yesterday in a virtual meeting, on the state of municipal governance and operations on moving to level three of the lockdown, and on the municipalities that are under section 139 of the Constitution.

Admitting the failure to consult the department, Minister Dlamini-Zuma apologised, telling the committee that the process of consultation is driven by President Cyril Ramaphosa. She said, however, that even the President doesn’t ignore the committee deliberately, but was missed due to unfortunate oversight reasons. “I must assure the committee that won’t happen again. We will ask for its views next time,” said Ms Dlamini-Zuma.

On the claim from some of the members of the committee that Minister Dlamini-Zuma avoided or decided not to answer some of the written questions asked to her by members of the committee, she said she never avoided or ignored the questions, but she realised that some of the questions were not for her, but were supposed to be directed to the other spheres of government.

Some of the members of the committee told Minister Dlamini-Zuma that the government moved from level four of the lockdown to three hastily and unreasonably, and some members attributed that to the government’s insensitivity to black people’s lives. Minister Dlamini-Zuma said the government is sensitive to black people’s lives and takes all the citizens of the country very seriously.

She told the committee that the government balances its overarching responsibility of saving the lives of the people against Covid-19, with ensuring the prevalence of livelihood to the people. She assured the committee that the government doesn’t move the country from one step of the lockdown to the other recklessly, and told the committee that all government services, across all the spheres of the government, are going to be available from the 1st of June this year.

The committee expressed its unhappiness to the department after it heard that the department was not aware of the number of municipalities that were able and unable to hold virtual meetings for the purposes of service delivery. It told the department that situation created an impression that the department has poor or no monitoring mechanisms in place to do its oversight work over the municipalities, and told it to get its act together on that.

Also, the committee couldn’t accept as a legitimate reason the report from the committee that some municipalities couldn’t hold virtual meetings during the previous lockdown levels due to reasons that included financial challenges, and that Supply Chain Management policies on procurement were not adhered to in those lockdown levels.

The committee told the department to ensure that all the expenditures that took place must be reported by the municipal managers to the municipal councils, and that the councils must fast-track the passing of municipal IDPs (Integrated Development Plans) and budgets as those are strategic tools for the acceleration of service delivery to the people.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE ABD TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**