**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**FUNDING CHALLENGES HAMPER PROGRESS IN DEFENCE WORKS FORMATION**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 10 June 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans has urged the Department of Defence (DOD) to divide the infrastructure development function transfer schedule into smaller, more achievable targets which can be monitored in terms of progress.

This follows a briefing from the DOD regarding the transfer of the Infrastructure Development Function from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI).

The DOD was in March 2019, instructed by the Standing Committee on Appropriations (SCOA) to take over the Infrastructure Development from DPWI. While the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, had agreed to this with the indication that a financial injection for projects and capacitation of Defence Works Formation (DWF) is needed, funding remains one of the biggest constraints of the programme.

The Secretary of Defence, Dr Sam Gulube, told the committee that the DOD does not have the necessary funds to optimise the DWF since the department itself has been experiencing funding challenges, especially about the cost of employment (COE).

The committee has heard that the contractors appointed by the DPWI continue to be a challenge and that the DOD in many instances does not have a choice but to allow for the term of the contractors to end naturally. Dr Gulube also indicated that the infrastructure development framework inherited from the DPWI allows for the funding of goods and services, which include consultants, but not the appointment of new employees.

Dr Gulube said the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the DPWI and the DOD has shifted several functions to the DOD, but the DOD has not been able to appoint the necessary skills such as architects, quantity surveyors, civil engineers, artisans, and so on.

Minister Mapisa-Nqakula told the committee that the political will to see the programme function at an optimal level is there but it lacks capacity. The committee has heard and agrees that the transfer of functions should also be accompanied by the budget from the DPWI. The committee also agrees with the views of the Deputy Minister, Mr Thabang Makwetla, that this capacity should be sustainable and readily available when needed.

The committee acknowledged the validity of the challenges faced by the DOD and noted the efforts made in ensuring on-the-job training and other areas, but it is also of the opinion that these have been ongoing for many years and need urgently to be addressed. The committee, therefore, advised the department to develop a comprehensive plan for a fully functional DWF and start working towards this incrementally. The committee agreed to follow up with the department in the next three months.

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