**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JOINT DEFENCE COMMITTEE RESOLVES TO POSTPONE BRIEFING RELATED TO BORDER SAFEGUARDING AND DEPLOYMENT OF SANDF**

**Parliament, Friday, 19 June 2020 –** The Joint Standing Committee on Defence yesterday resolved to postpone the scheduled briefing related to border safety and the deployment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to support the South African Police Service in enforcing measures aimed at combating the spread of Covid-19, owing to the absence of the Chief of South African Defence Force (CSANDF), General Solly Shoke.

General Shoke and the Secretary for Defence, Dr Sam Gulube, were invited to update the committee on the plan to deploy soldiers in line with the recent letters of deployment from the President and the Department of Defence’s (DOD) Covid-19 related activities. The committee took strong exception to the absence of the CSANDF without an apology.

Dr Gulube said that it has always been understood that he would represent the Department of Defence (DOD) as the Accounting Officer and present to the committee and that he did not inform the CSANDF about the meeting. However, the committee believes that the deployment of 76 000 members of the SANDF would be the largest ever operation to date in the democratic era. Therefore, any matters related to defence force deployment should be accounted for by the CSANDF to whom the President has released these members for utilisation.

While acknowledging the accounting role of the Secretary for Defence, the committee said that the CSANDF has an obligation to report to the committee. The committee maintained that the White Paper on Defence (1996) states that the SANDF shall be subordinate and fully accountable to Parliament and the executive. The Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Cyril Xaba emphasised: “to that extent the CSANDF was answerable to Parliament”. It is therefore not the accounting officer for the DOD that needs to report on force levels, force preparation and deployment of soldiers, but the CSANDF, who must also be present when the discussion is taken on his presentation, said Mr Xaba.

The committee accepted that the CSANDF had not been informed of the meeting and resolved to present his part of the item to a future date.

Meanwhile, the committee commended the DOD and members of the SANDF on their exceptional role during lockdown. While welcoming the Secretary for Defence’s presentation on the DOD’s Covid-19 activities, the committee asked that the business plan with clear measurable objectives, outputs, performance indicators and targets indicating how the R4.5 billion budget allocated to the DOD for COVID-19 activities will be spent be presented at a future meeting.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, MR CYRIL XABA AND MR ELLECK NCHABELENG.**