**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE RECEIVES REQUEST FOR NEW FIREARMS AMNESTY**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 3 June 2020 –**The Select Committee on Security and Justice today received a request from the South African Police Service (SAPS) for a new six months’ firearms amnesty, commencing from August this year.

The SAPS told the committee that a total of 27 336 firearms were surrendered during the 2019/2020 amnesty period, which is far below the number of firearms surrendered during the 2005 amnesty, declared for the same period of six months. Last month, the final month of that amnesty period, more than 11 000 firearms were surrendered. This includes illegal firearms and those voluntarily surrendered.

The committee heard that granting another amnesty period will afford the communities another opportunity to surrender illegal and unwanted firearms and/or ammunition, in an effort to curb the proliferation of illegal firearms in circulation. It is believed that another amnesty, if declared, will be in the interest of the public since many people have shown a willingness to participate.

The aim of the amnesty was to reduce the number of illegally possessed firearms in circulation in South Africa, to provide firearm owners the opportunity to hand in unwanted firearms, to prevent crime and violence and to promote safety, to address the fundamental causes of crime in order to effectively protect our communities, and to ensure people living in South Africa feel safe and have no fear of crime.

Several members raised concerns about the lack of, or gaps in communication regarding the firearms amnesty.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Shahidabibi Shaikh, said at the start of the meeting the committee will not at this stage take a decision on the request, as an updated notice for the amnesty will have to be made to Parliament by the SAPS, as in the current one the dates were amended.

The committee heard that the restrictions that went with the lockdown on movement of people were raised as one of the reasons why many firearm owners could not participate in the previous amnesty. At the same time, the SAPS received more than 10 000 applications for firearms, still awaiting completion.

Ms Shaikh said the committee has clarified on a number of issues, including the importance of people to reapply for expired firearms, or to surrender unwanted or illegal firearms. As soon as the updated notice is sent to Parliament, the committee will process the matter.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE, MS SHAHIDABIBI SHAIKH.**