**MEDIA STATEMENT**
**DIRCO’S FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE UNSATISFACTORY, IR COMMITTEE**

**Parliament, Saturday, 27 June 2020** – The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation has voiced concerns over the performance of the Department of International Relations in the fourth quarter.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Tandi Mahambehlala, said it was a concern that the department struggled with adhering to the required 30-day payment rule to service providers. “This has to stop, the practice impacts on the cash flow of small businesses.

“We are particularly concerned about the exact reasons why this target is not being met? Why would the department not strive to pay suppliers for the services it has received? asked Ms Mahambehlala.
Furthermore, Ms Mahambehlala said the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic will negatively impact on small businesses, and this department wouldn’t want to appear as contributing to that challenge which will worsen the situation of unemployment in the country.”

Ms Mahambehlala said the committee is worried about the department’s obsolete Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure, as the ‘new normal’ situation brought by the COVID- 19 pandemic requires modern and well capacitated ITC infrastructure. The department was planning to conduct virtual diplomacy in the absence of a modernised ICT infrastructure.

The committee has noted, however, that there is some work being done in this regard and has called for its acceleration. “The coronavirus created adversity should be turned into an opportunity to conduct regular routine online diplomatic engagements,” said Ms Mahambehlala.

The committee expressed its wish to witness a deliberate representation of the previously disadvantaged group catering for gender mainstreaming, youth development and access for persons with disabilities. “The youthful workforce is mostly concentrated at the lower echelons of the department. The department requires mentorship programme as well as a clear strategy of developing a second layer leadership within the department.”

On another level, the committee commended the department for having turned the corner regarding the facilitation of the performance-based reporting on ‘smart’ objectives.
The committee instructed the department to prepare detailed reports for its consideration within a reasonable time, on challenges with adherence with the 30-day payment rule, list of 65 South Africans occupying strategic positions abroad, African Renaissance Fund (which is to be reported on as a stand-alone entity in future) and progress on the ICT modernisation project.

The committee also received a briefing from the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), on the conflict situation in Africa. ACCORD’s Executive Director, Advocate Vasu Gounden, informed the committee that the immediate threat that had a potential to distabilise the country and the region, was the emerging insurgency in the northern Mozambique.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, MS TANDI MAHAMBEHLALA.**