**MEDIA STATEMENT**
**COGTA COMMITTEE WELCOMES GAUTENG PROVINCE’S COVID-19 RESPONSE PLANS**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 5 August 2020 -**The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee of the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Faith Muthambi, told the leadership of the Gauteng Provincial Government that the committee expresses its disappointment and anger over the reports of widespread corruption involving funds meant to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic across the three provinces.

She said: “Our country has had to borrow money from International Monetary Fund (IMF) to deal with this crisis. Yet, those within the state who enable corruption, this to them is simply an opportunity to exploit the situation.” Furthermore, Ms Muthambi said: “We should all be concerned about these people who unashamedly steal money meant for personal protective equipment (PPE) for nurses and doctors, for food parcels for the poor, for workers who find themselves unemployed and for hospitals that require beds and ventilators. These funds are meant for communities in desperate need of services.”

The MECs for Health and Education appeared before the committee today to brief the committee on the provincial government’s Covid-19 response plans.

The committee expressed its concern over the disruptions and vandalization of schools by communities that demanded their closure during the lockdown in the province. The committee said those disruptions and vandalism grossly affected leaners that attended schools.

The MEC for Education, Mr Panyaza Lesufi, told the committee about the assistance of mass screening of learners, decontamination and disinfection of schools that was provided by the South African National Defence Force. Mr Lesufi said the army also protected the schools as well as learners.

The committee heard that learners will continue to receive food from schools during the school break. Also, Mr Lesufi assured the committee about the national revised annual teaching plans and the extended date for the last term for the continuity of the school academic programme in the province.

The Acting MEC for Health, Mr Jacob Mamabolo, told the committee that he has visited 26 health institutions in the province including two PPE storage facilities in the last few days. He said the Provincial Department of Health has sufficient PPE for healthcare workers.

Furthermore, he assured the committee that there will be sufficient beds for both the existing and field hospitals during the peak of the pandemic forecasted for September. The committee appreciated the plans of the province to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COGTA, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**