**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**ORGANISATIONS CALL FOR MORE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE UPGRADING OF LAND TENURE RIGHTS AMENDMENT BILL [B6-2020]**

**Parliament, Thursday, 20 August 2020**– The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development yesterday held its second day of public hearings, and heard various organisations calling for the public hearings on the [Upgrading of Land Tenure Rights Amendment Bill [B6 – 2020]](https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Bills/2020/B6_2020_Upgrading_of_Land_Tenure_Rights/b6-2020-upgrading-of-land-tenure-rights.pdf) to be extended.

The committee heard that virtual public hearings were excluding the voice of the very people the Bill purports to protect. Most of the organisations speaking to the committee appreciated an opportunity to address the committee on the virtual platform. However, some still voiced their concern that people living in rural areas were disadvantaged due to network connectivity, access to data and facilities to present to the committee.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made it challenging for public hearings to be held without putting communities at risk of contracting the virus, and the committee had to ensure that consultation with communities, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, academics, traditional leaders and other stakeholders are consulted and their views are heard.

The committee heard some organisations and individuals call for the individual ownership of land and property, especially for single women with families, whilst the institution of traditional leadership made its case for all rural land to be in communal ownership. More importantly there were many calls for the Bill to include both urban and rural communities as it was high time that people were allowed their right to ownership of land, especially those who have been displaced by apartheid.

A critical question emanating from the public hearings is a question on customary law or practices within families in so far as protection of property rights and tenure security are concerned. Some suggested that the Bill, if passed, must address processes for adjudication and recordal of rights before conversions.

There was a call to address the issues of land restoration and restitution broadly, and therefore the committee must approach the Constitutional Court for an extension of the deadline so that further public participation can take place. However, the ULTRA Bill deals specifically with ownership and rights to tenure security, and therefore the committee has applied for and will continue with extended public hearings until it has exhausted the process of public hearings.

The Chairperson of the committee, Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela, said that “in so far as possible during this pandemic, rural communities must be reached via the Public Education Office and Parliamentary Democracy Offices so that those who are affected can make their inputs into the Bill”.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, NKOSI ZWELIVELILE MANDELA.**