**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**DIALOGUE ON ROLE OF DEFENCE FORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA A NECESSITY**

**Parliament, Friday, 4 September 2020 –**The Joint Standing Committee on Defence is unanimous about the necessity of ongoing dialogue about the kind of defence force South Africa wants and needs, in relation to the funding necessary to capacitate such a force. The committee concluded an informative mini-symposium on the South African National Defence Force’s (SANDF’s) design and related matters.

“This dialogue was necessary to isolate pertinent issues in our work of oversight over the SANDF, especially in relation to the fiscal constraints within which the SANDF operates and the state of the SANDF, as articulated by the defence review. We appreciate the contributions made by invited experts Prof Lindy Heinecken, Dr Moses Khanyile and Mr Helmoed Heitman in dissecting challenges faced by the SANDF,” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Co-Chairperson of the committee.

One of the critical issues raised by panellists is the need for a national consensus on the funding of the SANDF, as there is a mismatch between what the defence force is required to do and the budgetary constraints related to that requirement. The reality is that the current state of South Africa’s economy is poor and the likelihood of an improvement is dependent on various external variables that are outside South Africa’s control.

In relation to personnel, various views were expressed on the balance between short-, medium- and long-term service, which has led to an imbalance between the SANDF’s deployable force and administrative bodies. Similarly, the lack of an exit mechanism contributes to an increase in personnel costs, which is exacerbated by rank inflation. The experts agreed that a robust conversation is needed on the ideal exit mechanism in South Africa’s situation and the funding of those mechanisms.

Another key agreement was that while the SANDF faces massive challenges, some aspects of the defence force function well. However, there is an urgent need to address the gaps preventing optimal functioning.

The committee agreed that solutions to the challenges raised by experts require long-term planning to ensure that the SANDF is fit for purpose. To this end, the committee resolved that the leadership of the SANDF will consider the issues and ways to address them in the short-, medium- and long-term.

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