**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE BRIEFED ON GOVERNMENTS POSITION REGARDING FATE OF COMMUNAL LAND GOVERNED BY TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 16 September 2020 –** The Select Committee on Land Reform, Environment, Mineral Resources and Energy was briefed on restitution by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. The committee was briefed on the government’s position regarding the fate of communal land governed by traditional authorities in accelerating land reform using state-owned land for redistribution.

Briefing the committee, the department indicated that even though communal land is either registered in the name of the state or is considered to be unregistered state land, it is not actually state land. The government’s position is that communal land will play no part in land redistribution, but will rather be transferred to the people who live on it.

The department informed the committee that it is developing policy and legislation in line with the recommendations of the presidential advisory panel on land reform and agriculture, adopted by Cabinet in December 2019. This will clarify the government’s position and provide the necessary institutional framework for future administration of communal land. Relevant stakeholders, including traditional leaders, will participate in the process.

Responding to the presentation, the committee welcomed the government-led development of infrastructure in rural areas, which will assist subsistence farming on communal land and which is critical for food security. The committee questioned if the government has budgeted for this development, but commended the department for supporting farmers, as this contributes to the economy. In addition, it urged the department to finalise the policy and legislation regarding communal land, and requested more interaction with the department on policy and the finances needed to take the process forward.

The committee is of the view that landlessness and homelessness must be address, and the rights of people living in communal areas should be guaranteed.

In state land allocation, the committee welcomed the need to particularly affirm women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Committee Chairperson Ms Tebogo Modise expressed concern about the agri-park model mentioned in the document. “On our assessment during oversight, the model has not proven to be a success and the use of the Land Bank to offer financial assistance is worrisome, considering the financial problems its currently experiencing.” However, Ms Modise said the private-public partnership plan is welcome in an effort to assist the farmers and the community.

The committee also noted the importance of including everyone in the public consultation process when formulating policy. It advised the department that their planning for the transfer of land must consider ways to avoid conflict between communities and traditional authorities planning, and that water rights must also be considered.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON LAND REFORM, ENVIRONMENT, MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY, MS TEBOGO MODISE**