**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**POWERS AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE ACCEPTS LEGAL OPINION ON SONA INCIDENT**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 15 September 2020 –**The Powers and Privileges Committee has today resolved to accept the external legal opinion on the incident which led to the temporary adjournment of the sitting and delay in the presentation of the State of the Nation Address (Sona) address by President Cyril Ramaphosa on 13 February 2020.

The committee further welcomed the appointment of Adv Ncumisa Mayosi as an External Initiator for the enquiry that arises as a result of the alleged disruption of the presentation of the Budget Vote Debate speech by Minister Pravin Gordhan.

The committee was briefed by Parliament’s Legal Services on the legal opinion received from an outside legal counsel regarding the Sona incident. The external legal opinion was expected to clarify two points, whether the conduct by members on the day constitutes misconduct, and whether the Powers and Privileges Committee has jurisdiction in considering this matter as referred to it by the Speaker of the National Assembly.

The legal opinion confirmed that according to Rule 214 of the Rules of the National Assembly, the committee is fully empowered to consider this referral as made by the Speaker.

On the question of contempt of Parliament, the counsel opined that a process must be followed whereby members are given an opportunity to put their versions of events and the committee makes a determination on the question of contempt.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Philly Mapulane, emphasised that the committee was not dealing with the merits or demerits of the Sona 13 February incident at this stage, but was to establish two fundamental issues in the legal opinion of whether or not does the committee have a jurisdiction on the matter, and whether the incident constituted a contempt of Parliament.

The committee was also briefed about the appointment of the External Initiator for the alleged disruption of the Budget Vote Debate speech of Minister Gordhan. The committee accepted the report and welcomed the appointment of Adv Mayosi.

On the issue of Minister Gordhan, Mr Mapulane said members of the committee have viewed the footage and have identified members who disrupted Minister Gordhan. "The External Initiator will assist the committee by drafting charges and the alleged members afforded an opportunity to make representations,” said Mr Mapulane.

The committee heard that Adv Mayosi has sufficient experience for the role she has been appointed for. According to Parliament’s Legal Services, Adv Mayosi has experience in litigation, constitutional processes, and in administrative law. The committee has asked Parliament’s Legal Services’ officials to provide a written profile of Adv Mayosi to members of the committee.

**ISSUED BY PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE POWERS AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE, MR PHILLY MAPULANE.**