**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON IR RECEIVES BRIEFING FROM AUDIT RISK MANAGEMENT**

**Parliament, Thursday, 8 October 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation received a briefing yesterday from the Audit and Risk Committees on the performance of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation in 2019/20.

Since the 2019/20 audit process has not yet been finalised, the committee regarded the briefing as a precursor to the department’s audited annual report. The session was meant to highlight the department’s performance challenges, as well as those of its entity the African Renaissance Fund, relating to the implementation of the recommendations of the Auditor-General and on its implementation of the set objectives in 2019/20.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Tandi Mahambehlala, highlighted that the main challenge with the department’s performance is with internal control deficiencies. “The department’s Audit Action Plan remains inadequate, resulting in some of the actions/recommendations not addressing internal control deficiencies from the audit findings,” Ms Mahambehlala pointed out. “For example, the department is still struggling to find a solution to the overspending on employee costs despite numerous promises to remedy the situation. Therefore, the risk of incurring unauthorised expenditure remains high on this item.”

The committee noted progress in important performance areas. However, it expressed a serious concern about the delay in the conclusion of a skills audit in the finance function. From previous Auditor-General’s reports, it is evident that some of the audit findings result from a skills gap. This is despite the oversight intervention through the committee’s recommendations and the audit queries raised by the Auditor-General.

The committee noted with dissatisfaction that the department is considering engaging external service providers/consultants to perform a skills audit exercise. This was seen as a very slow process and constituting a slap on the face to the portfolio committee’s recommendations and the Auditor-General’s audit outcomes aimed at addressing this root cause of the recurring negative audit outcomes.

The committee stressed the need for a baseline assessment, including a competency assessment for the whole organisation, which will contribute towards redesigning the new organisational structure to strengthen the generally weak internal control systems. It saw the importance of a call for a review of organisational structure, to enable the department to respond to its mandate and deliver on its objectives.

“It is crucial to have an alignment of human resources to the mandate of the department to ensure focused service delivery and break the vicious circle of negative audit outcomes in this department,” said Ms Mahambehlala.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, MS TANDI MAHAMBEHLALA.**