**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COGTA COMMITTEE CALLS FOR MORE FUNDING TO STRENGTHEN THE WORK OF THE CRL RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 18 November 2020** – The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA)**,**(National Assembly), today received a briefing on the 2019/20 Annual Report from the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic (CRL) Communities and discussed the work of the commission.

The committee expressed its concern over the entity being the only one in the CoGTA portfolio that has not attained a clean audit opinion. The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Faith Muthambi, said “compliance findings on procurement remain a stumbling block as the Auditor-General identified the irregularity in the process of appointing internal auditors and in the facilitation of strategic planning”.

The committee raised its concerns over the audit findings which emphasised that the Accounting Officer did not exercise oversight responsibility regarding financial and performance reporting and compliance, as well as related internal controls. The committee also noted that management did not always prepare regular, accurate and complete financial and performance reports based on reliable information. Management also did not adequately review and monitor compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The commission therefore did not attend fully to the committee’s 2019/20 Budget Review Report recommendations which urged it to improve the implementation of its Post-Audit Action Plan to prevent stagnation of the audit opinion. More concerns were raised on the Accounting Officer and the Chief Financial Officer receiving bonuses during the year under review. The committee was not satisfied with the response that it received that these bonuses included their performances for the previous years as well. The committee calls on the commission to strengthen its internal controls and to implement consequence management.

It was also noted that the performance in terms of the Annual Performance Plan has regressed, as the achievement rate of targets fell from 100% in 2018/19 to 76% during the year under review. The committee also noted and commended the commission on its work on public engagement and education which focuses on engaging communities and youth on cultural, religious and linguistic matters. The commission has not only met its target but has exceeded it in relation to educational programmes on CRL Rights Commission’s matters.

To this end the committee expressed it concerns over the ongoing initiation schools during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic and was more concerned about the Eastern Cape continuing with initiations. The commission informed the committee that it was awaiting the regulations prohibiting initiations to be gazetted.

The committee heard that the CRL Commission had met with Prophet Bushiri to discuss labour issues with his staff and complaints it had received. However, the investigation has not proceeded as the Prophet was arrested, released and he later left the country.

The committee also heard that the commission has met with the victims of KwaSizabantu Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and heard their allegations of rape, physical abuse, racial discrimination, virginity testing on girls as young as seven years old, among other acts of human rights violations. The investigation is continuing and the commission will meet with the management of KwaSizabantu Mission.

The commission has engaged various universities to assist and capacitate it with research.

To strengthen the work of the CRL Commission, the committee will support its call to increase funding as the allocation of R45 million is not sufficient for it to adequately carry out its work.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFIARS, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**