**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**POWERS AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE COMMENCES WITH HEARINGS ON INCIDENT THAT TOOK PLACE ON 11 JULY 2019**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 25 November 2020**– The Powers and Privileges Committee today commenced the hearings into the incident that took place on 11 July 2019 during the budget vote speech of the Minister of Public Enterprises, Mr Pravin Gordhan.

The committee began today’s proceedings by considering a request to allow the counsel of the 16 affected Members of Parliament to make representation before the committee on behalf of the Members. The legal representatives raised objections to the continuation of the hearings, citing that they object to the merits of the process of the hearings. The legal representatives requested the committee to accede to the demand made by the affected Members, that the hearings be conducted by a retired judge and/or a practising senior counsel.

The committee informed the legal representatives that the committee is constituted by the National Assembly through the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act. The legal representatives informed the committee that they will challenge the Act and the National Assembly Rules and requested to be excused from the hearings.

The committee was informed by the Initiator that there is no just cause on why the charged Members are not present at the hearings today. The committee resolved to continue with the hearings and proceeded to charge the 16 Members of conduct constituting contempt of Parliament in terms of section 13 (a) of the Act.

The committee also received oral evidence from Mr Collen Vusumzi Mahlangu, the Under-Secretary of the National Assembly Table who was on duty in the mini-plenary when the incident took place. The footage of the incident was played during Mr Mahlangu’s oral evidence to assist the committee in identifying the Members involved in that incident. The committee will continue with the hearings tomorrow.

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