**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT TELLS DEPARTMENT THAT COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS IS NON-NEGOTIABLE**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 2 February 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries today received a briefing from the Auditor-General (AG) on the audit outcomes of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries and its entities for the 2019/2020 financial year.

The committee is concerned that the department received a qualified audit opinion. It is encouraged, however, by the fact that the material findings decreased from the previous year from seven to three findings.

The committee is also pleased to learn that there is an improvement in the working relationship between the AG and the department and hopes that this improved relationship will result in the development and implementation of an audit action plan by the department so that shortcomings and deficiencies can be addressed.

The committee has made it clear to the department that non-compliance with laws and regulations is non-negotiable. Furthermore, it has also informed the department that following the supply chain management processes as prescribed is non-negotiable and that it expects the department to take action.

The committee told the department that there should be consequences for unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure. This is more so as irregular expenditure is currently at R2,6 billion and seems to increase every financial year.

Also, the committee has expressed its pleasure on the appointment of the new Director-General, Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala, and wished her well in her new role.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, MR FIKILE XASA.**