**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT PLEASED WITH IMPROVEMENTS IN AUDIT OUTCOMES FOR 2019/2020**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 26 January 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries appreciates the general improvement in the audit outcomes of entities under the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries for the 2019/2020 financial year.

The committee today received presentations from the South African National Biodiversity Institute, South African National Parks, Isimangaliso Wetland Park and the South African Weather Service (Saws). The committee welcomed their unqualified audit opinions and hopes they will continue to improve until they receive clean audits.

The committee is also pleased to learn that the entities have filled senior management positions and, in some cases, are in the process of filling vacant senior management positions. This is something that the committee had raised before and it is pleased its recommendations are being implemented.

The increase in irregular expenditure as a result of non-compliance with supply chain management processes at these entities remains a great concern. The committee wants consequence management to be implemented against those responsible for this increase in irregular expenditure.

The committee has requested Isimangaliso to provide work skills and development plans, a list of suppliers currently non-compliant with tax regulations, a copy of each grant and what it was used for, and a list of all properties bought and sold by the Park.

The committee is also concerned about Saws employees found guilty of corruption and fraud, who resign before disciplinary processes begin or, in other cases, are finalised. The committee would like a solution to be found that ensures these individuals experience the full might of the law. The committee asked Saws to provide a comprehensive report on these employees and the processes underway to deal with them.

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