**MEDIA STATEMENT

FAILURE TO RESOLVE ICT CHALLENGES AT HOME AFFAIRS CONTRIBUTES TO LONG QUEUES**
**Parliament, Wednesday, 27 January 2021–**The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs has expressed its disappointment in the failure of the Department of Home Affairs to resolve the perennial Information Technology (IT) challenges that continue to hamper its ability to deliver quality services.

The committee received briefings yesterday that included a briefing from the department on its annual report for the financial year 2019-20, and a briefing from the Auditor General South Africa on the audit outcomes of the annual report for the financial year 2019-20 of the department.

The Chairperson of the committee, Adv Bongani Bongo, said: “It is unacceptable that the IT environment has not improved over the past few financial years and is worrying in the context of a department with a vision to be totally automated in delivering services. It is also unacceptable that it has taken this long to fill the position of the Deputy Director-General (DDG): ICT which the committee considers critical in resolving technological challenges at the department.”

The committee highlighted the impact of the lack of improvement of the IT environment and its impact on the war on queues programme. It said the glaring and perpetual long queues that are evident at service points indicate the far reaching implications of the impact of the lack of improvement within the IT environment.

It is further concerning, the committee said, that the long queues are prevalent at a time of the Covid-19 crisis and when they pose a high risk of being super-spreader sources.

Despite this, however, the committee has welcomed the assurance it got from the department of interviewing the shortlisted applicants from today to fill the position of the DDG: ICT. The committee will await a report within a month from the department on progress in filling the critical positions within the department’s IT environment.

The committee has welcomed the achievement of 75% of planned targets over the financial year by the department. While the committee appreciates the department for the achievement of its service delivery targets, it has called for a detailed plan indicating clear timelines on achieving the remaining targets.

Meanwhile, the committee is concerned that the department is stagnating in its audit opinion especially because the matter of emphasis continues to be on material findings on compliance with legislation. To this end, it said, the R284 million in irregular expenditure with R277 million of payments made on the ABIS project must be investigated and concluded. “The committee remains of the view that adherence to key legislation and policy processes is essential in ensuring prudent spending of state resources,” Adv Bongo emphasised.

Also, the committee has expressed its concern over contingent liability that the department is facing as a result of litigations, but it is reassured by the department’s employment of staff within its legal services unit to ensure timely response to legal matters against itself.

The committee welcomed the decrease in fruitless and wasteful expenditure in the year under review. Furthermore, it expressed its appreciation on the department’s move to institute investigations against the alleged perpetrators of fruitless and wasteful expenditure with the aim of recovering the wasted financial resources.

Regarding the investigation on how Prophet Shepherd Bushiri and Mary Bushiri absconded from South Africa, the committee remains committed to getting to the bottom of the matter and will engage other committees within the Justice and Security cluster to get a full briefing from the cluster with the aim of getting reasonable answers on the matter.

Meanwhile, the committee has noted  and welcomed the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi’s apology regarding comments he made during an interview on TV last Sunday which the committee was unhappy about. The Minister told the committee that he respects the committee’s constitutional mandate of oversight over the department and that his comments were in no way an affront to this important mandate.

Regarding the correspondence which the committee Chairperson has received on the matter of alleged fraudulent Corporate Visas issued to new mining companies, Bokamoso and Phenyo mining solutions, the committee has resolved to request the department to suspend the permits that were given to the two mining houses.

Furthermore, the committee has instructed the department to conduct an investigation into the issuance of those permits especially in the context of the allegations of preferential treatment given to these entities and it has given the department a deadline of the end of March 2021 to submit a comprehensive report on the matter.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, ADV BONGANI BONGO.**