**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE WELCOMES DEPARTMENT’S READINESS TO REOPEN BORDER POSTS**
**Parliament, Tuesday, 9 February 2021–**The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs welcomes the detailed plan with responsibilities and milestones presented by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) on readiness to open ports of entry.

Following the humanitarian and health crisis at Beitbridge and Lebombo ports of entry and an oversight visit by the committee to the two ports, a decision was made by the committee that a detailed plan must be developed by the department and its stakeholders to ensure that the reprehensible situation does not repeat itself when borders are opened. “We are satisfied by the plan put in place by the Department of Home Affairs and sister departments at ports of entry. But the committee cautioned that plans are useless if they are not adequately implemented and thus we have called for full implementation of the plans,” said Adv Bongani Bongo, the Chairperson of the committee.

Of critical importance in the plan are the ongoing discussions between the DHA and the Department of Health to finalise the health plan to support the re-opening through adequate resourcing of the testing capacity at both Beitbridge and Lebombo. The committee acknowledges that the department plans to finalise its plan this afternoon and will await a complete readiness report following this engagement.

“Lack of capacity of port health practitioners was one of the leading causal factor of the crisis and the plan to tackle this problem is welcomed. Also, we are satisfied that the implementation of a ticket system will assist in the managemen of queues and will create an environment where social distancing is respected,” Adv Bongo emphasised.

Also of importance is the ongoing interaction with neighbouring countries to ensure synergy and alignment of curfews and the management of traffic through the respective ports. An intergrated approach has always been desirable in resolving the challenges at ports of entry.

While the committee welcomed the plans for the re-opening of borders, it has emphasised the need to adjust the plans for the medium and long term, especially in consideration of the impending Easter weekend movement of people across borders.

Regarding the correspondence the committee Chairperson received on the matter of alleged fraudulent corporate visas issued to mining company Royal Bafokeng Platinum Mine, the committee noted the counsel by the Minister regarding the legal challenges that might arise.

“In principle, we agreed that there is a need to have an engagement with the Department of Labour, legal and the official from the Department of Home Afairs who is accused of fraudulently issuing the permits, to get to the bottom of the matter. The committee remains steadfast that fraud and corruption must be eliminated and that due processes of the law must be followed at all times,” Adv Bongo said.

Meanwhile, the committee received a brieifing from the Minister of Home Affairs on the development of the policy and legislation to amend the Electoral Act to allow independent candidates to participate in the national and provincial elections. The committee has resolved to give the executive time to reflect on the matter and table their proposals when they have concluded their processes. In the meantime, the Chairperson of the Committee, Adv Bongo, has been tasked with iniating a discussion with the Presiding Officers of Parliament to get their support for holding a stakeholder engagement forum to discuss this matter. This decision is in line with the committee’s commitment to engage extensively on the matter.

Similarly, as part of its commitment to open discussion, the committee received a presentation from Mr Mosiuoa Lekota MP on his Private Members Bill, the Electoral Laws Second Amendment Bill [B34 – 2020]. In receiving the presentation, the committee was of the view that it contributes to the general discussions that must be held on the matter.

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