**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE TELLS DEPARTMENT THAT TIME FOR STRATEGIES IS OVER, IT’S TIME FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 3 March 2021 –** The Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure was today briefed by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure on the expeditious opening of shelters for gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) victims and other strategies the department has in place to advance women’s causes.

Leading the department, its Minister, Ms Patricia de Lille, assured the committee about measures taken by her department to hasten the process of identifying these shelters and of preparing them for their identified purpose. She said the shelters can play a significant role in curbing the perpetual cycle of abuse when it comes to GBV victims.

The committee was informed by Ms De Lille that there is a need to urgently establish a task team to attend to this matter in order to respond as quickly as the department can in identifying and in converting these properties into shelters.

The Minister told the committee that the department will engage with the South African Local Government Association (Salga) and have a meeting with Members of the Executive Committees of provinces to make the issue of shelters their standing agenda of all their interactions.

The committee heard that the department has identified 84 properties and 57 of them have been visited. Of those properties, six are in the Western Cape and another six in Gauteng. There’s a realisation that securing of safe houses for the victims of GBVF is a critical intervention.

The committee told the department that the challenge of the immovable asset register remaining incomplete due to the delayed rollout of the ARCHIBUS software is severely hampering this project.

On the delays experienced by the department in signing the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with national departments, provincial governments and municipalities to secure properties for shelters, the committee asked the department about strategies it has in place to speed up this process going forward. In response, the department said that it has learnt valuable lessons in the first phase of this process, it will now come with a much clearer progress report on the MOAs with well over 200 municipalities, 44 districts and eight metropolitan areas.

Minister De Lille told the committee that there is an inter-ministerial committee to oversee transversal mandates to ensure that these shelters are put to good use.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Nolitha Ntobongwana, told the department that one thing that cannot be disputed and that the committee knows is that statistically, South Africa has a high crime rate and has recently experienced a spike in GBVF cases and they are escalating every year.

Ms Ntobongwana added: “What the department has done thus far is a correct start, but we have to intensify our collective effort to curb this pandemic to ensure that women and children are not subjected to this scourge in the future. A fight against this scourge is not a government responsibility, it’s our collective duty. If we assume it as such, we can win this fight, we can win this war against the abuse of women and children.”

The Chairperson emphasised that GBVF requires a multi-pronged, collaborative approach. She said: “GBVF is a component of poverty and inequality. Every single department at every level of government must battle against it as our future depends on winning this war. It is crucial that GBVF is mainstreamed in all government departments."

Furthermore, Ms Ntobongwana said: “It’s well and good to have strategies in place to deal with this dilemma. We have now reached a point where we should not be talking about strategies, but what implementation measures are in place to ensure that we win this war. And we must do so with a great sense of urgency.”

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, MS NOLITHA NTOBONGWANA.**