**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE CAUTIONS AGAINST DELAY IN RELOCATING TO NEW OFFICES**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 17 March 2021 –**In its meeting yesterday, the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation received an update briefing on the relocation to suitable alternative office accommodation for two of South Africa’s missions in New York.

The department informed the committee that 12 rental spaces were viewed, three of which were shortlisted. One of these is preferred and the missions will soon relocate.

The committee cautioned the department against further delay in relocating. Ms Tandi Mahambehlala, the Chairperson of the committee, cautioned: “The current office accommodation is a hospital and the department is the only non-medical tenant. Hence, it becomes even more urgent that relocating the missions in New York to inclusive, decent, safe and affordable accommodation is implemented without delay.”

During its oversight visit in December 2019 to the New York pilot project, the committee wanted to establish why a tenancy agreement that expired in April 2014 was allowed to continue on a monthly basis, at an exorbitant rental cost. The committee had no doubt that the offices had to relocate to suitable alternative accommodation, close to the United Nations.

“However,” said Ms Mahambehlala, “this situation of rentals should be phased out. The department should focus on a strategy for acquiring property abroad, to curb the high, unpredictable and unstable rental costs facing missions abroad.”

The committee reserved its right to satisfy itself that all the necessary supply-chain prescripts were followed in identifying and procuring the new office accommodation for the two missions.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, MS TANDI MAHAMBEHLALA.**