**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE WELCOMES COLLABORATION IN FIGHT AGAINST CRIME AND CORRUPTION**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 16 March 2021 –** The Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services today received briefings from the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (the Hawks) on investigations into the Master’s Office, the Office of the State Attorney and Covid-19-related cases.

These law enforcement agencies have been working together to bring criminals to book in these matters. Committee Chairperson Mr Bulelani Magwanishe commended these joint efforts. “We welcome the collaborated efforts in the fight against crime and corruption. The greatest threat to government is the silo mentality – agencies working by themselves instead of joining forces. This is how more entities and agencies can work in order to strengthen government.”

The committee raised concern, however, with the slow conclusion of fraud and corruption cases against members of the legal profession. In some instances, matters have been ongoing for over 10 years. The SIU said in response that it will continue to try its utmost to speed up such matters. It highlighted financial and human resources constraints as some of the reasons for delays.

The committee heard that there are 138 incidents and complaints of Covid-19-related corruption and the recovery of funds at the Fusion Centre, with 116 under investigation and 22 closed. Of the 124 actual cases registered, 99 under investigation, nine have been closed and 16 are before court, with 33 accused persons.

The committee also heard that the agencies’ investigation teams are under-resourced, meaning, for example, that South African Police Service detectives have insufficient resources to investigate the large number of Unemployment Insurance Fund cases. Further challenges include over-stretched National Treasury capacity due to a lack of co-operation from provincial treasury offices. In supply-chain management (SCM)-related investigations, SCM officers in government departments do not provide all the information requested by the investigating officers. Subsequent requests for the missing information cause delays, which in turn leads to possibility of documents, including invoices, being altered.

Mr Magwanishe highlighted that legislation is an insufficient deterrent. It is the implementation of legislation that will ensure criminals are brought to book. “It is also important to note that both the NPA and the Hawks need more resources to continue the fight against crime and corruption,” he said.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, MR** **BULELANI MAGWANISHE.**