**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE PLEASED WITH FEEDBACK FROM COVID-19 DEBT RELIEF FUND RECIPIENTS**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 17 March 2021** – The Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development is pleased to hear positive feedback from the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) which received the Covid-19 Debt Relief Fund.

The fund was an initiative of the Department of Small Business Development and it was administered by the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (Sefa) and R513 million was allocated to the fund.

Twelve SMMEs were invited and 11 appeared before the committee during a virtual oversight meeting. They gave feedback on how the Debt Relief Fund managed to cushion them from financial distress that came about as a result of the impact of the national lockdowns, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

They are KPL Die Casting, Lapologa BnB, White Hills Trading, Waterfront Guesthouse, Rigana Manufacturing, Bardie Media, Libra Joiners and Interiors, Dirang Mmogo Business Enterprise, VSM Constructions and Tattoo Republic.

Cab for Ventures PTY Ltd could not make it to the meeting and Mvesande Trading said that it did not receive funding, despite having made the application.

Ten SMMEs confirmed receipt of the funds from Sefa and, they all expressed gratitude to the government for such intervention.

According to the department and Sefa, 14 800 fully completed applications for the Debt Relief Fund were received, but only 1 497 were approved.

The approved applications were from those SMMEs that are owned by youth, women and people living with disabilities.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Violet Siwela, said the committee will schedule its own meeting to deliberate on the inputs and proposals in order to come up with an oversight report that will highlight observations and recommendations.

“We heard that repayment is generally a burden to most of the recipients and believe that the department and Sefa should come with a workable intervention. The committee’s role is to ensure that the environment is enabling in order for the small businesses to thrive and grow,” said Ms Siwela.

The committee will continue its oversight on other beneficiaries through a virtual platform because of the current Covid-19 conditions.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MS VIOLET SIWELA.**