**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**AGRICULTURAL AND LABOUR COMMITTEES TO CHART WAY FORWARD ON PLIGHT OF FARM WORKERS**

**Parliament, Friday, 19 March 2021** – The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour in a joint meeting today received a presentation from the content advisors of both committees on “Framing an approach for coordinated oversight on living and working conditions of farm workers, farm dwellers and farmers”.

This meeting stems from the National Assembly resolution of 10 November 2020, which mandated both the portfolio committees to conduct joint oversight activities on the implementation of legislation aimed at improving the living and working conditions of farm workers, farm dwellers and farmers. The committees are also mandated to look at the government’s commitments towards improved living and working conditions in farming communities. This includes work done by different stakeholders in the agricultural sector, an assessment of the impact of legislation affecting farm workers and to make recommendations for legislative amendments.

The committee heard that issues affecting farmworkers, farm dwellers and farmers are multi-faceted and require a coordinated approach from a number of government departments such as Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Health, Education, Transport, Home Affairs and the Human Rights Commission amongst others.

The Chairperson of the Agriculture and Land Committee, Inkosi Zwelivelile Mandela encouraged the content advisors that in mapping the way forward they “must take note of the concerns raised by the members of both committees with regard to food production and food security, and must factor that into the document”.

One of the critical challenges experienced by farm workers and farm dwellers is security of tenure. Inkosi Mandela said: “Farmworkers are forced off the land they work on and forced to live in squatter camps in squalid conditions and the committees must undertake oversight visits these communities.”

The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour will have to report back to the National Assembly by 30 November 2021. Given the prolonged periods of recess due to the elections this year and after engagements with communities and other stakeholders, the committees will decide if more time is required for the submission of the report.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, INKOSI ZWELIVELILE MANDELA, AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR, MS LINDELWA DUNJWA.**