**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**EASTERN CAPE INITIATION SCHOOL FATALITIES CONCERNS COMMITTEE ON COGTA**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 31 March 2021** – The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs has expressed a concern over initiation school fatalities in the Eastern Cape, where 13 initiates lost their lives in December 2020.

The committee had an engagement yesterday  with the Department of Traditional Affairs and the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) on issues of initiation.

The committee heard that fatalities occurred as a result of dehydration and alleged fighting despite the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), and the NHTL’s undertaking to put safety measures in place. Furthermore, the Eastern Cape provincial government had a risk adjusted plan to prevent fatalities.

The committee has asked to be provided with a comprehensive report regarding the fatalities. It said the report should include, among other things, the number of initiates that were discharged with injuries and support given to the bereaved families.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Faith Muthambi, said that the committee should be provided with a report on consequence management in order to make sure that there is accountability on the matter.

The committee is of the view that initiation schools in the Eastern Cape require a serious intervention and that the Provincial Monitoring Team should come and brief the committee about the December incident.

Ms Muthambi said that there also needs to be measures in place to support parents whose children die in the initiation schools. She further said that department of CoGTA should work with the law enforcement agencies to clamp down on illegal schools.

Also, Ms Muthambi said that the department of CoGTA should make a provision to include implementation plan of the Customary Initiation Bill into its annual performance plan as soon as the bill is assented into law by the President.

“Our role as Parliament does not stop with the conclusion of the legislative process, but continues in respect of monitoring and oversight. We will therefore be continuously engaging all the relevant stakeholders as to be kept abreast of developments in the implementation of this important statute,” said Ms Muthambi.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**