**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON LAND REFORM CALLS ON THE DEPARTMENT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH STATE OWNED ENTITIES**

**Parliament, Thursday, 13 May 2021 –**The Select Committee on Land Reform, Environment, Mineral Resources and Energy told the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment that, in light of the economic challenges and budget cuts, the department should work closely with state owned enterprises to streamline their operations and services to ensure continuity of critical services and contribution towards the government’s economic recovery plans.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment appeared before the committee today virtually to brief the committee on its annual performance plan (APP) and budget for the 2020/21 financial year.

The department told the committee that budget allocations to its entities will decrease significantly in the 2021/22 financial year as compared to previous financial year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The committee was of the view that the decline in budget allocation to the entities will have an impact on conservation and protection of biodiversity that does not only have intrinsic value, but contributes to tourism revenue.

The committee said that there is a need to fast-track the eradication and control of Invasive Alien Plants, specifically those directly affecting our limited water resources and water bodies, like the Water Hyacinth.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Tebogo Modies, said: “We welcome the targeted Integrated Permitting System that will assist organisations who contribute to controlling the Invasive Alien Plants through processing them into new and useful products, for example, paper, fertilizers and ornaments.”

In light of the ongoing water shortages across most of the municipalities, waste dumping in water bodies is a continuing challenge such as dumping of disposable nappies and other forms of waste. Ms Modise, suggested that provinces and municipalities should be brought on-board in the waste economy master plan and assist in waste management to protect “our limited resources”.

The committee indicated that the department should work closely with the SOEs performing earth systems observation monitoring to coordinate efforts towards improving the monitoring networks across South Africa. Furthermore, the committee said there is a need to continue to improve and maintain weather and air quality monitoring station networks to enable for timeously production of early warnings to protect communities and infrastructure from extreme weather events, and ensure a healthy environment.

The committee also said that the department should work closely with the provinces and municipalities, especially those with limited capacity, to assist them in developing and implementing their own climate change adaptation strategies.

Regarding the suspension of the SanParks Chief Executive Officer, Ms Modise welcomed the investigation that is within the law enforcement agencies and that someone has been placed in an acting position.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON LAND REFORM, ENVIRONMENT, MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY, MS TEBOGO MODISE.**