**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE WELCOMES CONFIRMATION FROM NCACC OF COMPLIANCE TO ARMS CONTROL FRAMEWORK**

**Parliament, Friday, 14 May 2021 –**The Joint Standing Committee on Defence received the 2020 3rd and 4th quarter reports on all controlled items transfers. The committee welcomed the assurance that South Africa continues to comply with international commitments on arms control.

The achievement of a balance that takes into consideration international obligations, addressing proliferation concerns, preserving jobs within the arms industry as well as ensuring compliance to legislation remains one of the committee’s huge preoccupations. The committee has previously highlighted concerns around the lack of adequate opportunity to engage the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) and it welcomed the chance to scrutinise the report to satisfy itself on the work of the NCACC.

The committee noted the impact of Covid-19 on the defence industry and is hopeful that the lowering of restrictions will aid the rejuvenation of the industry and ensure the preservation of jobs as well as contribute to South Africa’s economic growth. Going forward, there is a recommitment to continuous engagements on the work of the NCACC.

Meanwhile, the committee received a report on irregular expenditure at the Department of Military Veterans for the financial years 2013/14 to 2018/19. The committee is concerned that there was a lack of will by the accounting officer and senior management to implement consequence management within the institution. This led to a culture of impunity and disregard of the Public Finance Management Act, Treasury regulations and delegation of authority regulations. Despite this, the committee welcomes the establishment of the Financial Management Committee intended to speedily deal with cases of irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

Nonetheless, the committee is concerned that lack of capacity within the department is hampering the work of the Finance Management Committee as well as delaying investigations into allegations of fraud within the department.

The committee also welcomes the progress in cleaning the military veterans’ database, a recommendation made by successive defence committees. While the tangible progress should be commended, the committee remains concerned that the process has not been concluded, as this impacts negatively on the work of the department.

Meanwhile, the committee deliberated on the allegations of irregularity levelled against the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans. Following a response from the Minister to the allegations, the committee resolved to elicit further detailed information from the Minister to enable the committee to make a determination on the way forward. The committee will, upon receipt of further substantive responses from the Minister, decide on the appropriate course of action.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, MR CYRIL XABA AND MR MAMAGASE NCHABELENG**