**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE CALLS FOR COHERENCE IN CHARACTERISATION OF VIOLENCE AND LOOTING**

**Parliament, Monday, 19 July 2021 –**The Joint Standing Committee on Defence has called for coherence in characterising what led to the violence, wanton looting and destruction of property over the past week, especially in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. The committee held a briefing with the Minister of Defence and top leadership of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) on the roll-out of Operation Prosper.

The committee believes that the intelligence community must play a critical role in understanding and characterising the disturbance. “The characterisation of the violence will assist in planning and counteracting similar future disturbances. The reality is that the SANDF is projecting spending about R615 million on this project and it is critical that there is clarity and coherence on what this budget is spend on now and what resources are necessary to prevent any future flare-up,” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Co-Chairperson of the committee.

Despite this, the committee welcomed the information that as of Sunday 18 July, 21 525 SANDF members were deployed as part of Operation Prosper. Similarly, the committee welcome assurances that more units are on standby in other provinces that have not yet experienced protest action, so that deployments are proactively positioned when the need arises.

“Since the deployment of the SANDF we have seen laudable calm and stability, which gives us assurances that our security is in good hands. We appreciate the augmentation of the deployed soldiers and are reassured that there will be no similar flare-up,” said Mr Mamagase Nchabeleng, the Co-Chairperson of the committee.

Regarding the impact to the economy, the committee highlighted that there is a need to consider designating the N3 highway and other major arteries as critical infrastructure, to enable better and efficient protection of these roads. When they are obstructed, it affects the heartbeat of the nation’s economy. The committee is cognisant of the recurring nature of disruptions, especially on the N3, and the impact it has on the economy, especially for the movement of goods from the Durban harbour to inland provinces and to the rest of Africa,

“We appreciate the information that there is increased deployment and patrol on the N3 to counter any disturbance. This is critical to the functioning of the economy, especially as the country rebuilds from the devastation caused by Covid-19,” Mr Xaba emphasised.

The committee will visit both KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng on Tuesday and Wednesday to assess the rollout of Operation Prosper and the impact it is having on the ground.

**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**