**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH COMMENDS DEPARTMENT  FOR  PROGRESS ON VACCINATION**

**Parliament, Thursday, 22 July 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Health received a briefing from the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra) yesterday virtually on Covid-19 vaccines pipeline and further findings/data; the use of Ivermectin and an update on the court ruling; and on the application process for vaccine manufacturers.

The committee also received an update from the Acting Minister of the Department of Health, Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi, on the vaccine rollout programme and on variants.

The committee told Sahpra that the entity must ensure that data is made available on the side-effects of current vaccines to mitigate the growing suspicion and hesitancy against vaccination.

Sahpra assured the committee in that regard that it is in a process of collating data in a bid to address that. It told the committee that it has since developed a concept to report on the “adverse events following immunisation and adverse events of special interest”. Furthermore, it said more detailed report on this will be published soon.

Sahpra’s Chief Regulatory Officer, Ms Portia Nkambule, told the committee that a company that produced a vaccine currently in circulation must report the adverse effects of its products weekly and its safety monthly and explain how it will mitigate such.

The department reported to the committee that in order to accelerate the coverage of vaccination, it has since adopted a cluster approach. The committee asked why workers at certain sectors are prioritised than others that are also and equally at the coalface of infections?

The department emphasised that it is guided by the minimum age requirement on vaccination.  Ms Kubayi said: “We learn as we go, and our cluster strategy will be adjusted from time to time. When one strategy does not yield the desired effects, we will innovate and see how best we can conduct our vaccine coverage.” She said as the department they want to have as much vaccines in the health system as possible to ensure that they have a security of supply.

Referring to the Sahpra, the Chairperson of the committee, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, said the committee would be pleased to get regular updates from Sahpra on the progress of vaccines that are in its validation process to mitigate the security of vaccine supply and demand.

He said: “We will continue to engage and we can’t wish each other away on this matter, it is of great concern to all. As a committee we want to ensure that the security of the supply of vaccines is not jeopardised and that we meet our vaccination targets as a country. In the process, we want to quell any untoward perception or suspicion about the important work that you are entrusted with.”

Dr Dhlomo also commended the department for the progress registered thus far and urged the department to work towards meeting the 300 000 daily vaccine coverage target set by the President to ensure that the vaccine coverage is improved and South Africans are immunised to protect them against the coronavirus infection.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO.**