**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COGTA COMMITTEE SUPPORTS DISSOLUTION OF NON-PERFORMING MUNICIPALITIES**

**Parliament, Thursday, 29 July 2021 –** The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) today held a follow-up engagement with Ditsabotla Local Municipality on its responses to questions raised by the committee on the oversight to North West Province in May this year.

On 5 May 2021, the third day of its oversight visit to the province, the committee held a meeting with the Ngaka Modiri Molema District and the local municipalities under its jurisdiction. In this meeting, the Ditsobotla Local Municipality was represented by warring factions, with the Chief Whip of the municipality insisting that the Section 139 intervention team was not recognised by the municipality. The committee did not receive a presentation from the municipality because the mayor was locked out of the municipal precincts by a rival political faction.

The committee felt that this was an outright demonstration of the true extent of instability in the municipality. According to the report from the mayor, Councillor Daniel Buthelezi, the unfortunate situation still prevailed on 10 May 2021, at the time of compiling the report. The report informed the committee that the status of Council remained in question and that there were only three substantive senior managers available to run the whole municipal administration, namely the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Planning and Development.

The Municipal Public Accounts Committee was reported to be dysfunctional due to political infighting. Consequently, no MPAC Oversight Reports have been forthcoming over the past few years. The MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs, Mr Mmoloki Cwaile, has had to seek court relief against the municipality because council has been intent on flouting the law and defying the MEC’s directives.

The section 139(1) (b) intervention team, the lawful mayor and executive committee were still denied access to the municipal precinct. The Chairperson of the Cogta committee, Ms Faith Muthambi, said: “It is now more than two months since the mayor’s report and it is important for us to understand what progress has been made in addressing the political instability in the municipality. The situation outlined in the mayor’s report is not acceptable. We cannot allow the committee’s oversight visit to be rendered a waste of time.

“Under these circumstances, we cannot help but welcome the national Cabinet resolution to dissolve some 45 municipalities across the country. The situation in Ditsobotla makes the municipality a good candidate for dissolution. The municipality has been under Section 139 intervention on numerous occasions, but has never been dissolved. The sooner the MEC implements the Cabinet resolution in Ditsobotla and other identified municipalities, the better. There is no reason for a municipality to exist if its main focus is on fighting internal political battles rather providing basic services to its communities.”

The committee heard from the former mayor of Ditsobotla, Mr Daniel Buthelezi, that he had gone to court in February and that the court had ruled in his favour to be reinstated. Nonetheless, he was denied access to the office. He had seen a social media post wherein he was removed from the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) list without any explanation. He has informed the committee that he was not removed by his party and neither did he violate any code of conduct. He subsequently wrote to the IEC, but it has failed to give him reasons for his removal, apart from it receiving a letter from the municipal manager. Mr Cwaile informed the committee that Mr Buthelezi has not been paid for the past three months and is seeking redress via the IEC. The province will have to wait for the court proceedings, as the issue has been complicated by the removal of Mr Buthelezi from the list.

Mr Cwaile further informed the committee that Section 139 1(b) has been invoked on Ditsobotla Municipality and that there has been an increase on unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure. From the 2016/2017 financial year to date, the municipality has never adopted a funded budget. There has always been a higher revenue target, which has not been achieved. There have been interventions with the Rapid Response Team deployed by national government, however this has not been successful.

MEC Mr Cwaile also informed the committee that as far back as 2016, Clover Dairies had intended to relocate to KwaZulu-Natal due to the close proximity to the harbour. The planned relocation is not solely due to the poor state of the roads and service delivery challenges, such as waste management. This resulted in a loss of 300 jobs affecting about 2 000 people.

The MEC also informed the committee that the equitable share for service delivery was spent on the municipality increasing the number of its employees by employing relatives of managers and councillors.

The committee has resolved to hold a follow up meeting with the Department of Cogta to receive a full briefing on the Cabinet resolution to dissolve the five municipalities in the North West province.

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