**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON ON IR UNHAPPY ABOUT NONAPPEARANCE OF DEPARTMENT’S MINISTER AND ACTING DG**

**Parliament, Friday, 27 August 2021 –**The Department of International Relations and Cooperation delegation was not allowed to present to the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation on 25 Wednesday 2021, because both the Minister and the Acting Director-General were not present and only submitted their apologies at short notice.

The purpose of the briefing was to update the committee on consequence management, especially on cases involving the Director-General (DG) and Ambassador Faisel Moosa, in addition to reporting the department’s and the African Renaissance Fund’s performance for quarters 3 and 4 of the 2020/21 financial year.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Tandi Mahambehlala, said she received apologies from the Minister and the Acting Director-General at short notice. She said: “What is disturbing about both apologies is that the department has been aware of the committee’s programme for more than a month, yet the accounting officer takes leave at short notice.

“The timing of the leave is unfortunate, as it coincides with her responsibilities to account to the committee on matters of the department’s quarterly performance. On the other hand, had the Minister's apology been communicated earlier, alternative arrangements could have been made to accommodate her. Unfortunately, she has not given a possible future date for her briefing to the committee.”

Ms Mahambehlala said she finds the practice unacceptable that at the time when the department has to update the committee on its performance, both the executive authority and the accounting officer are unavailable. “This leaves the committee with no choice, but to link this development to its repeated concern that the department does not respect the oversight role of Parliament. The committee programmes should not be undermined in any way,” continued Ms Mahambehlala.

She said the department has a record of submitting documents to the committee very late and in most cases in a poor state, denying Members of the committee an opportunity to interrogate them to their satisfaction. “We have raised this issue before; it fell on deaf ears. It is an unacceptable and disrespectful conduct by the department and this has to stop, or else we will elevate the matter to the Leader of Government business through the Speaker of the National Assembly.”

While the committee is mindful of its considered call for the department to implement consequences management, this should not be used arbitrarily to target individuals. “We will not allow a situation where consequence management is used as a mechanism to target certain individuals due to other ulterior motives and those that are considered undesirable,” Ms Mahambehlala said. “It does not make sense to have employees suspended over long periods while earning full salaries, thus leading to unnecessary fruitless and wasteful expenditure.”

As a way forward, the committee recommended that the department should furnish it with findings and recommendations of the investigation report on the allegations of the DG’s misconduct, considering that in its oversight report, it has not found that the DG was in any way implicated in the procurement for the New York project. The department should also provide reasons why the committee should not regard the case relating to Ambassador Moosa to be unfair labour practice. This is due to the fact that Ambassador Moosa was suspended after having been charged.

Ms Mahambehlala expressed a concern that when it is not a sanction, suspension is meant for investigation purposes prior to charges being preferred.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION, MS TANDI MAHAMBEHLALA.**