**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE APPLAUDS IEC FOR IMPROVED AUDIT, DESPITE FUNDING CHALLENGES**
**Parliament, Tuesday, 16 November 2021**– After receiving a briefing on the Electoral Commission of South Africa’s (IEC’s) 2020/21 annual report, the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs decried the funding cuts, as this has a direct impact on the IEC’s ability to run free and fair elections. Nonetheless, the committee welcomed the IEC’s clean audit.

“While we are cognisant of the fiscal pressures the country is facing, the risk posed by the funding shortfall on the ability of the IEC to run a free and fair election is tangible,” said Mr Mosa Chabane, the Chairperson of the committee. In the recently concluded local government election, the funding shortfall necessitated just one registration weekend, in comparison to the two in previous election cycles.

Funding cuts and other challenges notwithstanding, the committee applauded the IEC for running a credible, free and fair local government elections. The committee is committed to scheduling an engagement at the earliest available time with the IEC to receive a comprehensive report on the 2021 local government elections.

Regarding the annual report, the committee welcomed the progressive improvement in audit outcomes within the IEC, which led to the entity receiving a clean audit. “While we welcome the improvement, we see this as a foundation for future positive audits. Also, the attainment of a clean audit must also result in improvement in delivery of services, as per their mandate,” Mr Chabane emphasised. The committee appreciates the work done by the IEC leadership to steer it on a straight course, despite the challenges.

The committee remains concerned that the target to register 25 960 000 voters on the voters’ roll was not achieved. The committee is cognisant that this failure occurred in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions and fears, coupled with the funding challenges. This notwithstanding, the committee appreciates the extensive interactions of the Political Liaison Committee, which continues to be a pillar in strengthening our electoral system.

The committee called on civil society and other stakeholders to contribute to voter education, which will strengthen South Africa’s democracy. The low voter turnout during the local government election points to a dire need to heighten electoral education to ensure that South Africans participate extensively in the electoral process and democratic processes in general.

The committee also called for the IEC to strengthen capacity among their electoral staff prior to elections, in order to remedy some of the challenges experiences during the local government elections.

The committee remains concerned about irregular expenditure of R15.6 million, even though this was a 27.5% reduction in comparison to the previous financial year, as this indicates non-compliance with the Public Finance Management Act. The committee acknowledges, however, that the balance of the irregular expenditure was identified by the IEC internal compliance processes and remedial action is already being implemented.

The committee will interact soon with the IEC to address various challenges experienced during the local government elections to find remedies for future elections.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, MR MOSA CHABANE.**