**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY ON 1 MILITARY HOSPITAL REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME**

**Parliament, Friday, 3 December 2021 –**The Joint Standing Committee on Defence finds it completely unacceptable that the Department of Defence and Military Veterans has shown complete disregard and unwillingness to account for the 1 Military Hospital in Tshwane's unending repair and maintenance programme.

The committee scheduled a meeting with both the defence department and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, for an update and accountability on the repair programme. Following a meeting that took place on 2 September 2021, the committee requested briefings from both departments on the hospital's forensic audit report and associated consequence management.

"We are concerned that the defence department failed to brief the committee on the forensic report that they have been sitting on it for about a year, citing that it is yet to be taken through the internal structures due to it sensitive nature," said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Chairperson of the committee.

The committee's concerns are based on the defence department's unwillingness to share with the committee the findings of a forensic investigation into the matter. Also, the department has been unwilling to take action against senior staff members identified to have acted unlawfully in relation to the project.

Despite this, the committee welcomed the Department of Public Works' readiness to be held accountable. It also welcomes its initiation of consequence management, which is a necessary measure to safeguard taxpayers' resources.

The committee remains of the view that the project is an unmitigated disaster, with the state continuing to spend millions in private healthcare due to the delays in completing the repair project.

The committee's concerns centre around the escalation of costs on the one hand, and construction and the cost of medical outsourcing on the other. The cost incurred for outsourced medical services is projected from 2010/11 to 2019/20 to be about R1.086 billion, which is unacceptable. Furthermore, due to outsourcing, the department continues to lose expertise at the facility.

The project will remain a major point of focus for the committee and it intends to get the defence department to account in the near future.

Regarding the long-term solution for the borderline fence, the committee supports a collaborative approach to resolving the porous border fence. The committee also reemphasises the need for an integrated borderline, patrol roads and ICT solutions to resolve the challenges at the borderline. It called on both departments to finalise development specifications aligned to best-practice borderline solutions. The Department of Defence and Military Veterans has to approve specifications aligned to its security mandate.

**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**

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