**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**PC ON HEALTH WANTS THE COMMISSION FOR GENDER EQUALITY TO ENSURE THAT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ARE IMPLEMENTED.**

**Parliament, Friday 11 March 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Health informed the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) that it needs to do much more to ensure that its recommendations are implemented.

Briefing the committee on its report on the investigation into Choice of Termination of Pregnancies in South Africa: 2021, CGE's Chief Executive, Ms Jamela Robertson said the investigation found limited or no monitoring by the National Department of Health (NDOH) of the termination of pregnancy (TOP) services within the nine provinces.

This is deduced from the observation that NDOH could not provide any information on this service and how it is being managed. In addition, the number of facilities reported by NDOH differs from that reported by provinces. The responses received suggests that each province manages TOP services and that reporting structures or requirements to the NDOH appear to be absent.

Amongst its findings, the CGE observed the lack of facilities and trained professionals across provinces which result in backlogs at many of the facilities that provide TOP services. The CGE also found that TOP services are not easily accessible, especially in rural areas with certain districts, regions, and local facilities not providing TOP services.

The impact of this is that members of the public are being denied access to TOP services in these areas. The Commission acknowledged that the unwillingness of healthcare professionals to conduct TOP services due to conscientious objection is regarded as a barrier in rendering the services. It was observed that the department does not have a standard interview questionnaire utilised during recruitment processes. There is no standardised funding model for TOP services across provinces.

Based on these findings, the committee said the CGE needs to ensure that the NDOH is held accountable for the outcomes of its investigations and the implementation of its recommendations.

Committee Chairperson, Dr Kenneth Jacobs, reiterated that the CGE as a Chapter 9 Institution should have more bite in terms of issues that they deal with.

The committee is of the view that the narrative presented did not take into account the Constitutional rights of physicians and healthcare workers. The committee has asked for feedback on how the rights of healthcare workers are being accommodated.

The committee also noted the CGE's response that departments are monitored, subpoenaed and reported to relevant portfolio committees if they fail to implement its recommendations.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, DR KENNETH JACOBS.**

For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the committee's Media Officer:
Name: Yoliswa Landu
Parliamentary Communication Services