**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE CONCERNED BY INGONYAMA TRUST BOARD’S LACK OF BUDGET FOR ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 3 May 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development for the second time today heard the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, explain that the Ingonyama Trust Board (ITB) had submitted its 2022/23 Annual Performance Plan without a budget allocation plan due to a budget deficit. It is not the first time that the ITB has submitted such plans without a budget allocation plan.

The committee mentioned its concerns with the irregular processes, but agreed to proceed with the presentation of the strategic and annual performance plans. The committee also asked the Minister to provide in writing the reasons for the non-submission of the budget and how she will resolve the tabling of the ITB’s budget allocations for 2022/23 financial year.

The Chairperson of the ITB informed the committee that the ITB was in deficit, as the budget it receives is insufficient for its operations. The ITB is not allowed to use the funds in the Ingonyama Trust. The committee resolved to conduct oversight to the ITB with a physical engagement to gather enough information on its operations to come to a determination. The committee emphasised that ITB must account and comply with all legal requirements.

The committee resolved to allow Ms Didiza time to engage with the ITB and to revert to the committee.

Thereafter, the committee proceeded with day one of public hearings on the Agricultural Produce Agents Amendment Bill [B33-2020]. The committee heard from both the Fresh Produce Exporters Forum and the Agricultural Produce Agents Council that the Bill will not assist stakeholders, but rather will be detrimental to its operations, as there will be an increase in red tape, an increase in costs across the value chain, a reduction in market access, limited competition and a skewed playing field for agents and farmers.

The committee informed the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to engage with the two organisations to discuss the risks, so that the challenges in the amendments to the Bill can be addressed so that the economy can be supported to grow and strengthen.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE ACTING CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MS MANKETSI HLAPE.**

For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the committee’s Media Officer:
Name: Sureshinee Govender
Parliamentary Communication Services