**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TIMELINES NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT TEMPORARY RESIDENTIAL UNITS DO NOT BECOME PERMANENT IN KZN, EC, AND NW**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 11 May 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements today received a progress report on the Department of Human Settlements’ response to the floods in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and North West. The committee underscored the urgent need for planning to begin to permanently relocate those affected by floods, to ensure that settlements in housed in temporary residential units (TRUs) do not become permanent.

“While the committee welcomes the information that procurement for the construction of TRUs in all affected districts has been finalised, it has raised the concern that TRUs should not become permanent, as they are intended only for the interim period. Thus, the committee has urged the department to initiate plans to ensure that those affected receive houses within a reasonable timeframe,” said Ms Machwene Semenya, the Chairperson of the committee. The committee was informed that construction of 1 000 TRU units has started in eThekwini, Ugu and ILembe districts and that other construction in other districts will commence in May 2022.

Regarding collaboration in the intervention within the human settlements environment, the committee welcomes the establishment of a joint coordination committee between spheres of government to manage the intervention. The committee also called for enhanced collaboration and communication with affected communities to ensure that they are conscious of the progress in implementing the intervention and challenges, if any.

The committee has highlighted the need to complete the assessment of damages to ensure that planning is comprehensive and budgeted for. While the committee appreciates that some areas continue to be inaccessible due to damaged roads and bridges, it emphasises that ways need to be found to assess and plan for those areas. In line with this, the committee called for the National Home Builders Registration Council to complete the development of an assessment tool for damaged houses in order to ensure uniformity in assessment.

Furthermore, the committee has called for clarity on whether the technical capacity that has been deployed to the provinces is in-house or consultants. The committee is wary of utilising mainly private consultants, as this has the potential to misdirect intervention funds from direct intervention towards consultants. Meanwhile, the committee has also highlighted the need for the disaster to be used as an opportunity to empower local residents in the process of redevelopment with employment opportunities and skills transfer.

The committee also requires further information on the impact of the National Treasury’s decision on the surplus retention of about R282 million pledged by entities within the sector, which the committee was informed will only be made available after September. While the committee acknowledged legislative impediments to making the funds available immediately, it argued that this should not frustrate the intervention and that plans must be put in place to address this problem.

Regarding departmental targets, the committee raised concerns that the department will have to revise performance targets, despite the fact that the National State of Disaster comes with funding. The committee has accepted the argument that the funds have currently not been transferred, but emphasised that the department must give an updated assessment of targets when it receives the funding, to ensure that set targets are met.

Regarding the District Development Model, the committee called for a framework to guide interaction and collaboration between spheres of government to prevent non-commitment to the model. The committee believes that collaboration is critical to resolve the silo mentality prevalent in government and to ensure that performance targets are achieved.

The committee also received a presentation on the Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme and raised a concern that the programme is not achieving its intended mandate of enabling the middle-income category to access housing. The committee has called for the department to enhance engagement with banks to ensure that there is a convergence between the aims of the programme and the funding requirements set by banks.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS. MS MACHWENE SEMENYA.**

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