**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COGTA COMMITTEE RESOLVES TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES REGARDING STALLED MUNICIPAL CASES IN FREE STATE**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 17 May 2022 –** The Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation has raised a serious concern about stalling of cases of alleged impropriety within municipalities in the Free State that arose as a result of various Section 106 of the Municipal Systems Act investigations. As a result of that, the committee has resolved to call all law enforcement agencies within the next two weeks to get a progress report and reasons for the unacceptable delays.

“We are of the view that the delays and lack of consequence management undermine the effort to create a capable state as envisioned in the National Development Plan. The committee deems it important to call the Provincial Commissioner of the South African Police Service, the leadership of the Directorate of Priority Crimes and the National Prosecuting Authority to account on the reasons behind the delays,” said Mr China Dodovu, the Chairperson of the committee.

The committee’s concern stems from the fact that some cases date back as early as 2011. That, according to the committee diminishes the need to fast-track cases on the one hand, and it weakens the fight against corruption and financial impropriety something which confirms a perception of a weak state on allegations of corruption on the hand. For example, the case of the Municipal Manager of Ngwathe Local Municipality who is accused of increasing his salary and approving a once-off payment for himself is still not finalised.

The committee was informed that there are currently 20 cases that are being investigated by the HAWKS and it is of the view that an update is necessary to assess the progress and challenges if any. It has also highlighted its concern about the political instability in some of these municipalities such as Mohokare Local Municipality which has resulted in the delay in commencing the Section 106 investigations.

Meanwhile, the committee received a progress report on the Section 154 support to the municipality and subsequently the court ordered mandatory intervention in terms of Section 139 (4) and (5) of the Constitution at Mafube Local Municipality. The committee welcomed the various successes such as the spending of 100% of capital grants for 2019/2020 which were spent on their intended purpose and thereby extended services such as electricity connections and ensured reliable provision of water services.

The committee has noted that the Provincial Executive has invoked Section 139 (5) (a) & (c) of the Constitution and has requested that it is provided with regular updates to ensure effective oversight. Regarding the Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality, the committee welcomes the information that the municipality is at an advanced stage of an Active Partnering Programme negotiations with Eskom to ensure payment of its debt for services received.

The committee welcomed the progress as it will ensure sustainable and dependable availability of electricity for residents and businesses within the municipality. “We are aware that businesses had threatened to abandon their operations in the municipality which will have resulted in job loses, This would have been undesirable for the people of the area as unemployment continues to affect the people negatively,” said Mr Dododvu.

He added: “The committee urges the leadership of the municipality to continue engaging stakeholders to ensure that decisions made regarding the Active Partnership Programme have the backing of all stakeholders.”

The committee has instructed all parties concerned to speedily finalise the court dispute in relation to the salary levels of the Municipal Manager and the Chief Financial Officer to ensure a refocus on the delivery of quality services to the people of Maluti-a-Phofung who have received poor services for some time.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MR CHINA DODOVU**

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