**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**MULTI-PARTY WOMEN’S CAUCUS INTENDS TO VISIT ALL PROVINCES AS PART OF ITS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE ACTION PLAN**

**Parliament, Thursday, 26 May 2022 –** The Multi-Party Women’s Caucus (MPWC) today adopted its action plan on gender-based-violence and femicide (GBVF). The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Nkhensani Bilankulu, said the committee will be crisscrossing the country in the next few months to engage stakeholders and visit provincial legislatures to strengthen and intensify the fight against GBVF.

Ms Bilankulu said the action plan is informed by the MPWC’s identification of GBVF as a priority focus area, as well as the expressed need for the committee to be a socially based structure that empowers women at all levels, and an expressed need for the committee to conduct oversight and check on progress in relation to reports by various departments on the implementation of the pillars of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF.

Ms Bilankulu said: “The recently assented GBVF laws have encouraged the MPWC to resolve to embark on initiatives in all provinces to empower communities about these laws.”

Prior to adoption of its plan, the committee was briefed by the Department of Justice on its readiness to implement GBVF legislation. Ms Bilankulu said this is part of the preparatory work for the oversight visits. “Acknowledging the importance of partnering with key stakeholders in various provinces as well as being fully prepared prior conducting provincial visits, the committee today engaged with the Department of Justice and Correctional Services on its readiness to implement the recently assented GBVF laws as well as the date of commencement of these laws.

The committee further intends to engage provincial legislatures, municipal councils and women’s caucuses on identification of communities and available relevant stakeholders for the planned initiatives. Ms Bilankulu said relevant stakeholders will include civil society organisations (men’s formations, organisations for persons with disabilities and LGBTQIA+), tertiary institutions, traditional leaders, religious bodies, and any other available relevant stakeholder in the selected areas.

Between July and September, the committee will visit the Eastern Cape, Free State and Gauteng provinces where it intends to conduct empowerment sessions on GBVF laws, conduct oversight on the South African Police Service to check the availability of rape kits, taking of Buccal samples for all arrested for schedule 08 offenses and DNA backlogs.
The committee further aims to visit shelters where victims are accommodated, courts for sexual offences, as well as visiting Thuthuzela Care Centres. Between October and December, the committee intends to visit KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. During the first three months of next year, it plans to finalise its oversight visit by visiting North West, Northern Cape and the Western Cape provinces.

“The committee with its counterparts in the provincial legislatures and in the municipalities will after each provincial visit, engage on issues that came to the fore and identify programmes to pursue in order to deliver practical solutions that will have a positive and lasting impact on communities,” said Ms Bilankulu

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE MULTI-PARTY WOMEN’S CAUCUS, MS NKHENSANI KATE BILANKULU.**

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