**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MAKES SUBSTANTIVE DECISIONS ON ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 12 July 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs today continued to consider the Electoral Amendment Bill and made substantive decisions that will pave the way to drafting the A list Bill, which will be considered by the committee. The committee is satisfied with its work thus far and has arrived at a balance between fairness for both political parties and independent candidates, and the protection of proportional representation.

On definitions, the committee decided that the definitions in the draft Bill of province and region should be retained. The committee also decided that independent candidates must have representation in liaison committees, which are a critical component of electoral work. The committee also agree that these committees be called Political Liaison Committees to ensure that the existing literature continues to be used.

Regarding the prescribed minimum requirements for candidates to participate, the committee decided that an independent candidate must provide at least 50% of the quota for a seat in the previous equivalent election. There was also an agreement that the Bill must include an electronic verification requirement to enable the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) to verify submitted signatures. Also, candidates must pay an election deposit to be determined by the IEC.

The committee today heard that there might be constitutional questions on the requirement of a cooling off period for independent candidates. The committee has decided to maintain within the Bill the requirement for a three-month cooling off period for members of a political party before they stand as an independent candidate.

Regarding the clause on seat allocation, a decision was taken that the Bill should remain with 200 compensatory seats and 200 regional seats, as proposed by the original Bill. This allocation of seats will be achieved through a single-round Droop quota system.

There was consensus that in the event of a vacancy in a seat allocated to an independent in the legislature, the seat should be filled by the next highest available independent candidate or political party. Meanwhile, the committee has deferred a decision on independent candidates participating in one or many regions to its next meeting to enable members to consider advice presented to the committee, especially as it relates to ranking of regions of preference.

As a result of the decisions made today, the committee has mandated the legal teams to commence with drafting the A list Bill including the committee’s decisions for consideration in the next meeting.

Meanwhile, following the decision to receive a summarised version of the Ministerial Committee established to review all permits and visas issued since 2004, the committee raised alarm at the findings presented and has called for urgent action to remedy the shortcomings within the permitting section. The committee’s concerns are based on the vulnerability of the system and corrupt officials, which undermines not only the country’s systems but its security as well.

The committee has in the meantime welcomed the firing of six officials and disciplinary processes against four more. The committee approved the recommendations presented in the report and instructed the department to present an implementation plan with timelines on how it will remedy its weaknesses in the meeting scheduled in Parliament’s third term.

The committee also highlighted the urgency of digitising the department’s systems to ensure the system is secure. This will improve the country’s security too.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, MR MOSA CHABANE.**

**For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the Committee’s Media Officer:
Name: Malatswa Molepo (Mr)**
Parliamentary Communication Services
Tel: 021 403 8438