**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS CALLS FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN DEFENCE AND PUBLIC WORKS ON DEVOLUTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Parliament, Friday, 2 September 2022 –** The Standing Committee on Appropriations held deliberations with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) and National Treasury on progress made in devolving infrastructure maintenance functions. The briefing was a follow-up to the committee’s oversight visits to the Free State and Gauteng.

DPWI informed the committee that a total devolution to the Department of Defence has not happened yet, owning to a request from the Minister of Defence for more time to consider the request, as it was made by her predecessor. Furthermore, for the process to advance, agreement is required from the ministers of Public Works and Instructure, Public Service and Administration and National Treasury.

The Minister of Defence, Ms Thandi Modise, said her department is experiencing challenges in filling finance positions in her department to deal with the financial aspects of the devolution process.

The DPWI informed the committee that at least 10 projects in the design and development stage are currently on hold.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Appropriations, Mr Sfiso Buthelezi, said: “These infrastructure projects are made to create employment, which forms part of the president’s Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan and have implications for small businesses.”

Furthermore, Parliament has appropriated money for the two departments and the two must work together and use the money given by the national legislature effectively.

The committee also raised its concern about the number of buildings leased by the government departments and encouraged a move towards departments taking ownership and maintenance of their buildings. The committee applauded the Department of Defence for opting to maintain their buildings themselves.

The Minister for DPWI, Ms Patricia de Lille said her department is working on a new programme called Refurbish, Operate and Transfer in partnership with the private sector. Ms de Lille said: “We have identified five buildings as a pilot in Pretoria where we are going to partner with the private sector to refurbish and repurpose those buildings.”

The committee also noted with concern reports from the Department of Defence that some of the buildings occupied by soldiers are built on dolomite, which has the potential to subside. Mr Buthelezi added that expecting soldiers to live in these conditions is inconsistent with expectations for an army that defends South Africa’s territorial integrity.

Meanwhile, Ms Modise informed the committee that the SANDF is ready to participate in the clean-up of the Vaal River and has the skills required for the project.

The committee said it will invite the Ministers of Defence and DPWI in two months’ time to provide further progress on the devolution of infrastructure.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, MR SFISO BUTHELEZI.**

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