**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**POLICE COMMITTEE RECEIVES FIRST PUBLIC INPUTS ON TERRORISM AND RELATED ACTIVITIES AMENDMENT BILL**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 7 September 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Police today received various initial inputs in virtual public hearings on the Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorist and Related Activities Amendment Bill [B15-2022]. The committee received presentations from Afriforum, Sussex Terrorism and Extremism Research Network (STERN), and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The process of public consultation and participation is a constitutional requirement that Parliament is obliged to undertake as part of its decision-making processes. The hearings are in line with Section 59(1) of the Constitution, which urges for public involvement in the legislation-making processes. The committee appreciated the inputs received and is hopeful that they will contribute substantially to the strengthening of the Bill.

Despite the hearings starting today, the committee in its meeting last week resolved to extend the deadline for submission of public comments. The new submission deadline is Friday 9 September 2022, which gives individuals and organizations more time to make submissions. Public participation remains an important pillar and central feature of the committee’s work and of law-making, which is why the committee extended the deadline.

The central theme of Afriforum’s submission was that while it welcomes the state’s commitment to incorporating international norms into our domestic law, there is a fear that the Bill is overreaching and a threat to the rule of law and constitutional guarantees. They were also critical of the lack of funding and skills to implement the current legislation, which Afriforum believes will not be addressed by introducing more legislation.

The Red Cross was concerned by the absence of a clause within the Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorist and Related Activities Act to exempt from criminalisation exclusively humanitarian action carried out by humanitarian and impartial organisations. The Red Cross believes the wording of the Bill currently may unintentionally criminalise the provision of humanitarian assistance.

STERN highlighted the importance of remembering that the law is intended to defend democracy and underscored the need to ensure preservation of freedom of expression, association and legitimate opposition.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON POLICE, MS TINA JOEMAT-PETTERSSON.**

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