**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE CALLS FOR BETTER COORDINATION AND PLANNING TO ENABLE UNBLOCKING OF STALLED HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROJECTS**

**Parliament, Thursday, 8 September 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements has called for better planning and coordination between national, provincial and local government as a means to unblock stalled human settlements projects. The committee today received progress reports from KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga on blocked projects and the eradication of asbestos roofs and mud houses.

The committee is concerned that in all areas under consideration there is a clear lack of coordination and cooperation between the three spheres of government, which is causing project delays. “The lack of coordination will inadvertently delay projects which negatively undermine the good intentions of the projects. We are hopeful that the adoption and operationalisation of the District Development Model can assist in aligning plans and budgets of sister departments to ensure that a greater impact is made,” said Ms Machwene Semenya, the Chairperson of the committee.

**KwaZulu-Natal**
The lack of coordination, which has contributed to a lack of bulk infrastructure and stalled projects, reflects substandard planning, and poor alignment of plans and budget to ensure provision of quality services. “It is unacceptable that a project like the Mzingazi project with an estimated 1 000 units in King Cetshwayo District can remain blocked due to lack of bulk infrastructure. The policy decision to move from housing to human settlements was intended to ensure that all services are provided. But it remains concerning that the silo mentality remains prevalent within government departments depriving a thousand beneficiaries from getting quality housing,” Ms Semenya emphasised.

While the committee acknowledges efforts to interact with water service authorities to ensure the provision of bulk infrastructure services, it has called for urgency and decisiveness to ensure that these projects are implemented.

Regarding the eradication of asbestos roofs, the committee is concerned that there is lack of credible information to quantify the number of asbestos roofs in the province. While the committee welcomes the commencement of an assessment programme to quantify the need, the lack of information is a worry and impedes speedy development.

The committee welcomes the plan to eradicate 2 224 mud houses in the province at a budgeted cost of R397 705 000. “The need for the eradication of mud houses is even more pressing with the increased dangers caused by unpredictable weather patterns caused by global warming. We urge the department to implement the plans as presented,” Ms Semenya emphasised.

**Limpopo**
The committee welcomes the information that the Ministerial War Room’s intervention on blocked projects has resulted in a reduction from 478 projects to 161. Despite this information, the committee has called for long-term solutions to challenges such as the non-performance by contractors, contract lapses and terminations. These solutions should protect the state from payment of services when contractors have not met service level agreements.

Nonetheless, the committee has urged that structural integrity assessments on blocked projects older than five years are completed to ensure that the stakeholders plan adequately to unblock those projects.

As in KwaZulu-Natal, the committee was displeased by the lack of data on houses with asbestos roofs, as this delays the implementation of the eradication programme. The committee emphasised the need to conclude the assessment project so that the project can proceed.

The committee was critical of the Limpopo provincial government after hearing that no serviced sites were delivered by the end of August 2022, despite a target of 6 055. The committee was very disappointed with this, as it deprives a segment of society of an opportunity to build for themselves on serviced sites. The committee has urged the department to remedy this and move with speed to implement this programme.

**Mpumalanga**
The committee welcome the information that the provincial government has set aside budget to implement the asbestos eradication programme, but is concerned that the R20 million allocation is too small, considering the 10 000 roofs on the list already presented by municipalities. The asbestos backlog will be greater when the other nine municipalities submit their list. A bigger budget allocation is required.

The committee has called for planning for the outer years of the medium-term economic framework to ensure that funding is set aside to complete the project.

Regarding the eradication of mud houses, the committee is concerned that Mpumalanga has not quantified the challenge in the province or commenced with a programme to quantify mud houses in the province despite the admission that due to the province being a rural one there is a prevalence of these structures there. The unavailability of this data impacts on the ability of the province to plan and budget effectively.

Regarding blocked projects, the committee is concerned about the challenge presented by the business forum in the Govan Mbeki municipality. Also, the committee raised concerns that there is no approved beneficiary list linked to the blocked projects. This creates immitigable risk for the future of the projects.

Despite some of these challenges, the committee has called on the stakeholders to redouble efforts to ensure the completion of projects.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MS MACHWENE SEMENYA.**

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