**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COLLABORATION BETWEEN DHA AND UNHCR CRITICAL IN ERADICATING ASYLUM-SEEKER BACKLOG**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 21 September 2022**– The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs has welcomed progress in clearing the asylum-seeker appeals backlog, which currently stands at 133 582. The committee is hopeful that the project partnership agreement between the Department of Home Affairs, through the Refugee Appeals Authority of South Africa (RAASA) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, will deliver its intended objectives and that RAASA will not experience any further backlog.

“The clearing of the asylum-seeker backlog will go a long way in securing the rights of those genuinely requiring protection in South Africa. Also, it will entrench South Africa’s position in the promotion and support for human rights as advocated by the United Nations,” said Mr Mosa Chabane, the Chairperson of the committee.

The committee welcomes assurance that the four-year project partnership agreement at an estimated cost of R146 784 million will provide the necessary capacity support that RAASA needs to clear the backlog. While the committee acknowledges that the number of appeals decided since the project was launched remains low, with 450 decisions having been made and 284 incomplete files returned to the DHA, it remains hopeful that the appointment of RAASA’s new Chairperson will go a long way in driving the project.

The committee welcomed the digitisation of all records to enhance the adjudication process and reduce the potential of loss of records. The committee has urged for full digitisation to ensure speedy processing and streamlined processes.

Meanwhile, the committee welcome the full reopening of refugee reception offices across the country, with the exception of the Cape Town office only awaiting finalisation of the new office. The committee also called for the continuation of online extensions to reduce the volume of clients visiting offices in person.

Meanwhile, the committee received a presentation from the Congolese Civil Society of South Africa touching on various issues affecting refugees and those seeking refuge in South Africa. The committee has resolved to raise some of those concerns with the Department of Home Affairs and will after receiving concrete responses from the DHA interact with the civil society group.
**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, MR MOSA CHABANE**.

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