**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE WELCOMES DEPARTMENT’S SIXTH UNQUALIFIED AUDIT OPINION, BUT THE QUALITY OF SERVICES STILL NEEDS TO IMPROVE**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 19 October 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs has welcomed the Department of Home Affairs’ sixth unqualified audit opinion, which indicates improved governance. However, the committee also emphasised the need for the department to improve its frontline services. The committee received annual reports from the department and the Government Printing Works (GPW).

In line with the drive to improve services, the committee welcomed the Minister of Home Affairs’ assurance that the department is investing more in mobile trucks to ensure that the department’s services reach more areas. The committee also urged the department to increase the roll-out of the branch appointment booking system, which promises to be an effective tool to reduce the long queues at Home Affairs offices.

The committee also welcomed the announcement that National Treasury has allocated additional funding to fill 742 vacancies in Home Affairs, which will help with service delivery. Meanwhile, the department’s ongoing challenges with the State Information Technology Agency and its computer technology requires refocus and renewed efforts to fix it.

The committee welcomed the department’s reduced fruitless and wasteful expenditure, from R640 000 to R153 000. However, consequences for those found responsible for fruitless expenditure are required to ensure that in the next financial year there is no fruitless expenditure. The increase in irregular expenditure is another cause for concern as this indicates procurement policies are being undermined.

The committee accepted the department’s explanation that due to Covid-19 there is a backlog in issuing skills and other visas. The department assured the committee that it now has more capacity to increase the speed of the visa adjudication process.

The committee resolved that the department must give the committee regular updates on audit action plan implementation to ensure that the matters of emphasis are reduced.

Regarding the data loss at GPW, the committee is concerned that the entity continues to imply that the data crashes were caused by a power disruption, despite a ministerial investigation that found to the contrary. The committee was also not pleased with the GPW’s tardiness in implementing risk-mitigating processes within the ICT environment but heard that vacant ICT positions will be filled by March 2024. However, the committee considers this deadline too far off in the face of GPW’s challenges. The committee urged the entity to heighten its focus on resolving its ICT challenges and to provide a regular update to the committee.

**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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