**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**USING TECHNOLOGY AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER IS NECESSARY TO DEFEND OUR BORDERS**

**Parliament, Friday, 21 October 2022 –** The Joint Standing Committee on Defence has emphasised the significance of investing more in innovative technological interventions as force multipliers to enhance the work of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to safeguard South Africa’s borders.

The committee received an update on the implementation of Operation Corona, which has the mandate of defending South Africa’s territorial integrity. “The committee is acutely aware of the serious capacity challenges impacting the operation negatively, but supports fully the intention to incrementally bring into play sensors and radars as a force multiplier in the medium term,” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Co-Chairperson of the committee.

The challenge of lengthy procurement has been highlighted as a general impediment to the SANDF’s work. The committee urged SANDF senior leadership to work with the National Treasury to find solutions to ensure that this ongoing problem is resolved and that capabilities are made available to deploy soldiers on the ground.

The committee also highlighted the need for the SANDF to work with related government departments at all levels to find solutions to the infrastructure challenges on the border, such as poor fencing, patrol roads and access routes. A collaborative effort is necessary to remove the impediments that make it difficult to safeguard our borders.

Deployed soldiers’ morale should also receive proper attention, as this impacts negatively on operations. In line with this and in full awareness of funding shortcomings, the committee called for improved facilities within the deployment area to enhance morale.

The committee welcomed the signing and implementation of operational protocols between the Department of Defence and the Border Management Authority to regulate effective cooperation at borderlines. The committee also welcomed the assurance that the cooperation has been effective thus far and urged further cooperation. “The porous nature of our borders requires cooperation by all stakeholders to ensure success. The committee has called for enhanced cooperation within the security cluster to find solutions and ensure efficiencies at the borderline,” said Mr Elleck Nchabeleng, the co-Chairperson of the committee.

The committee acknowledged the work done by the security cluster at the borderline despite varied challenges. The committee emphasised the need for continuous improvements to ensure South Africa’s territorial integrity on land, air and maritime borderlines.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, MR CYRIL XABA AND MR MAMAGASE NCHABELENG**

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