**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SOUTH AFRICA MUST MAKE FIRM RESPONSE TO US, FOLLOWING TERROR ATTACK ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, feels South Africa’s response to an announcement by the US Embassy in South Africa of a terror attack in Johannesburg is inadequate. A firmer response is required, he believes.

“A week ago, there was an announcement by the US, without following South African protocol. I am not sure if the response by South Africa was adequate. We expected a call from our President to the US President or a formal meeting between the two countries on the matter.

 “We need something more tangible than the statement than the incident was ‘unfortunate’. We need a firmer position on what the US has done. There must be a meeting to clarify South Africa’s stance on this matter,” the Chairperson said. The terror threat announcement affected business negatively, with the tourism and public transport sectors the worst affected, because of fear and anxiety, he continued.

Today, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) appeared before the portfolio committee to brief it on the structured bilateral mechanism between South Africa and the US. DIRCO Deputy Minister Ms Candith Mashego-Dlamini assured the committee that cordial bilateral relations between South Africa and the US continue to gain momentum and have increased significantly this year. All three structural bilateral mechanisms have been met and President Cyril Ramaphosa has made a working visit to the US.

In a detailed presentation to the committee, the department describes the US as a major economic and development cooperation partner for South Africa. It is also an important export market for value-added goods, a source of foreign direct investment, of technology and also of tourists.

DIRCO says the South Africa-US bilateral relations cover a wide spectrum of issues aligned to South Africa’s domestic priorities and the National Development Plan. These include health, education, environment, agriculture, energy, science and technology, and safety and security.

“There is better synergy with South Africa’s desire for inclusivity and preference for rules-based outcomes in international institutions such as UN, G20 and the WTO. The US is willing to assist South Africa’s economic recovery, support for the African Continental Free Trade Area, innovation and advancement of the digital economy and the just energy transition,” said DIRCO.

Mr Mahumapelo said it is difficult to ignore the US, because of the strategic role it plays in global politics and the size of its economy. “The US has the responsibility to normalise relations with states that agree with it, but also with countries that don’t agree with its policies. US enemies cannot be our enemies.

“If we not going to accelerate development of Africa as a global economic force, countries like the US will continue to undermine us. We need a much better and firmer Africa in as far as global affairs are concerned. As a country, we need to up our game not to allow anyone to come to our country and do as they please and undermine our sovereignty,” said Mr Mahumapelo.

**Sakhile Mokoena**