**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMENDABLE PROGRESS IN ERADICATING BACKLOGS IN HOME AFFAIRS BUT CONCERNS REMAIN WITH PERMITTING AND VISA ENVIRONMENT**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 14 March 2023 –** The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs has raised serious apprehension with challenges and backlog that persist within the section dealing with Permanent and Temporary residence applications. The committee today interacted with the Department of Home Affairs on the backlogs in various environments within the department.

“We have noted the interventions implemented to deal with various backlogs, but we remain concerned that the permitting environment continues to struggle to deal with its backlog. While we welcome the intention to hire additional human resources to resolve the challenge, the committee has highlighted the necessity of digitising to speed up the process and make it more reliable,” said Mr Mosa Chabane, the Chairperson of the committee.

The committee was informed that there are 49 529 permanent residency applications of which 40 365 are backlog cases. Also, there are 75 814 temporary residence applications of which 55 1732 are older than 8 weeks. The committee is concerned the impact these backlogs have on the drive to increase foreign direct investment and contribute directly to the growth of South Africa’s economy while contributing to the eradication of unemployment. While the committee accepts that the delegations and standard operating procedures has been submitted for approval, which is expected by the end of March 2023, the committee calls for the speedy implementation of these new delegated authority and Standards Operating Procedures.

The committee further welcomes the assurance that the 61 DHA officials who are due for a foreign office deployment will also assist with the reduction of the backlog. But the committee has emphasised the importance of the eVisa regime to reduce turnaround times and ensure greater efficiency. Despite this, the committee has requested that greater care be taken to ensure that the reduction in delegation and adjustment of SOPs, does not result in undermining of systems and the entrenchment of corrupt elements especially because of the security element to the work done by the DHA.

Meanwhile, the committee has welcomed the implementation of the track and trace interventions within the civics environment aimed at improving the departments effectiveness.

The committee remains of the view that the digitisation of records at the department will play a critical role in resolving the many challenges within the department and has called on the department to conclude its digitisation process and implement it fully.

Regarding the backlog at the Refugee Appeals Authority of South Africa, the committee welcomes the information that the authority has resolved some of the challenges that impacted the implementation of the backlog eradication plan, including incrementally digitising files to improve efficiencies. The committee has urged the authority to conclude the recruitment processes of critical staff including that of the appointment of a Project Manager who will coordinate the Backlog Project, and the appointment of four Refugee Appeal Officers or Case Workers to assist the Members administratively in other regions. It is also critical to conclude the recruitment of (5) legal secretaries to support Members to speed up writing decisions.

The committee has recommitted to monitoring the backlogs across the various environments to ensure that the department delivers on its mandate,

**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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