**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Defence Committee Demands Denel And SANDF To Meet To Thrash Out Concerns On Denel’s Ability To Support SANDF**

**Parliament, Friday, 17 March 2023**– The Joint Standing Committee on Defence called on Denel to meet with theSouth African National Defence Force (SANDF) commandto thrash out concerns raised about the ability of the defence arms manufacturer to effectively support the sovereign and strategic capabilities of the SANDF.

The committee met with the board and senior management of Denel together with the Minster of Defence and senior management of the SANDF yesterday to assess the ability of Denel to support the national army following the Medium-term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) allocation.

While the committee noted the striking turnaround strategyespecially in relation to the R3.1 billion additional allocation for the procurement of prime mission equipment and technology that will serve as a force multiplier in internal and external operations, as well as repair and maintain navy defence systems to improve maritime security, it remained concerned that there is uncertainty on the ability of Denel to deliver on its mandate as the entity implements its turnaround strategy.

“We remain concerned that there is a seeming disjuncture between the expectations of the SANDF and Denel’s ability to first maintain critical Prime Mission Equipment and develop capabilities that will ensure that the SANDF’s operational readiness to execute its National Securitymandate. It is on this basis that we agreed for an urgent meeting of the Project Control Board so that these challenges can be discussed and resolved,” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Co-Chairperson of the committee.

The committee was steadfast in its commitment to ensure that the SANDF is operationally ready for deployment and has the capabilities it needs to deliver on its mandate. In its meeting two weeks ago the committee highlighted its concern that the lack of spares was negatively impacting on the platforms and capabilities of the SANDF. Furthermore, the lack of capabilities and equipment was highlighted as one of the pillars that negatively impacted on the morale of soldiers.

While this meeting is not expected to reach consensus on all areas, the committee underscored the need to find workable solutions especially in areas where Denel is the Original Equipment Manufacturer of PME for the SANDF. Also, the committee expects clear timelines on the implementation of those solutions to be in a better positionto oversee implementation.

The committee will urgently convene a meeting following the envisioned engagement of the Project Control Board to receive and assess the suggested solutions. It remains of the view that Denel plays a central role in sustaining the defence industry, for the retention of jobs of the employees and for the creation of more employment opportunities.

It is in this light that the committee has called for the full implementation of the turnaround strategy to ensure the continuation of the provision of support to the SANDF. Regarding funding on domestic defence research and development, the committee supports investment into defence research especially the utilisation of technologicalcapabilities as a force multiplier. The committee also raised concerns on reduced spending on SANDF given the strategic importance of the national army.

Another concern which the committee highlighted wasstagnation, especially in areas where the country is leading in terms of defence technology. Apart from that, the committee has committed to enhancing its oversight role on the defence research and development to ensure increasedproductivity and delivery of quality products.

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

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