**MEDIA STATEMENT

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE WELCOMES PROGRESS ACHIEVED BY COMMISSION ON RESTITUTION OF LAND RIGHTS TO SETTLE CLAIMS**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 24 May 2023 –** The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development received a briefing from the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights on the progress achieved to settle and finalise land claims in terms of the old order from 1995 to 31 March 2023. The commission also provided a status report on the submission of the report to the Land Claims Court.

Presenting an overall report on the claims lodged before the cut-off date of 30 December 1998, the Chief Commissioner, Ms Nomfundo Ntloko-Gobodo, said the commission has settled 82 976 claims in all provinces. This cost R53 billion in total, of which financial compensation cost R22 billion, the acquisition of land cost R25 billion and grants R5 billion.

Furthermore, the commission has settled over 3.8 million hectares to the benefit of 2.3 million beneficiaries, including 175 000 female-headed households and 1 246 people living with disabilities. Of claims finalised between 1995 and 2013, Ms Ntloko-Gobodo said 59 712 claims were finalised across all provinces from 1995 to 31 March 2013.

The committee heard that the commission has finalised 65 410 claims from 1995 to 2023. The commission also provided a status report on the Lamosa II judgement. Ms Ntloko-Gobodo reported that the commission must submit reports to the Acting Judge President of the Land Claims Court on a six-month basis in compliance with the Constitutional Court order dated March 2019 (LAMOSA II judgement).

As part of the order, the commission is obliged to submit the number of outstanding old order claims in each of the commission’s administrative regions. The commission is also obliged to submit the anticipated completion date, including short-term settlement targets; a description of any constraints, including budgetary constraints, that may prevent the commission from reaching its completion target dates; and a list of solutions implemented or considered to address these constraints and any additional matters the court may direct, until all old order claims have been processed.

Ms Ntloko-Gobodo told the committee that the commission has successfully submitted seven reports in line with the court order. The latest report was submitted on 24 January 2023. Concluding its presentation, the commission listed several current challenges. One of these is that the budget, which is insufficient to make an impact on the goal of accelerating the settlement of the outstanding old land claims.

Responding to questions from the committee, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mr Mcebisi Skwatsha, said the department is considering making an assessment on the way forward, which will be presented to Cabinet, to seek a way forward in relation to the required human and financial resources.

In welcoming the presentation, the committee applauded the commission for the work it has done thus far and for obtaining a qualified audit report. The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela said: “I truly believe that the only manner where we will be able to fast-track this is for us to implement expropriation of land without compensation and in doing so, we will be able to address this gross and grave injustice and ensure that land hunger is corrected.”

Parliament weighs heavily on the department to ensure that they are in full compliance of the court order and expect a programme outlining how it intends to address all outstanding claims and its related issues and challenges, Chairperson said.

The restitution of land rights and its related claims is a fundamental pillar of restorative justice envisaged by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and whilst we welcome the immense progress made by the Department and the Commission on Land Claims in concluding outstanding pre 1998 claims as per the Constitutional Court order any such outstanding claims delays restorative justice for post 1998 claims, Chairperson said.

In view of this, Parliament urges the department to address this matter with the urgency it deserves and reaffirms the importance of a programme and timetable for settling all outstanding old order claims, Chairperson added.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, NKOSI ZWELIVELILE MANDELA.**

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