**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JOINT DEFENCE COMMITTEE URGES DOD TO SPEND BUDGET ON TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE BORDER SECURITY**

**Parliament, Friday, 26 May 2023**– The Joint Standing Committee on Defence has raised alarm that procurement challenges have contributed to the fact that the Department of Defence has not spent resources allocated for the procurement of technology that would act as a force multiplier to safeguard the border. The committee yesterday received an update briefing on the current situation with Operation Corona.

“The committee has previously welcomed the intention to deploy technological capabilities as force multipliers and has fought for allocations to be made available to that end. The inability to procure negates the good plans and does not aid the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in its operations along the borderlines. It is on this basis that we urge the SANDF to streamline procurement processes and remove any impediments,” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Co-Chairperson of the committee.

The SANDF was allocated about R225 million for the procurement of vehicles and border technology, capabilities that the committee views as strategic in delivering the difficult task of safeguarding the borderline. Despite this challenge, the committee has acknowledged the work done by the SANDF to protect the border, albeit in difficult conditions.

The committee welcomed the announcement that notwithstanding the general procurement challenges, the SANDF has procured three new multimission patrol vessels in the medium term, with the first to be operationally deployed in 2023. The committee believes this will enhance maritime safeguarding. Efforts to deploy technology in the form of sensors and radars must receive greater focus going forward.

The committee has encouraged the intention to optimise collaboration between government departments such as the South African Police Service and the Border Management Authority to mitigate capacity shortages.

The lack of adequate infrastructure to deter cross-border crimes remains a concern. The committee has called for collaboration between government departments, such as the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, to ensure the development of adequate border fences and patrol roads, which will enable better safeguarding.

The committee encouraged the soldiers deployed at the border to continue their impressive work as work is done to improve conditions and capabilities that will assist in the delivery of the mandate.

**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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