**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE WELCOMES BRIEFING ON INGONYAMA TRUST BOARD FROM MINISTER DIDIZA**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 6 June 2023 –** The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development received a briefing today from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development on the overall mandate of the Inter-Ministerial Task Team (IMTT) on Ingonyama Trust. The committee also heard about the scope of work the task team covered in dealing with Ingonyama Trust.

Briefing the committee, the Minister of the department, Ms Thoko Didiza said, the IMTT was formed on the basis of the recommendations of the Parliamentary High-Level Panel on the Assessment of Key Legislation and the Acceleration of Fundamental Change, which was led by former President Kgalema Montlanthe.

Ms Didiza told the committee that in 2019 there was a heightened public discourse on a policy recommendation regarding the possible expropriation of land without compensation. She said in view of the High-Level Panel’s recommendation regarding the possible repeal of Ingonyama Trust Act, there was a suspicion amongst traditional leaders in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) that there was a link between the Panel’s recommendation and the possible expropriation of Ingonyama Trust land without compensation.

According to Ms Didiza, that led to a brief meeting between the late King Goodwill Zwelithini and President Cyril Ramaphosa where they agreed to further engagements. Following the meeting, President Ramaphosa established the IMTT, comprising of a few Cabinet Ministers and the Premier of KZN to start the preliminary discussion with King Zwelithini. The preparations included addressing concerns that were raised regarding a supposed government position with respect to Ingonyama Trust.

Minister Didiza said the IMTT noted that issues raised in relation to Ingonyama Trust were broader issues of land tenure and land administration that had become unnecessarily politicised.  She said the view was that government needed to initiate a macro policy and legislative review that would culminate in the promulgation of a law of general application that would improve security of tenure across the country.

Minister Didiza added that Ingonyama Trust appeared to experience governance related challenges. The task team took the view that the supervising Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development had to help Ingonyama Trust to deal with such challenges. The committee heard that the Minister initiated consultations with King Zwelithini and other relevant parties for the appointment of a new Board. A nine member Interim Board which included one person from the previous Board was appointed in 2020.

The committee was told that at least two workshops were held with the Board to ensure that there was a common understanding on its mandate. The Board is currently dealing with few matters of concern that included litigation against the Trust; disbursement of funds to beneficial communities; transfer of R293 townships; the surveying of Ingonyama Trust Land and how Surveyor Generals can assist the conclusion of the process; financial management and budgeting and the Ingonyama Holdings.

The committee was concerned about the department’s oversight mechanisms over Ingonyama Trust and its Board. “This committee and the previous Ingonyama Trust had somehow reached a deadlock about accountability to Parliament. The Board refused to account on the affairs of the Trust, citing the fact that PFMA does not apply to the Trust,” the Chairperson of the committee, Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela said.

Nkosi Mandela continued: “This committee also believes that the Trust is accountable to Parliament on all its affairs through Ingonyama Trust Board. As the committee we will continue to play the oversight role over the Board.”

**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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