**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**ACTING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON COMMENDS ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 9 November 2021 –** The Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries today applauded Isimangaliso Wetland Park Authority for achieving a 100% performance against the 61 targets set for the year despite the restrictive lockdown regulations which impacted on the entity.

In most instances the entity exceeded the targets. Significantly the Isimangaliso Wetland Park borders the Umkhanyakude and King Cetshwayo districts where the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality are rife. The park has proven to be an employer of choice in the area as its staff turnover is less than 10%.

The acting chairperson of the committee, Mr Pogiso Modise commended Isimangaliso for thinking 'out of the box" during the Covid pandemic and by controlling access and limiting visitors, the park remained open and still managed to exceed visitors by 95 000 and was able to increase its revenue from the R6,2m to R11,3m.

The Portfolio Committee received briefings from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and Isimangaliso Wetland Park Authority on the Fourth Term Quarterly Report for 2020/21 financial year.

The committee heard that SANBI has improved its performance from 67% in the 2019/20 financial year to 81% in the 2020/21 year creating 1527 jobs in the process.

Committee members further noted that Isimangaliso Wetland Park is largely reliant on grant funding to sustain itself and during the year under review it spent 95% of its budget given that the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions impacted on many of its programmes. Additionally, the entity exceeded the number of hectares of alien plants treated from the target of 30 000 to 56 956 hectares due to additional funding received from the Department.

The committee is satisfied with the performance of the Isimangaliso Wetland Park Authority and further notes that the authority received an unqualified audit opinion.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE ACTING CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, MR POGISO MODISE.**

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