**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**BASIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE CONCERNED ABOUT EFFECTS OF LOAD SHEDDING ON MATRIC EXAMS**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 9 November 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education today expressed grave concern regarding the lack of electricity supply and load shedding during the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Grade 12 examinations, which are currently under way.

It is not only the actual exams that are affected, said committee Chairperson Ms Bongiwe Mbinqo-Gigaba. "It also impacts on the learners' preparations for the examinations. It is particularly concerning with the National Senior Certificate examinations."

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) informed the committee today that the Director-General has already requested an urgent meeting with the Eskom CEO, which is expected to occur in the next few days. The committee was assured that it would be appraised of the outcome of the meeting in order for South Africans and learners to have some form of certainty.

The DBE today briefed the committee on exam readiness, reminding it of the challenges faced by the class of 2021. Rotational attendance in 2020 due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that this class has lost a lot of learning and teaching time. Consequently, the 2021 matriculants have had to make up the curriculum that was not completed last year. Furthermore, the class also started the year later, once again due to the pandemic.

The committee was assured that with additional programmes, such as autumn and spring vacation schools, the sector has tried to make up for lost learning time. Some 20 days were gained through this programme, combined with e-learning and revision.

The November 2021 NSC examinations began on Wednesday, 27 October 2021, and will conclude on Tuesday, 7 December 2021, for 897 786 students – 735 677 full-time and 162 109 part-time candidates. They will sit for their exams at 6 326 public examination centres, 526 independent centres and 326 designated centres. The Minister is expected to announce the national results on 20 January 2022, with results made available at schools a day later.

On its verification of the state of readiness to assure the quality of the NSC examinations, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) said staff shortages are a national challenge. Filling vacancies remains a systematic challenge, exacerbated by the current budget cuts. However, provincial education departments (PEDs) have put measures in place to ensure that examination deliverables are not compromised.

The committee heard that Umalusi has evaluated the DBE/PEDs' state of readiness to administer the exams and found that all measures are in place to ensure credible 2021 November NSC examinations. Umalusi appreciated the DBE's and PEDs' efforts to address the challenges raised by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba said all indications are that concerns highlighted during the assessment to check on readiness have been addressed. "All indications are that the DBE and its PEDs will be able to deliver quality results and fair examinations.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION, MS BONGIWE MBINQO-GIGABA.**

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