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| **MEDIA STATEMENT**  **COMMITTEES CONFIDENT IEC IS READY TO HOLD CREDIBLE, FREE, AND FAIR ELECTIONS** **Parliament, Friday, 10 September 2021 –** The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs and the Select Committee on Security and Justice are satisfied that the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) is ready and capable to deliver credible local government elections within the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The joint meeting received a presentation from the IEC following the Constitutional Court order on 3 September to hold local government elections by 1 November 2021. The committees emphasised that theirs was not to interpret the Constitutional Court order, especially in the context of the pending contestations to the order. “The Constitutional Court is well placed to clarify issues of the amendment of the timetable, especially the opening of candidate nomination,” said Mr Mosa Chabane, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs. This notwithstanding, the committees welcome the IEC’s decision to schedule a voter registration weekend for the 18 and 19 September 2021. “The ultimate mark of a free and fair election is ensuring that every eligible voter is granted the opportunity to register and vote. We therefore call for all eligible voters to take up the opportunity to register and participate in the local government elections,” said Ms Shahidabibi Shaikh, the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Security and Justice.      Regarding the preparedness of the IEC to hold safe, credible, free and fair elections, the committees welcome the announcement that the IEC has procured 40 000 new voter management devices, which will be used for the first time for these elections. The committees have been assured and are confident that devices have been tested and are adequate for the job. They will guarantee political parties and the electorate in general that these elections are credible and in line with the 2016 Constitutional Court ruling in the Electoral Commission v Mhlope and others case. The committees noted that the 2021 local elections will occur at an extremely difficult time when the third wave of Covid-19 infections is still ravaging some provinces. As a result, the committee has called the IEC to strengthen non-pharmaceutical Interventions, such as social distancing and availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) to safeguard electoral staff against infections. The committees noted that the IEC has enough PPE to deliver a safe voter registration weekend. The committee also welcomed the assurance that the National Treasury has made a commitment to make available funding to the IEC to procure PPE for election day. The committee also welcomed the assurance that the National Treasury has made available the funding the IEC needs to run the elections.   The need to strengthen voter education was highlighted by both committees, especially in far-flung rural areas and in the languages easily comprehensible in those communities. “Within the context that the timetable is facing considerable pressures, the committees emphasised that the need to ramp up communication is critical to ensure that people take up the chance to register and to vote,” emphasised Mr Chabane. In line with this, the committees welcomed the information that the IEC has invested in communication initiatives that will commence this weekend, on a wide variety of communication platforms, including radio, community radio, TV, social media and printed media. The committees also urged political parties to compliment the voter education initiatives and add their bit to communication, especially regarding the voter registration weekend. The committees appreciate that the IEC is compelled to reduce face-to-face interactions as a result of constraints imposed by Covid-19. The committees also welcome the information that all contracts and logistics related to both the registration weekend and voting day are in place to enable a relatively seamless process. “We also welcome the announcement that the commission has enough human resources in place to roll out credible elections. Furthermore, the committees are content that the commission will implement refresher training to ensure that electoral officials are able to deliver on their mandate,” Ms Shaikh emphasised.     Regarding the work of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), the committees welcomed the assurance that the DHA continues to issue new IDs and temporary identification certificates to enable people to register and vote. The committees urged South Africans to collect their IDs. “We urge that people must approach the DHA to collect about 418 000 IDs that remain in the DHA offices,” Mr Chabane emphasised. The committees also welcomed the announcement that DHA offices will be open during the voter registration weekend to enable people to collect their IDs. The committees will monitor the roll out of the voter registration weekend and have committed to invite the IEC for a further update after the voter registration weekend. The committees remain confident that the IEC is capable of delivering credible, free and fair local government elections that are central to safeguarding the sanctity of our democracy.   **ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HOME AFFAIRS, MR MOSA CHABANE, AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE, MS SHAHIDABIBI SHAIK****For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairpersons, please contact the committees’ Media Officer:**Name: Malatswa Molepo (Mr)Parliamentary Communication ServicesTel: 021 403 8438Cell: 081 512 7920E-mail: mmolepo@parliament.gov.za   |

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