**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**ENGAGEMENT OF COMMITTEES ON AGRICULTURE AND LABOUR WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN KZN LOOSEN OLD BOLTS OF OPPRESSION**

**Parliament, Saturday, 13 August 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour which are in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) on a joint oversight visit had successful engagements yesterday with stakeholders in meetings which marked the beginning of the joint oversight visit to farms in the province.

The purpose of the joint oversight visit is to assess the living and working conditions of farm workers, farm dwellers and tenants on the farms. The joint oversight visit follows the resolution of the National Assembly which the House took in November 2020 calling on the committees to assess the impact of legislation on the living and working conditions of farm workers, dwellers and labour tenants in order to review the legislation.

Addressing the stakeholders in Amajuba District, Inkosi Zwelivelile Mandela, who is the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the leader of one of the delegations highlighted the fact that the farming sector bears more scars of colonial oppression and gross violation of human rights “where the abuse of farmworkers and farm-dwellers has been endemic and shameful”.

The provincial stakeholders that participated in the meeting included Umhlaba Wethu Social Movement, Utrecht Farmers Association, Amajuba Farm Dwellers, KwaZulu-Natal Agri Union, Landless People’s Movement. The provincial departments of Agriculture and Land Reform, Employment and Labour as well as the South African Police Service were also part of the meeting.

The problem of forced and constructive evictions was among the list of the horrific and excruciating forms of abuse farmworkers and farm dwellers continue to endure under farmers in the KZN notwithstanding 27 years into the constitutional dispensation. Farmworkers and farm dwellers told the committees that the KZN Department of Employment and Labour is not providing the support it is supposed to provide to them, they said it is like non-existent.

Inkosi Mandela’s delegation visited Fort Ingangane Farm in Amajuba where it found that the farm is compliant with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and farmworkers are earning more than the minimum wage set by government. On the same farm, however, there are four households who have registered labour tenant claims and one of them received a court judgement in 2011 which compels the department of agriculture to provide him with redress.

The committees have split themselves into two delegations so that they can reach as many farms as possible. The delegations will today visit farms in the Amajuba and Uthukela districts and as part of the joint oversight programme they will conduct public hearings in both districts to afford farm workers and farm dwellers an opportunity to raise issues affecting them.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE LEADER OF THE DELEGATION,  INKOSI ZWELIVELILE MANDELA.**

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