**Parliament, Tuesday, 8 December 2020 –**The Chairperson of the Select Committee on Security and Justice, Ms Shahidabibi Shaikh, has urged the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to ensure that a perfect balance is kept between meeting the tight deadline of the finalisation of the Electoral Amendment Bill and upholding all the constitutional principles that include public participation.

Ms Shaikh confirmed that due public participation processes would be followed and remarked that the committee will ensure that nothing is compromised in the process of the finalisation of the Bill. The committee received a briefing today virtually from the IEC on the Electoral Laws Amendment Bill.

The Chief Electoral Officer, Mr Sy Mamabolo, who presented the Bill, assured the committee that a significant improvement has been made after the 2015 Kham Constitutional Court judgement on the IEC regarding details that included the physical addresses of voters. He said although the commission has not reached a “perfect point”, but a great deal of improvement has been made, especially on the registration of addresses. In 2016, he said only six (6) million voters were not registered with addresses and the current figure is around 1.2 million. He said the issue of conventional addresses is a problem in rural and informal communities.

The committee heard that the commission has consulted widely on the Bill. Mr Mamabolo said political parties have been part of the journey on the Bill and the genesis of that journey was a workshop conducted between the commission and political parties on the Bill. Asked by the committee about the time frame of the Bill, Mr Mamabolo said the Bill must be settled a year before the next elections. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this time frame is not possible and therefore the end of February 2021 would suffice.

The objectives of the Bill include to insert certain definitions; to streamline the provisions for the registration of political parties; to provide for the registration of parties in respect of particular provinces, district and metropolitan municipalities and to repeal provisions relating to registration of parties in respect of particular local municipalities; to repeal obsolete provisions; to amend the provisions regarding public access to the voters’ roll; to amend provisions allowing voters to vote in a voting district where they are not registered; to amend provisions relating to the submission of lists of candidates and to amend provisions relating to special votes in elections for the National Assembly.

In welcoming the presentation, Ms Shaikh said the committee is in the process of placing an advert calling for public comments on the Bill, where submissions must be received by 22 January 2021. Thereafter, the committee will consider the submissions and agree on the way forward.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND JUSTICE, MS SHAHIDABIBI SHAIK.**

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