**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE OUTRAGED BY COMMENTS MADE BY CHAIRPERSON OF DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES’ AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 2 December 2020 –** The Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services has unanimously agreed today that a proper investigation is required into a video that went viral in which the chairperson of the audit committee of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is seen making “insulting” comments shortly after a meeting yesterday with the committee.

Portfolio committee Chairperson Mr Bulelani Magwanishe said the video gives the impression that the utterances were made in relation to Members of Parliament (MPs) serving on the committee. Members of the portfolio committee saw this as an irritation to its oversight work.

In the video, utterance in a vernacular language referring to the DCS were made after a briefing yesterday from the office of the Auditor-General (AGSA), loosely translated to mean “these people are boring”.

The AGSA informed the committee that it could not find sufficient documentation to prove that the information in the audit report is a true reflection of the situation in DCS.

Several members of the committee, fluent in the venacular said even the loose translation is subtle and the actual words are “deeper and more insulting”. The chairperson of the audit committee, Ms JS Masite, has since explained that the utterances refers to a diffirent meeting. Committee members have, however, maintained that a certain decorum is required when officials or presenters are in vitual meetings, as it is on the same level as being in Parliament. MPs also took issue with her comments that it is unfortunate that the video went viral. It was agreed as a leader she is expected to behave in a professional manner.

Committee members saw this as an insult not only to the committee, but also to Parliament. The multi-party committee therefore felt that the issue cannot just be left at the explaination provided by Ms Masite.

Mr Magwanishe said: “The committee has resolved that an urgent investigation is required. It is important that Parliament is respected. You might not like the MPs, but they should be respected, as they represent the people of South Africa. We therefore require that the Commissioner of Corrections respond to us by Friday including remedial actions.”

Mr Arthur Fraser, Commissioner of Correction, said in response that Ms Masite is not an official of DCS, but rather an independent appointment by the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Ronald Lamola. He therefore thinks it should be Minister Lamola doing the investigation.

Mr Magwanishe said the Minister has already been made aware of the issue. “As long as the deadline of the report regarding the investigation is met, it does not matter who does the investigation. Furthermore, we require the proof and details of the meeting she claimed that her comments refers to.”

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, MR** **BULELANI MAGWANISHE.**

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