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| **MEDIA STATEMENT**  **DECISION TO TEMPORARILY HALT THE JOHNSON & JOHNSON VACCINE ROLLOUT ‘TAKEN AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE’** **Parliament, Wednesday 14 April 2021 –** The Portfolio Committee on Health heard from the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, that the announcement made to halt the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine rollout was taken as a precaution rather than an intention to completely withdraw the rollout. Minister Mkhize said: “We remain confident as government and are happy that of almost 300 000 people that have been vaccinated with the J&J vaccine in South Africa, we have not received any reports of adverse events that have been caused by the vaccine including blood clots.” The committee was briefed by the Minister on Health and the Department of Heath on the J&J clinical trials, vaccines procurement and progress on the vaccination rollout programme.  Committee Chairperson for the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, said he notes and is pleased with the announcement made by the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, that 51 million vaccines have to date been secured. In his opening remarks, Dr Dhlomo questioned the Minister on how many vaccines have been procured from Johnson & Johnson and the cost for each vaccine. Dr Dhlomo further asked for more information on other vaccines that are being procured and what the cost of each vaccine is. Dr Dhlomo requested more details on the agreements that the government has entered into with the pharmaceutical companies and if they are onerous clauses. Minister Mkhize said as government they have found themselves in a precarious position of having to choose between saving citizens’ lives and risking putting the country’s assets into a private company’s hands. The committee was informed that some of the conditions in the first agreement have been met but in relation to the second agreement, J&J put a precondition that the No Fault Compensation Regulations be published by 30 April. This condition has also been made by Pfizer. “Furthermore, another precondition stated that they wanted to have sole discretion to determine additional terms and guarantees for us to fulfil the indemnity obligations. That condition posed a risk to our assets and fiscus.” The committee said it is dismayed by the terms demanded by the pharmaceutical companies. The committee expressed concern over the financial implications that the announcement made should the vaccine create and be found to have challenges. However, the committee noted the difficulties of the negotiations with the manufactures to find suitable terms and agreements. The committee welcomed the announcement of the appointment of the retired Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo, who chair will the No Fault Compensation (NFC) structure. The NFC fund will uphold the principles of fairness, transparency, equity and protect the constitutional rights of citizens. **ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO.** For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the committee’s Media Officer:**Name: Ms Yoliswa Landu****Parliamentary Communication Services****Tel: 021 403 8203** **Cell: 081 497 4694****E-mail:** **ylandu@parliament.gov.za**     |

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