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| **MEDIA STATEMENT**  **HUMAN SETTLEMENTS COMMITTEE CRITICAL OF HIGH NUMBER OF BLOCKED PROJECTS**  **Parliament, Thursday, 3 March 2022 –** The Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements criticised the high number of blocked human settlement projects across the country, as they directly undermine Section 26 (1) of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. The committee received a report from the Department of Human Settlements, where it learnt that 3 522 projects are deemed to be blocked. While the committee recognises the expansion of the definition of blocked projects, it is nonetheless alarmed that projects have not incurred any expenditure for over 36 months. “It is unacceptable that a project cannot incur any expenditure for 36, especially in the context of the demand for quality shelter, as well as the squalor within which our people live,” said Ms Machwene Semenya, the Chairperson of the committee.  It is also concerning that common factors blocking projects highlighted by the department include lack of bulk service, poor performance by contractors, and the challenge of the construction mafia. “The planning of all projects should at the very least map up the connection of households to bulk infrastructure. It is incomprehensible how the department and its stakeholders cannot plan effectively leading to blockages. Bulk infrastructure should be a starting point of any project,” Ms Semenya emphasised. Also, the department must work with law enforcement agencies to fight the challenges presented by the construction mafia, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. Regarding the poor performance of contractors, the committee reiterates its call that poor-performing contractors must be restricted from doing business with the state to ensure the protection of the state’s coffers. Poor implementation of projects exposes the state to the risk of financial and credibility loss, which is unacceptable. The committee urges the department to urgently conclude the instruction note guiding this process to ensure standardisation across provinces. Furthermore, the committee reiterates its position that project-level verification and monitoring remain a key pillar in ensuring that projects are implemented qualitatively. The committee welcomes the department’s planned interventions, which range from establishing administrative capacity panels with a variety of skills to expedite completion of projects to a collaboration with the private sector to find solutions to the blockages. Despite this, the committee has emphasised the need for urgency in implementing the plans to ensure the delivery of projects. The committee has committed to monitoring progress in unblocking projects and will receive periodic updates and reports from the department. “Ultimately what we want are projects that are implemented as per the planned schedule and within the planned budget, which is important on two fronts. First, in safeguarding against wastages of taxpayers’ monies and secondly, the return of dignity to the beneficiaries who are still waiting for their housing,” Ms Semenya concluded. **ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS. MS MACHWENE SEMENYA.** For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the committee’s Media Officer:Name: Malatswa Molepo (Mr)**Parliamentary Communication Services**Tel: 021 403 8438Cell: 081 512 7920E-mail: mmolepo@parliament.gov.za   |

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