### Address by (MP) Cde Tidimalo Legwase on the Budget Vote Debate of the Department of Home Affairs

10 July 2019

Chairperson

The Strategic purpose of the Home Affairs Department is to effectively and efficiently determine and safeguard the identity and status of citizens. It also must regulate immigration to ensure security, promote development and fulfil South Africa’s international obligations.  Home Affairs is the backbone of national security, service delivery and citizen development since it is the custodian of the unique identity of all citizens and documented foreigners residing in South Africa.

Home Affairs has a responsibility inter alia, to make sure that all South Africans have identity and have status. Furthermore Home Affairs must maintain a credible and secure Nations Population register, supply enabling documents and to citizens as well as foreign nationals.   Home Affairs plays a decisive role as the backbone of the Developmental State and is central to enabling security and service delivery. It plays a crucial role in enabling all South Africans to proudly claim their citizenship, their identity and dignity. The Department must therefore balance its security and service delivery functions and develop strong ties with communities

**Chairperson**

Any evaluation of the performance of the Department must be assessed against Medium Term Strategic Framework of the ANC government. This document guides the programs and ensures there is a comprehensive and cogent response to the challenges of the current conjuncture.

The Presidency Twenty Year Review (2014) and the National Planning Commission’s 2011 Diagnostic Report highlight – poverty, inequality and unemployment continues to negatively affect the lives of many people. Too few people have work, investment is too slow and education lags behind our requirements. The weak state of the economy impedes our efforts to reach our development goals. The second phase of our democratic transition calls for bold and decisive steps to place the economy on a qualitatively different path that eliminates poverty, creates jobs and sustainable livelihoods, and substantially reduces inequality.  This requires radical socio- economic transformation and a sustained focus on addressing the uneven quality of service delivery. Key areas that Home Affairs responds to in terms of the Medium Term Strategic Framework are effectively defending, protecting, securing and managing our borders. Further ensuring that identity of all persons in the country are known, secured, and streamlining regulations to reduce burden of importing core and critical skills that are needed for the economy.

Chairperson

In securing an effective, efficient management of immigration, South Africa as a signatory to international convention and protocols (UN Convention on rights of refugees of 1951 and OAU convention of 1969) on the protection of rights of refugees and asylum seekers, is very cognizant of our international and moral obligation towards meeting these obligations. South Africa is also one of the largest receiving states for refugees and asylum seekers in the world.

In this regard, we have an obligation to ensure that all asylum seekers are issued withy valid documentations enabling them to remain in the country legally as well as speedily reviewing decisions that have been found to be unfounded or manifestly unfounded. Extra ordinary measures must be implored in finalizing applications for Asylum, such as improving information technology, extending operating hours, opening refugees’ reception office on Saturdays, improving filing system and queue management.

The department of Home Affairs must also revisit permits conditions and put effective mechanism in place to ensure that they create a balance and acceptable degree of protection of local labor. This must however must be done not to affect other sector of the economy such as Tourism and other Labor-intensive sectors. There must also a better coordination between the Department of Home Affairs and law enforcement Agencies to improve implementation of the immigration act. This must be done to ensure that Asylum seekers and refugee’s entry, movement within the republic is well handled, and their whereabouts are known. The department of Home Affairs must develop a system for monitoring applications, timeframe and documentation being produced.

Chairperson

The mandate has meant the transformation of Home Affairs into a modern, digital, secure custodian of national identity, responding to the present and future needs and circumstances, and run by professionals, operating in a highly secure environment to protect the records of the nation.  Within the governance system. In line with the National Development Plan, Home Affairs makes four critical contributions to the nation, enabling economic development; contributing to national security; enabling effective service delivery; and supporting governance and administration. The transformation of Home Affairs is about ensuring that it is a pivotal pillar for the pursuit of these four critical areas; and a reliable partner for ordinary people, government departments and the private sector, in pursuit of these goals that are so central to security of the nation.

Chairperson

The ANC 54th National Conference in December 2017 deliberated on the state of Home Affairs as a key function of the State. Conference raised its concerns over the presence of undocumented migrants in the Republic which poses both an economic and security threat to the country; Conference went onto to site empirical evidence that the majority of asylum seekers do not qualify for refugee status and protection but are rather economic migrants;

It deliberated on the challenges relating to legislation regulating access to citizenship by foreign nationals and acknowledged the initiative of the department had embarked on in modernization and development of a single national identity system, which is based on biometrics, to be also used as well in the Integrated Justice System to fight crime more effectively.

Conference clearly articulated the need to reconsider policy relating to centers for asylum seekers during consideration of their status; Concurrently the ANC recognized the perceptions that arise during this process and called for awareness programs to combat xenophobia and educate society against narrow nationalism; Conference welcomed the Stakeholder Forums of the Department as a demonstration of “the people” governing as per the Freedom Charter; While immigration is about the enforcement of laws, rules, and regulations, it is of critical and strategic importance that it be anchored and aligned to the promotion of economic development, jobs creation and trade investments in South Africa and within the SADC Region, the African countries and the rest of the world.  The development state must be built in a better Africa and a better world.

The imperative is therefore to balance the need for economic, cultural and social development of the country against its security needs and the integrity of our state and society.

Security must include security of the country, communities and each individual including foreigners and immigrant communities who are part of South Africa. Social cohesion includes the integration of immigrant communities into South African life to enrich and grow our society.

The ANC Supports the Budget Vote