

MEDIA STATEMENT

COMMITTEE REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO PROMOTE CHILD PROTECTION LAWS

Parliament, Wednesday, 14 May 2025 – The Portfolio Committee on Social Development has today reaffirmed its commitment to promote awareness in South Africa of child protection laws and policies. The recent case of the tragic disappearance and trafficking of six-year-old Joslin Smith in Saldanha Bay shocked the country and calls for the urgent need for implementation of comprehensive laws to protect vulnerable children.

The committee met with a delegation from the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, Dr Najat M'jid, and a delegation of the Department of Social Development, led by the Minister, Ms Sisisi Tolashe. South Africa, through the Department of Social Development, is a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children with the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The department has reported on the South Africa Country Report on Commitments and Pledge in Bogota Conference: Progress and Bottlenecks. The report highlighted the department's progress in ending violence against children.

Importantly, the department reported that the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide was reviewed to include pillar 7, which specifically focuses on child protection. It has also reported that Cabinet is heeding an urgent call by President Cyril Ramaphosa to implement a 90-day turnaround plan to implement impactful programmes at local and departmental levels, co-chaired by the departments of Social Development and of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. The plan developed seven workstreams and progress reports will be made at National Joints Intelligence Operations.

Dr M'jid acknowledged South Africa's progress in advancing child protection. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that the plans and pledges undertaken are costed, implemented, monitored and evaluated.

The committee highlighted areas of improvement in the implementation of child protection services but acknowledged the continuing wide gap in access to information and services between urban and rural areas. Government services and information do not reach rural areas, although there are high levels of violence against children and sexual abuse of children by family members.

These cases go unreported and when they are finally reported the damage is unspeakably huge and irreversible. Children living on the street are also excluded from government programmes and public participation programmes. The committee expressed serious concern over parent neglect of their children, sometime due to drug addiction. This demonstrates the importance of parenting programmes and education of families on child protection.

The committee welcomed the department's report and the progress it has made in the implementation of its commitments regarding the Bogota Conference. The committee also undertook to conduct oversight over the implementation of actions and plans to protect children, to ensure that they are monitored and achieve their intended impact.

ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MS BRIDGET MASANGO.

For media enquiries, please contact the committee's Media Officer:

**Name: Ms Faith Ndenze
Parliamentary Communication Services**