**National Council Standing Committee Conducts Oversight Meetings in Zambezi Region**

By: Pamela Mate

The National Council Standing Committee on Home Affairs, Security, Constitutional and Legal Affairs (HASCLA) conducted public meetings in the Zambezi Region with communities living along the Chobe, Kwando and Linyanti rivers to assess the security situation, livelihood and tourism in those areas in the backdrop of alleged hostilities by members of the Botswana Defence.

The Standing Committee kicked off the marathon meetings with a courtesy call on the Office of the Governor at the Zambezi Regional Council on Monday, 20 September and concluded on Friday, 1 October 2021 with community members at Lizauli. The two-week exercise saw the Committee hold 22 meetings, including those with the Bukalo, Mafwe, Mayeyi and Mashi Traditional Authorities as well. Some of the villages visited include Ngoma, Impalila, Invilivinzi, Mbalasinte, Nakabolelwa, Sangwali, Mbilanjwe and Malengalenga. About 120 witnesses gave their account on their experience living along the borderline riverine and narrated their daily struggles and challenges with respect to their encounters with the BDF and the impact this has had on their livelihood and the local tourism and conservation sector.

Upon their return, the Committee met with various Ministries, including the Office of the Surveyor General, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security, Ministry of Environment and Tourism as well as the Ministry of Defense and Veteran Affairs to gain wider understanding of the issues raised.

The House assignment was delegated to the Committee in May this year but due to the Covid spike during that period, it was only carried out in September. The main objective of the public meetings where to investigate the aforementioned issues by way of gathering all relevant information and evidence in the affected areas; assessing the impact of alleged hostilities; exploring the most appropriate mechanisms for redress in the event of such hostilities.

The five-member Committee is chaired by Hon. John Likando, deputised by Hon. Andreas Uutoni, with Hon. Daniel Kuuoko, Hon. Philemon Ndjabula and Hon Elkan Hainghumbi also comprising the Standing Committee.

The meetings were well attended, and a report is scheduled to be tabled when the House resume sittings.