**Media Statement: Committees on Tourism Urge Minister of Tourism to Prioritise Previously Neglected Communities**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 12 May 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Tourism, and the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, Economic Development, Small Business Development, Tourism, Employment and Labour yesterday received a briefing from the Minister of Tourism on the reasons for the withdrawal of the 2020/21 Annual Performance Plan of the Department of Tourism.

The Minister of Tourism, Ms Mamaloko Kubayi-Ngubane, informed the joint meeting of the committees that tourism portfolio that includes the Department of Tourism and the South African Tourism has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic more than any other department.

The annual performance plan included programmes such as the Tourism Incentive Programme to assist Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) with market access for SMMEs, community-based projects, and market activations by the South African Tourism, which could not be implemented under the current lockdown conditions.

The Minister told the committees that she had therefore written to the Presiding Officers of Parliament requesting for the withdrawal of the Annual Performance Plans for the Department of Tourism and the South African Tourism that were tabled in March this year.

She said the request for the withdrawal of the APPs was made to ensure that the new plans take into account the current conditions, and that tabling of the plans is not done for compliance reasons, but for the reasons of taking the sector forward.

The committees were unanimous in accepting the request for the withdrawal of the documents. The committees indicated that their acceptance of the request to withdraw the APPs was to provide the Minister with an opportunity to seriously consider incorporating the villages, townships, small towns and dorpies in the departmental and the South African Tourism plans.

The Co-Chairpersons of the meetings, Mr Supra Mahumapelo and Mr Mandla Rayi echoed the same sentiments and advised the Minister that the new Annual Performance Plans should consider the deepening poverty in the villages, townships and small dorpies, and the departmental plans should be biased towards these previously neglected areas, secondly the plans should address poverty, inequality and unemployment through tourism, and lastly the department should intensify communication with all its stakeholders to ensure that everyone is kept abreast of all the developments within the tourism industry.

The meeting agreed that the Minister should table the new documents as soon as possible within the time frames of the statutory requirements of the Division of Revenue Bill.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, MR S MAHUMAPELO AND SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR, MR M RAYI.**