**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON TOURISM CALLS FOR THE FORMATION OF AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL TASK TEAM TO DEAL WITH THE OUTBREAK OF LIFE THREATENING VIRUSES**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 4 December 2020 –** The Portfolio Committee on Tourism today received a briefing from the Department of Tourism on its second quarter performance report for the 2019/2020 financial year and a presentation on the coordination of all the tourism stakeholders.

The committee raised a question on the readiness of the department for the global outbreak of the Corona Virus which has infected over 20 000 people in China and the alarming death toll which is standing at over 400  today.

The virus, according to media reports, has since spread to 18 countries and has negative consequences for trade and tourism in South Africa as the tourism sector is a globalised economic phenomenon.

Based on these reports, the committee said, it is imperative for the South African tourism sector to be ready should an incident involving tourists occur.  In this regard, the committee calls for an interdepartmental approach of government departments that will include critical departments such as Home Affairs, Health, Trade and Industry, Public Enterprises and Tourism to develop a holistic strategy that looks beyond the Corona Virus and that will deal with any eventuality of similar outbreaks.

This is, according to the committee, necessary as the South African airports are the gateways to neighbouring countries and Africa at large.

The outbreak of the corona virus puts the spotlight on the need for South Africa to focus on the African continent for inbound tourism. The committee said, this also emphasises the need to further develop domestic tourism to act as a buffer for the tourism sector whenever such outbreaks occur.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, MR SUPRA MAHUMAPELO.**