**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON TOURISM URGES DEPARTMENT TO WORK WITH NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FUND TO ASSIST TOURISM SECTOR**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 2 June 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Tourism today adopted and supported the report of Budget Vote 38 of the Department of Tourism and South African Tourism. The adoption of the department and its entity’s budget votes is part of the process of deliberating and approving the department’s five-year strategic plans and annual performance plans, as required by the Money Bills Act of 2009.

As a result of the novel coronavirus outbreak and its devastating impact on the travel and tourism sector, the Department of Tourism and South African Tourism had to revise their planning. While some programmes had to be stopped completely in this financial year, others will only commence in the third and fourth quarter. New projects in response to the novel coronavirus also had to be introduced to mitigate and track the impact on the sector.

The committee has noted that this sector has been the hardest hit and therefore commends the Department of Tourism and South African Tourism on their efforts to re-plan for this financial year. In this light, the report was adopted with amendments to be effected.

Notwithstanding this scenario, the Chairperson of the Tourism Portfolio Committee, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, said that going forward the Department of Tourism should look at the feasibility of partnering with the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) to assist with disbursing the Tourism Relief Fund (TRF), thereby maximising opportunities from NEF to assist affected businesses and averting collapse in the sector.

 The department’s planning documents charted a progressive tourism development and marketing trajectory under difficult economic conditions. They also demonstrated the repositioning and repurposing of the department and the entity to deliver the tourism mandate, in line with the committee’s approach of focussing on domestic tourism through programmes implemented in villages, townships and small dorpies. These planning documents will ensure that South Africa remains a competitive tourism destination geared towards attaining an additional 21 million tourist arrivals by 2030.

The Committee is of the view that the global outbreak of the novel corona virus pandemic has further emboldened the call by the Committee to anchor tourism development on domestic tourism. The Committee is satisfied with the plans to refocus both the Department and the Entity towards domestic tourism over the next five years. The domestic tourism market is important as it could be used as tool to eliminate poverty at a local level, generate employment and intensify Local Economic Development, improve local infrastructure, spread tourism benefits to non-tourism suppliers such as crafters, address seasonality, and cushion the country from the volatility and fluidity of the international markets, and put local communities on the international map to attract international tourists.

The committee urges the Minister of Tourism to continually consult with the industry to assess their needs and, if necessary, consult with Cabinet to provide more relief funding for the sector.

The committee is confident that during the course of the 2020/21-2024/25 Medium Term Strategic Framework the sector will recover. The committee will therefore continue conducting its oversight work to ensure that collective efforts from government and the private sector continue to contribute to the trajectory of creating 21 million additional international arrivals by 2030.

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