**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AGREES THAT THE LEGISLATURES’ TOURISM OVERSIGHT FORUM WILL BOOST TOURISM**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 24 June 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Tourism today held its quarterly meeting of the Legislatures’ Tourism Oversight Forum (LETOFO) to discuss and receive an update on progress on the state of tourism in rural areas, especially in villages, townships and small towns (dorpies) in South Africa.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, in his opening remarks, reflected on the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality that people living in villages, townships and small towns are faced with, which is further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chairperson informed the meeting that the committee has adopted a working philosophy based on Rebranding, Repositioning and Renewal of the tourism sector in the South African economy. This has informed the oversight approach that seeks to work with all spheres of government in a cooperative, reciprocative, non-antagonistic, and non-co-optable manner.

The provincial legislatures reported on the various programmes in their respective provinces, which focus on village and township tourism. However, the District Development Model should be the key to ensure that every village, township and small town is incorporated in the local municipality’s programme for the development and promotion of tourism.

This forum will ensure planning of campaigns, cohesiveness and cooperation between the national, provincial, district and local municipalities – and that village tourism oversight structures are in place during the 6th Parliament. The provincial legislatures which were present in the meeting today were in agreement that this forum will charter the way forward for tourism to be included in district and local plans, especially the Integrated Development Plans of municipalities.

However, Parliament is still conducting internal consultations about the structure and form of LETOFO, and a Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted to that effect. Once Parliament has satisfied itself with the contents of the Memorandum of Understanding, the document will be shared with provinces for their internal consultations and adoption.

In the meantime, the committee will receive a list of villages for each province from the National House of Traditional Leaders (NHTL) and South African Local Government Association, which is an integral step to getting tourism off the ground in villages. The provinces have been requested to work with the NHTL in compiling the list of villages to ensure that all communities are incorporated.

LETOFO will meet on a quarterly basis where legislatures will report on activities which promote tourism at village, township and small town levels as part of the greater strategy of promoting tourism in provinces. LETOFO will not exist on its own but will, from time to time, call other government departments and stakeholders to come and engage with the forum in highlighting the challenges that provinces experience when it comes to developing and promoting tourism.

An example of the priority issues that will be considered by LETOFO, is the high membership cost of having an establishment graded by the Tourism Grading Council, and how village and township products could be assisted. The collaboration in the oversight work has never been more crucial, especially now during the time of Covid-19, where establishments are closed and many are on the brink of bankruptcy. The forum will need to look into how this cost can be curtailed or reduced to assist tourism establishments to market themselves.

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