**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TOURISM COMMITTEE APPLAUDS WOMEN IN TOURISM PROGRAMMES**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 18 August 2020 –** The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism has applauded the initiatives made in advancing Women in Tourism programmes. In the meeting held today, the Department of Tourism and the Women in Tourism, represented by the nine Provincial Chapter Chairpersons, appeared before the Portfolio Committee on Tourism as part of the committee’s recognition of the need to involve women in the tourism industry.

The meeting was held a day after the country went to Level 2 of the lockdown. The committee acknowledged that the national lockdown has had a serious impact on the tourism industry at large, and to women-owned businesses in particular. The opening of the interprovincial travel will bring some relief, but more work lies ahead to achieve a full recovery of the sector.

The committee acknowledged the findings of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, which entail that the majority of the tourism workforce worldwide is female, with 54% of people employed in tourism being women compared to 39% in the broader economy. The wage gap is smaller in the tourism industry as women in tourism earn 14.7% less than men. Tourism offers women greater opportunities for leadership roles, with 23% of tourism Ministers being female compared to 20.7% of Ministers overall.

More and more women are challenging gender stereotypes in the sector and assuming roles once dominated by men, such as tour guides. Technology is also an important factor for empowerment, providing women with more training opportunities and stimulating female entrepreneurship through easier access to the tourism market. Policy makers are becoming more aware of the importance of gender equality in tourism and putting measures in place to ensure women fairly share the benefits that tourism can bring.

The committee commended the work done by the Department of Tourism in organising the women who own businesses and those who aspire to own tourism businesses into the nine provincial Chapters of the Women in Tourism entities. The Chairperson thanked the women who are participating in the provincial chapters and said he understands that women carry the burden of work in their companies and at home as mothers and wives, but still succeed in driving the tourism sector forward.

The provincial chapter chairpersons raised a number of interventions needed to support women’s participation, including that government should acknowledge that women are in various stages of development and interventions should be varied and tailored to these varying needs; involvement of local municipalities in women’s empowerment; assisting with the plight of women who did not receive assistance from the Tourism Relief Fund; assistance with procurement of goods and services by the government; assisting women-owned businesses to access concessions from the likes of SANParks; facilitation of the establishment of women-owned Destination Management Companies in all provinces; and for women to be shareholders in tourism businesses.

In response, the committee urged the Department of Tourism to assist women-owned businesses that have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic; and ensure that women are part of the tourism value chain and supply chain; engage the private sector in advancing women empowerment; ensure that Women in Tourism become part of other women’s formations for networking and support; and ensure that women in villages and townships are empowered to participate meaningfully in the tourism sector.

The Chairperson of the Tourism Committee, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, made a commitment that the Portfolio Committee on Tourism will engage the Women in Tourism on annual basis as part of the committee’s Women’s Month activities to take stock of the progress made in providing necessary support to Women in Tourism.

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