**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TOURISM COMMITTEE URGES SA TOURISM TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGY TO PROMOTE DOMESTIC TOURISM**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 9 March 2021** – The Portfolio Committee on Tourism, (National Assembly), today received a briefing from South African Tourism (SAT) on the Second and Third Quarter Performance Report for the 2020/21 financial year.

The committee heard that SAT achieved 16/26 key performance indicators (kpi’s) across five programmes and that seven kpi’s were not due for reporting. However, SAT had not achieved three kpi’s. The committee also heard that the international tourist arrivals declined by 70% in 2020 due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in widespread travel restrictions to South Africa with almost no international tourists arriving in the country. Most experts in the industry do not foresee a return to pre-pandemic levels happening before 2023.

The United Nations World Travel Organisation’s extended scenarios for 2021-2024 indicate that it could take between two-and-a-half and four years for international tourism to return to 2019 levels.

The Minister of Tourism, Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, informed the committee that the department was busy setting up bilateral meetings with ambassadors of key countries which had flagged South Africa due to the new variant of the disease. The committee, however, informed the department that it should be making the international tourist market aware that it is not only in South Africa where there is a new variant as there were new variants found in other countries as well. This challenge therefore does not exist in South Africa only.

As there were signs of recovery in tourism due to the lowering of the alert levels, the committee advised SAT to develop a communications and marketing strategy to reinvigorate domestic tourism in villages, townships and small dorpies. Special tourist packages should be developed to inspire and motivate South Africans to travel within the country to keep the industry afloat.

The department and SAT was advised that there should be ongoing engagements with international trade partners to reignite and rebrand South Africa as a tourism destination of choice. SAT has informed the committee that there have been some engagements platforms in key markets to roll out the E-Visas which it is currently working on.

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