**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON TOURISM CALLS ON DEPARTMENT TO PROMOTE DOMESTIC TOURISM FOR A QUICKER RECOVERY**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 4 May 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Tourism today received a briefing from the Department of Tourism on its 2021/22 – 2023/24 Annual Performance Plan. The committee noted that the plan is tabled in a precarious global and domestic operational environment, as the tourism sector has been the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, said: “Just when the sector is beginning to recover at a domestic level, the current surge of the pandemic in India is a cause for concern for the safe reopening of international travel.” The committee called for the government and the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) to monitor developments in India to avoid a possible third wave, which may devastate South African Tourism and lead to a total collapse of the sector. The committee calls for government to be proactive in preventing any eventuality, whilst continuing to strike a balance to save lives and livelihoods.

The committee noted that the tourism vote will receive a total budget of R7.4 billion over the medium term, with transfers to South African Tourism accounting for an estimated 53.6 percent of the total budget. The department’s 2021/22 budget allocation amounts to R2 429.6 billion, R333.1 million of which is allocated to fund compensation of employees. The committee urged the department to strike a balance between tourism marketing and development to ensure that the demand for South African products is created whilst generating a supply base in previously disadvantaged communities in villages, townships and small towns.

The committee welcomed the appointment of the Development Bank of Southern Africa as an implementing agent for the 30 community-based tourism projects to be implemented in the 2021/22 financial year. This appointment will assist in eliminating the challenges previously experienced by the Department of Tourism in implementing infrastructure projects.

The committee also welcomed the adoption of the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan adopted by Cabinet to assist in bringing the industry to normality. The success of this plan will depend on the full participation of all stakeholders in the public and private sectors. The committee urged the department to also attend to the sector issues that prevailed in the pre-Covid-19 period. These issues include inter-sectoral matters such as facilitating access through e-visas; dealing with safety and security for tourists; airlift challenges; maintenance of tourism-related infrastructure; transformation and other related matters.

The committee will continue to conduct oversight on implementation of projects to ensure that the department implements all its programmes and projects as tabled in the 2021/22 – 2023/24 annual performance plan. The committee acknowledges the difficulty posed by the reduction in the compensation of employee’s budget in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework and that this may cause operational challenges. The committee urged the department to optimise its efficiencies and maximise the impact of the little budget available for the sector.

The committee also invited the private sector to customise their facilities to the domestic market to ensure a quicker recovery. South Africans are urged to take domestic tourism trips and substitute international trips with domestic tourism. This will assist to generate recovery and save millions of labour intensive jobs provided by the tourism industry.

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