**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TOURISM COMMITTEE ADOPTS BUDGET VOTE 38: TOURISM**
**Parliament, Wednesday, 12 May 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Tourism adopted yesterday Budget Vote 38 and the 2021/22 -2023/24 annual performance  plan (APP) which was tabled by the Department of Tourism, and the 2021/22 APP which was tabled by the South African Tourism (SAT).

The committee expressed its satisfaction of both plans and commended the department and the SAT for developing programmes and strategies that are geared towards the recovery of the sector. The committee has also acknowledged that the road ahead is a difficult and a fluid one given the rapid global changes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The committee said the current Covid-19 situation in India threatened global travel and fears of the third wave in South Africa. The committee urges the government to keep a close eye on the developments in India and to cushion the country and to continue saving lives and livelihoods.

The committee has noted that the APP of the department is tabled at a time when the tourism sector is still practically non-performing. International tourism has come to a grinding halt whilst domestic tourism is recovering. The committee has noted a number of interventions implemented by the government to cushion the sector, including the Tourism Relief Fund, the Tourist Guides Relief Fund, the implementation of the Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) and the development of Norms and Standards as safety protocols to facilitate safe reopening of the sector.

The committee has noted that on 26 April 2021 the High Court of Pretoria stopped the Tourism Equity Fund (TEF) as the civic organisations AfriForum and Solidarity wanted the fund interdicted.
However, the committee is concerned that the court interdict derails efforts of the department to drive transformation. This, according to the committee, also frustrates its focus on programmes that facilitate transformation.

The committee has noted that the main issue raised by the two organisations is the assertion that the TEF is a racial tourism fund. The two organisations took the Minister of Tourism, the Director-General for Tourism and the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA) to court.

The committee noted with concern that the two organisations took the Minister to court for the second time. Similar events unfolded when the Tourism Relief Fund was introduced in 2020 to provide relief to the distressed tourism sector as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. At that time the court ruled in favour of the Minister and the fund was disbursed.

The committee had noted that the public including some civic organisations, did not understand the concept of Broad-Based Black Empowerment and the need to transform the tourism sector. It had recommended that the Minister intensify public education on the B-BBEE Act and the Tourism Sector Codes. It maintains that public education needs to be intensified.

The committee commends the Minister for the continued commitment in implementing the Tourism Equity Fund and the Tourism Transformation Fund. It acknowledges the challenges experienced by the department in implementing these funds.

The committee further noted the department’s inclusion of villages, townships and small dorpies (VTSDs) in product development.  The committee heard that the department is undertaking to support the implementation of thirty community-based projects in the 2021/22 year.

The committee has previously raised concerns over negative messages emanating from the discovery of the 501Y.V2 strain of COVID-19 in South Africa. It raised concerns that referring to 501Y.V2 as a South African variant would cause an irreparable damage to the image of the country as a tourism destination. The unintended negative consequences have already begun as some countries have issued travel advisories against South Africa.

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