**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TOURISM COMMITTEE CALLS FOR THE PROPER MANAGEMENT OF THE CENTRALISED DATABASE OF TOURIST GUIDES**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 22 February 2022 –**The Portfolio Committee on Tourism today received a briefing by the National and Provincial Registrars of tourist guides on progress made with the provincial and centralised databases of tourist guides.

The committee noted the findings of the Auditor General on the implementation of the Tourist Guides Relief Fund which revealed that there are challenges with the tourist guides databases across the country. "The poor management of the database led to the erroneous payment of relief funds to people who are deceased, the double dipping of payments to people who also benefitted from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), people who are employed by the state, including municipalities and payments made to people without proper identity numbers", said the Acting Chairperson of the Committee, Ms Lusizo Makhubele-Mashele.

The committee heard that the Department and provinces are following up on the people who were paid incorrectly. Cases have also been opened with the South African Police Service where people redeemed money on behalf of deceased tourist guides.  The Department is working with SASSA and UIF to verify information about people who might have benefited from various government COVID-19 relief funds.

The committee noted that some provinces have no systems to develop the provincial databases and for reporting purposes and are using excel spreadsheets whilst three provinces namely Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Western Cape have developed an online system for the registration of tourist guides.

The committee enquired on the credibility of the national database of tourist guides given that some provinces which feed information to the National Registrar do not keep accurate and updated information. Further the committee has recommended that the Department of Tourism develop a standardised and uniform electronic online registration system to register, capture and manage the Tourist Guides databases. This will assist in the development and management of the provincial Tourist Guides databases that will feed to the centralised national database and be seamlessly linked. The department must also develop the standard operating procedures for the database.

The National Registrar of Tourist Guides was gazetted on the 4th February 2022, which elevates the director position of the registrar to the Deputy Director-General position. The committee further recommends that the Provincial Registrars be appointed at a Senior Management Service level so that they are at a strategic management level to perform legislated functions as provided for in the Tourism Act No.3 of 2014.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE ACTING CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, MS LUSIZO MAKHUBELE-MASHELE.**

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