**National Assembly**

**Debate On Vote 38: Tourism**

**By The Hon. Ms. Z Majozi**

**24 May 2023**

**15:00-17:00**

Honourable Chairperson,

Adopted policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP) and the White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa are in place to ensure that tourism is a national priority sector. It is a major contributor to our job creation targets and economic development in this country. South Africa’s economic transformation is only judged a success when our unemployment challenges and African Developmental Agendas have been realised.

With such promise of a land that can offer opportunities in tourism, the burden placed on this department is of national key importance. Funds allocated to this department need to be spent wisely in order to ensure maximum reach and development of all communities especially rural ones.

Honourable Minister, according to your budget, more than 93.7% of Program 2’s budget has been allocated to the South African Tourism SAT). The SAT is such an important entity which is intended to promote South Africa as both a leisure and a business events destination.

The department has failed to make available Monitoring and Evaluation reports on tourism projects and initiatives which are essential for improved oversight and holding this entity accountable. Although SAT sits with more than 53 per cent of the department’s overall budget, defying the constitutional mandate of Parliament has been a consistent streak from its Board, its members who also do not possess any tourism industry expertise deliberately do not attend Annual Performance Plan (APP) and budget meetings which is a clear indication of a lack of commitment from the Executive.

Two-thirds of the Board members have previously worked in the Western Cape Tourism, Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (WESGRO), an agency meant to promote tourism, trade and investment specifically in the Western Cape. This clearly demonstrates to us that there is no geographical, gender spread and representation of people living with disabilities in this Board as envisaged by the Tourism Act 3 of 2014.

Honourable Minister, we are concerned as to why you so vicariously went to the public media in telling parliament to note its power which comes off as a smokescreen tactic to deflect your own possible ties with WESGRO and these Board members seeing that you have elected to give full powers to this three-member Board. Is WESGRO the only place we could source competent Board members from in the whole of South Africa?

Numerous other concerns have been raised which the department has done nothing to address, the legitimate concern that the interim Chairperson of the Board and the Acting Chief Marketing Officer may collaborate in embezzling funds has been raised with the department and nothing has been done so far.

Not only does the Board seem to have a possible conflict of interest but there also seems to exist a clear misalignment in the Board’s understanding of its mandate and priorities whilst failing to handle its own affairs which is a clear giveaway that it will fail to turn things around.

In contravention of the Tourism Act, the Board has held more than eight (8) meetings as opposed to at least 4 ordinary meetings per year, not only does this indicate that the Board is focused on meetings and not actual work but it also highlights its lack of understanding of legislations that regulate it. Most importantly, we are concerned on who will be held accountable if the budget is released to the entity as currently, there is no permanent executive/accounting authority.

As a party, we believe the 2023/2024 financial year budget should not be made available to this department. The IFP rejects this Budget Vote.

Ngiyabonga, Chairperson.