**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY:**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY:**

**Question Number: 1288**

**Date of Publication: 1 April 2022**

**NA IQP Number: 13**

**Date of reply: 20 April 2022**

**Ms H S Winkler (DA) to ask the Minister of Tourism:**

(a) What steps is her department taking to promote eco-tourism and (b) in what way is her department promoting the transition to, and development of, ecotourism products in the sector in line with global demand for products in the field of eco-tourism? NW1547E

**REPLY:**

1. and (b)

Eco-Tourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local communities by promoting inclusive and sustainable tourism development, while ensuring the education of travellers, communities and tourism providers”.

Within the context of this definition, it is important to note that these principles directly cut across most of the areas of work of the Department such as nature-based tourism product and infrastructure development and maintenance, community-based tourism, women in tourism initiatives targeted at rural women projects and, nature-based tourist guiding capacity development and recognition. Indirectly, the quality assuarance programme implemented by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) and the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP) also significantly contribute to sustainability.

The Department derives it’s ecotourism approach from instruments such as the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998; the Tourism Act 3 of 2014 that promotes sustainable tourism; the National Tourism Sector Strategy (revised 2016), the White Paper on Tourism Development and Promotion in SA, 1996 that introduced the responsible tourism principle; the National Minimum Standard for Responsible Tourism (SANS 1162: 2011) and the Tourism Environmental Implementation Plan (2020-2025) which is a framework for environmental management in tourism as well as the Operational Guidelines for Community Based Tourism – 2021. It is also important to note that nature-based tourism already forms the larger part of the country’s leisure tourism offering, and to that extent there is no need to shift towards ecotourism but rather maintain a healthy balance in terms of our tourism offering.