**THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2519**

**DATE PUBLISHED: 19 NOVEMBER 2021**

**Mr D W Macpherson (DA) to ask the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition:**

(1) With reference to the World Expo 2020 which is currently underway in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and in light of the allegations that the Republic’s stand at the event has been unmanned on several occasions, (a) what total amount has been (i) budgeted and (ii) spent on this event on each line item, (b) was the stand open every day for the event and manned for the full period, (c)(i) what total number of officials from his department flew from the Republic to be at the event and (ii) at what cost and (d) what benefit did the Republic receive from its participation at the expo;

(2) whether he will furnish Mr D W Macpherson with (a) the list of officials mandated to man the stand and (b) the relevant attendance register; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) whether the stand has remained unmanned as alleged; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what action will be taken against the individuals who were assigned to man the stand? [NW2942E]

**REPLY:**

One of the primary objectives of South Africa’s participation at EXPO2020 is to provide South African companies exposure and access to global markets. To date, more than 219 companies have been recruited and economic development agencies are being provided a unique platform to display trade and investment opportunities offered by South Africa. In addition to the exposure received through the more than 125 000 visitors that have visited the stand since opening, a number of export and investment leads directly linked to South Africa’s participation at EXPO2020 have been registered.

1

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Examples include potential exports orders of fresh produce and food products by supermarkets and importers with headquarters in the UAE and Lebanon. Leads on potential investments in oil and gas, renewables, agro-processing, healthcare, construction and real estate were also registered.

Following the Tourism Promotion month, which concluded on 31 December; an MOU between SA Tourism and Emirates Airlines has been initiated aimed at promoting South Africa as a tourist destination; facilitate packages to South Africa; as well as a number of code-share agreements with various airlines operating in South Africa. In terms of Tourism investment leads, the Bin Otaiba Hotels (or The Otaiba Group) from the UAE which currently has invested more than R 4 billion in the South African tourism sector, has pledged to continue investment in South Africa and work towards reopening closed hotels due to Covid -19 and take up new opportunities for investment in South Africa. In addition, Millat Investment has also pledged to expand their footprint in SA in-terms of their hotel chains, undertaking to open a third branch of the Hyatt Hotels in 2022.

As the Expo is still currently being held until 31 March 2022, a detailed report indicating the impact and exposure will be completed thereafter.

According to the official EXPO2020 website, 192 countries are participating in the Dubai EXPO2020, with exhibitors required to build their own pavilions and ensure that their products are services are marketed. **the dtic** has budgeted R54 million to the following line items to enable the participation of South African public and private entities:

 Pavilion Construction

 Exhibition Space Rental

 Business-to-Business Virtual Platform

 Freight

 Travel and Accommodation for officials

I am advised that the South African pavilion work within the regulated hours of the EXPO, requiring all pavilions to be open 7 days a week from 10:00 to 22:00, and include the following additional information provided by the Department, as follows.

2

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The South African pavilion has only been closed to the public on three occasions. On 17 October 2021, the pavilion closed at 17:00 to allow for South Africa’s official opening and launch at EXPO2020. The second instance was on 28 October 2021, where doors closed from 18:00 to 20:00 for the hosting of a fashion show, allowing local South African clothing designers to present their exciting offerings to buyers from the Middle East. The third instance was on 31 December 2021 where the doors were closed at 20:00 to allow for fogging of the pavilion as part of Covid 19 protocols. The stand had been staffed for the full period.

Four **dtic** officials have flown from South Africa to be at the event and to remain until the closure of EXPO2020.

The list of **the dtic** officials mandated to attend to the stand are:

1) Ms Fuziwe Kubheka – Deputy Director

2) Mr Henry Mabale – Assistant Director

3) Mr Thabang Mamaru – Assistant Director

4) Ms Portia Chokoe – Trade and Industry Advisor

**the dtic** officials are also supported by four (4) ushers locally recruited in Dubai by the service provider as part of the stand building contract. The relevant attendance registers for officials and ushers can be supplied by the Director General of the Department.

**-END-**

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