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EDITORIAL



The 2021 year has been turbulent for the Tourism Sector. The Covid19 pandemic, and the measures employed to thwart the spread of the virus continued to impact the business of tourism, compelling us to think outside of the box to keep the sector functional under the new normal.

As a Department, we approached the year with zeal and optimism to put in place programmes and initiatives to support the sector, and usher in a glimmer of hope for tourism recovery.

As the 2021 year comes to an end, the third edition of the Bojanala Stakeholder Magazine celebrates the contributions and achievements that have made a difference in the sector, and have shined a global spotlight on South Africa as a premium destination.

Our quest to kick-start tourism recovery began with the implementation of the

Tourism Sector Recovery Plan. The development and approval of the Tourism Norms & Standards on safe operations in the sector enhanced responsible tourism practices under the new normal. Tourism Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu's feature on her engagement with Industry leaders unpacks how the Tourism Norms and Standards will be leveraged to reignite tourism and international arrivals.

Another milestone marked is the advancement of women as entrepreneurs. Championed by the Turkish Corporation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), explore how their Women Entrepreneurship Empowerment Programme will stimulate the growth of women-owned manufacturing businesses in the sector.

Tourism initiated its Global Advocacy Programme in October to ramp up advocacy efforts in key source

markets around the world. This follows the protracted damaging narrative and misinformation that have been reported about South Africa globally. Read more about how South Africa is changing mindsets and inspiring a new perspective with its Global Advocacy Campaign at the Dubai 2020 World Expo.

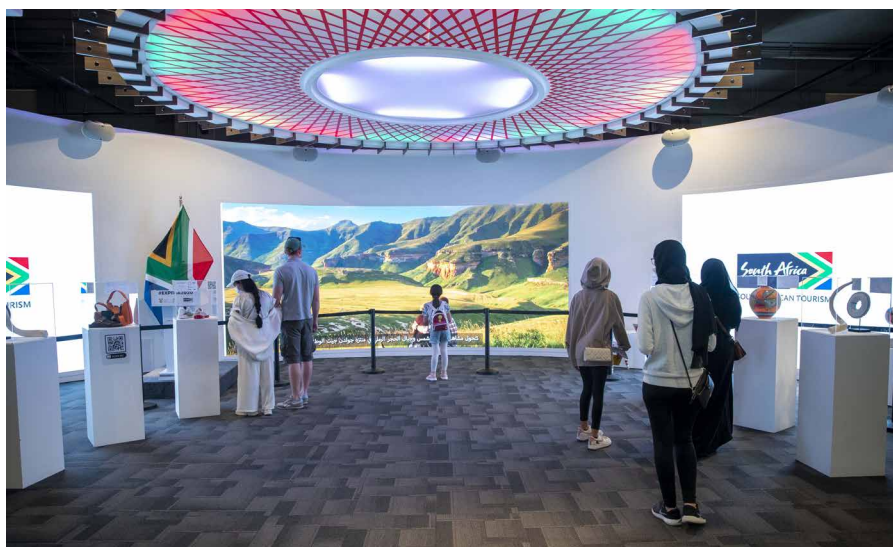
As we celebrate with friends and family this holiday season, be mindful that the COVID-19 virus is still with us. Stay safe this festive season by adhering to all health and safety protocols and by choosing to vaccinate against COVID-19 to protect your loved ones and, most importantly, to keep the sector open and functional.

For more information on Safety Tips during the Holiday Season Visit www.tourism.gov.za

#DoTourismResponsibly and
#Jab4Tourism

- Seapei Lebele





TOURISM TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT THE DUBAI 2020 WORLD EXPO.

South Africa's Tourism Month was launched with great fanfare at the Dubai 2020 World Expo on 3 December 2021, as delegates from around the world gathered to get a taste of South Africa. The event provided the country with an opportunity to take its place among the globe's biggest nations, showcasing all of its natural wonders and vibrant cultures as well as to tell its story.

South African Tourism's Acting CEO, Mr. Themba Khumalo, described the SA pavilion as a microcosm of what delegates might expect if they visit the country. "When you come to South Africa, it is not about seeing things and doing things. You can do that anywhere in the world but, when you come to South Africa, you come to be renewed from inside out."

Mr. Khumalo maintained that despite the challenges brought about by COVID -19, there is no substitute for experiencing a place for one's self. "We now live virtual lives where we see each other as pixels on screens. We sit in our rooms without moving for a whole week or even a whole month. This is not what the human race is built to be. There is nothing that replaces being there, the human touch and human interaction."

Despite the natural wonders that keep on bringing visitors to our shores, Khumalo said the highlight of any trip is the warm hospitality of South Africa's people. "From the six pillars we offer from a leisure travel standpoint – our

wildlife, urban cities, our brilliant coastline and our marine life – all of those are trumped by one thing: meeting the people of South Africa. You strike up conversations, build friendships, find new things about our culture, and at the end you have friends for life."

South Africa's borders are still open

Notwithstanding the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, South Africa has decided to trust its scientists and remain open to travellers looking to explore our shores during the upcoming holiday season. Government has embarked on the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccine which is successfully managing the high rate of infection and reviving the economy in the country.

In managing the pandemic, Khumalo said travellers to the country will find that every single touchpoint has been reworked to feel make one feel safe. "South Africa is open for business. And we are confidently open because we had put in the work [during lockdown] to make sure your holiday is safe and enjoyable."

South Africa an attractive investment destination

South Africa's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Mr. Saad Cachalia, was on hand to highlight the country's growing trade and industry, saying that it is ripe for foreign direct investment. "Government has made efforts to modernise industry according to global

standards. The emerging technologies coming out of the Fourth Industrial Revolution are determining the direction of industry, therefore, considerable amounts of planning and investment is going into upgrading it."

South Africa is an attractive destination for investors who are looking to expand their portfolios. Tourism is diverse, with agriculture and automotive manufacturing remaining some of the strongest sectors. Therefore, Investors have numerous options to explore.

Ambassador Cachalia further said that green energy presents investors, particularly those from the UAE with a strong opportunity for growth. "South Africa presents the UAE with possibilities that can help address its own challenges – particularly around renewable energy resources.

Investment opportunities lie within wind and solar PV energy generation, the manufacturing of solar and wind turbine technologies and components, and in energy storage."

Ambassador Cachalia also added that government's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) emphasises the urgency of diversifying the country's energy basket. "The IRP will provide substantial opportunities for private sector participation in the large-scale roll-out of renewable energy generation capacity, particularly wind and solar powered."

Tourism revival on the cards

Tourism plays a crucial role in the development of South Africa's economy. Government has drafted the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, which is aimed at reviving the industry to pre-COVID levels.

It is also driving re-entry into international tourism markets by maintaining Visa waivers for travellers from over 80 countries. The Tourism Equity Fund has been implemented to support strategic investments that will contribute to the sector's transformation.

"The government is committed in investing in right things to ensure tourism industry continues to evolve and sharpen itself," said Khumalo.

The South African Pavilion at Dubai Expo is located in the Opportunity District. The link is <https://southafricaexpo2020.co.za/sa-pavilion/>

TRAVELLERS URGED TO #DOTOURISM SAFELY AND RESPONSIBLY



**DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM
FISH MAHLALE**

The recent announcement on the detection of the Omicron variant saw the tourism sector suffer yet another blow with international countries arbitrarily imposing restrictions for travellers from the Southern African region.

The South African Government in December concluded the third leg of its Vooma Vaccination drive in a bid to increase the number of vaccinated people ahead of the December holiday Season. Speaking at a community engagement in the ZFM Mgcawu District of the Northern Cape Province, Deputy Minister of Tourism Mr. Fish Mahlalela urged all South Africans to #DoTourism safely and responsibly.

"It has been an arduous year for the sector and South Africans in general. As we prepare to take a break to spend time with family and friends, I urge you to explore our country's beautiful and diverse tourism offerings in a safe and responsible manner. This will ensure that the sector remains open which will boost recovery," said Deputy Minister Mahlalela.

South Africa's tourism sector is open under Adjusted Alert Level 1 and has steadily begun to navigate a path to recovery. According to Stats SA, hotels in the country recorded an occupancy rate of 26,7% in September 20 21, up from 20,3% in August and 12,4% in July.

As scientists work around the clock to obtain more data about the Omicron variant, it is clear that the future growth and sustainability of our economy will inevitably be influenced by perceptions on our country's health and safety standards.

"It is encouraging to see that the initiatives of the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan are gradually starting to yield positive results. This strategy, along with our government's concerted efforts to get as many people vaccinated in the country, will contribute immensely to elevating our safety standards thus propelling the sector to recovery," added Mahlalela.

A key component of the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan has been the development of Norms and Standards on safe operations within the sector to curb the spread of COVID19 and other related pandemics. The recently gazetted Norms and Standards provide uniformity in view of the tools compiled by industry associations, drawn from international guidelines in the travel and tourism sector including global and local health authorities, on the measures governing safe operations in tourism.

"Personal safety and security influence the visitor experience and the propensity for people to finalise their travel plans. Health and Safety is a priority as a result of COVID19 and approaches to travel is informed and will continue to be informed by this reality in the future."

"As we work towards tourism recovery, our Norms and Standards will provide assurance to visitors and all stakeholders that South Africa's tourism products and services are equipped to operate safely amid the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as other imminent health threats," said Deputy Minister Mahlalela.

The Norms and Standards cover services such as accommodation, food, tour operations, casinos, attractions, meetings, weddings, conference etc. The principles guiding safe and seamless travel include (1) non-discrimination of travelers; (2) clear communication on health protocols and regulations; (3) timeous information to visitors about rules and regulations in place; (4) data sharing on the basis of consent; (5) physical distancing rules and (6) downloading tracking app; (7) contactless payment and e-tickets for visiting attractions and entertainment amongst others.

The Gazette and proclaimed version of the "Norms and Standards on the safe operations in the tourism sector to prevent the spread of COVID19 other related pandemics" is available on the department's website www.tourism.gov.za

Minister Lindiwe Sisulu assures the tourism industry of the government's full support

Minister of Tourism Lindiwe Sisulu has assured the tourism industry that they have the government's full backing. This follows her successful trip to the UAE World EXPO 2020 held in Dubai, where she showcased South Africa to the rest of the world.

During the expo, Minister Sisulu met with various representatives from other strategic countries whose tourists are crucial to the South African tourism market.

"We are coming out of here excited because we have met an overwhelming number of countries that are interested in us because of the numerous tourism packages that our country can offer them," said Sisulu.

The Minister also had the opportunity to meet with the top executives of airlines. "Meeting the airline's top executives makes it possible to talk directly to the people who manage the schedules for destinations and assure them that we have a safe place to go to." Minister Sisulu stated.

She closed her trip following an engagement with members of the tourism trade that sells South Africa to the world, where they shared their concern that COVID-19 variants have been incorrectly associated with South Africa, which has damaged South Africa's brand reputation.

Minister Sisulu is optimistic about the prospects of tourism bouncing back and has welcomed the recent announcements by governments of some source markets, including the UK and Germany, to remove South Africa from their travel "red list", as tourism can only thrive when the country's borders are open.



As countries begin to relax barriers of entry to and from South Africa, we expect to see an increased resumption of travel, which in turn will speed up the recovery of the industry," said Sisulu.

The tourism industry is one of the worst-affected industries by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Minister Sisulu assured the industry that the government will do everything possible to help the industry during this difficult time. The Minister further assured the sector that the government would work tirelessly until South Africa is removed from all restrictive "red lists", which have wreaked havoc on the entire South African tourism value chain.

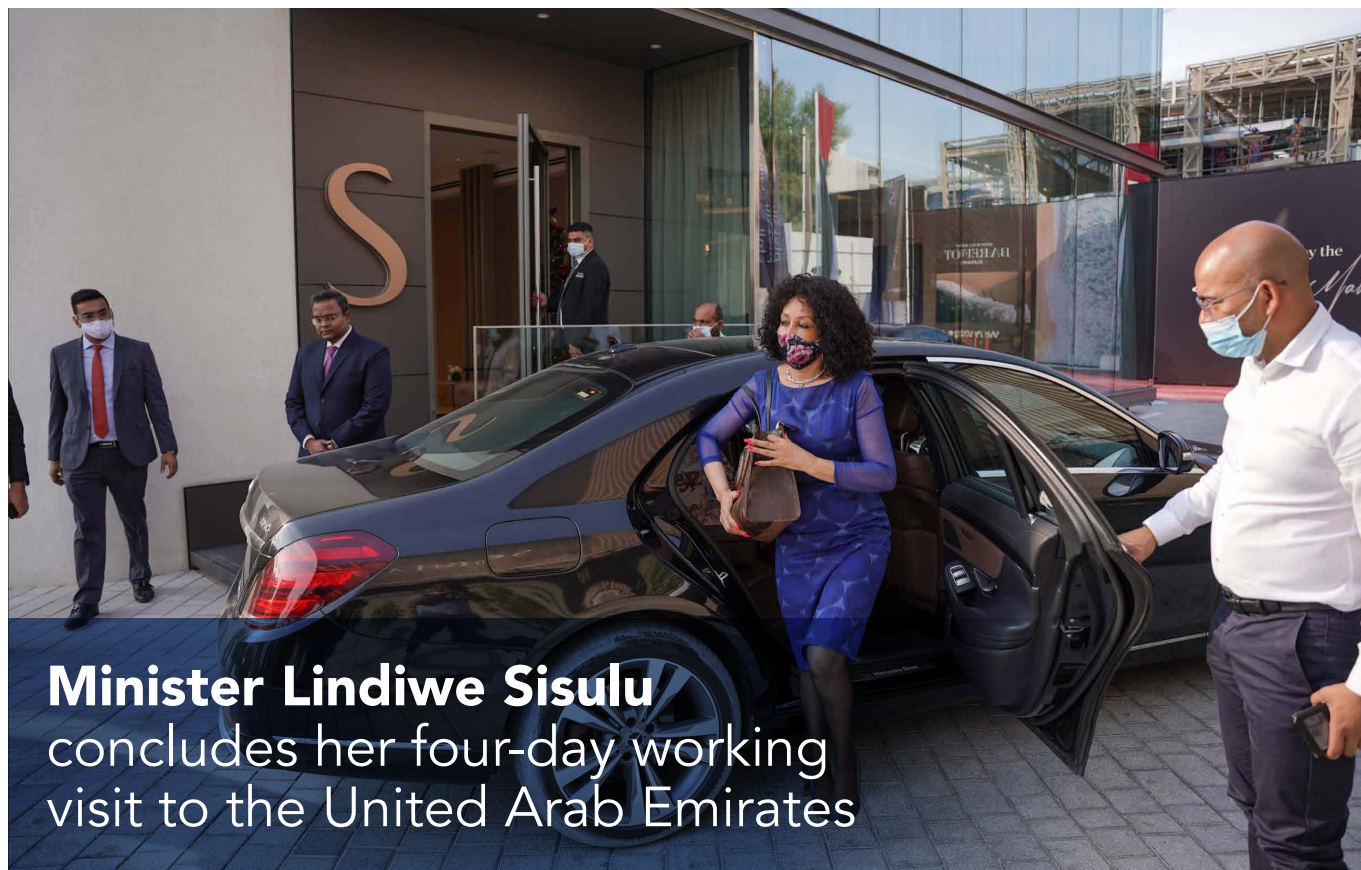
In an effort to ensure compliance with COVID-19 safety regulations and to ensure everyone's safety, South Africa allows travellers with a negative PCR COVID-19 test result not older than 72 hours to enter the country. Ports of entry into South Africa are fully equipped to ensure the safety of all travellers entering and leaving the country.

The festive season brought a welcome boost to the tourism sector. South Africa prides itself on countless scenic wonders and authentic experiences, which include Sun City, recently voted Africa's leading casino resort, Plettenberg Bay as Africa's leading beach and Durban as Africa's leading city destination. Table Mountain has also been voted as Africa's leading tourist attraction.



The Minister also encouraged South Africans to explore their country and visit their relatives and loved ones, but do so safely within the COVID regulations.

"Many locals have come to discover an abundance of travel opportunities on their doorsteps, and that can only mean good things for the South African travel industry. Now is a great time to explore your country", concluded Minister Sisulu. #Jab4tourism



Minister Lindiwe Sisulu of Tourism concluded her four-day working visit to the United Arab Emirates World 2020 Expo destination, the engagement was with members of the trade that sells South Africa to the world as well as a visit to other country pavilions at the Dubai World Expo.

Minister Sisulu said the association of the COVID-19 variants damaged South Africa's brand reputation. She however was comforted that some of our source markets removed South Africa from the Red List because tourism can only thrive when borders are open.

"As countries begin to relax barriers to and from South Africa, increased resumption of travel is likely to occur and speed up the recovery of the industry," said Sisulu.

The Minister further said that the sector would work tirelessly until such time that South Africa is removed from the Red List, by countries that imposed travel bans on her.

South Africa allows only vaccinated travellers with a negative COVID-19 test results not older than 72 hours to enter South Africa. Ports of entry into South Africa are fully equipped to ensure the safety of all travellers entering and leaving the country.



The Minister also encouraged the trade in Dubai and the Middle East to visit the SA Pavilion to learn more about other tourism initiatives from South Africa.

Tourism, which is featured during this December month at the SA Pavilion, aims to build partnerships and showcase the opportunities that emanate from our diversity and promote South Africa as a preferred investment destination.

The Dubai 2020 World Expo is divided into three districts namely, Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability and attracted 192 countries. The South African Pavilion is located in the Opportunity District.

The opportunity district is a platform that transforms dreams and aspirations into realities of tomorrow by unlocking the potential within oneself.

As one enters the South African pavilion, one is welcomed by two central pillars

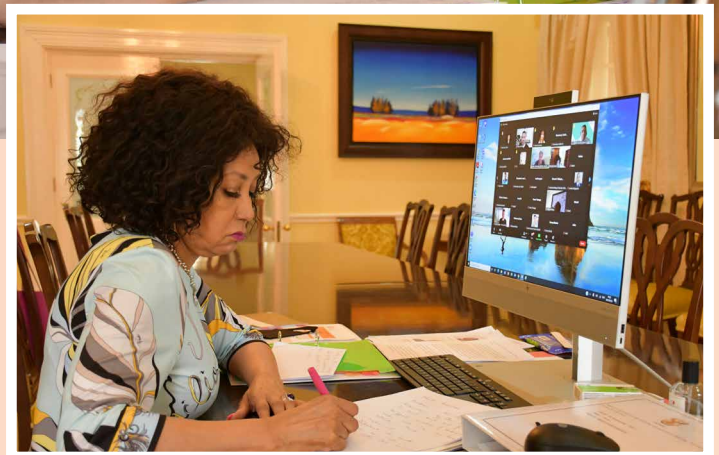
that bring to life the rich South African culture and diversity.

"We want the world to Think Opportunity, when they visit South Africa' world-class pavilion, it stimulates innovation and creates tangible opportunities in leisure, trade and investments" said Sisulu.

South Africa prides itself on countless wonders and authentic experiences and some of the provincial tourism gems promoted include Sun-City that was recently voted Africa's leading casino resort, Plettenberg Bay, Africa's leading beach and Durban, Africa's leading city destination. Proudly South African food products are also on display at the exhibition store.

The tourism platform is experiencing high traffic volume with 2nd December recording more than 6000 visitors. From first to 14 December, tourism welcomed more 23 000 visitors to the Pavilion.

The link to the South African Pavilion: <https://southafricaexpo2020.co.za/sa-pavilion/>



MINISTER SISULU ENGAGES WITH TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS

According to the Tourism and Migration Report released by Statistics South Africa in May 2021, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have devastating effects for the tourism sector with international arrivals to South Africa drastically declined since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the period, January – March 2020, South Africa received a total of 2 429 177 tourist arrivals. In 2021, South Africa only received 386 937 tourist arrivals, indicating a decline of 84.1% (2 042 240) in international tourist arrivals.

In order to address such devastating issues, the Minister of Tourism Ms Lindiwe Sisulu held a virtual Stakeholder Engagement meeting on 30 September 2021, to look into the effect of the

COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's economy. President Cyril Ramaphosa released the Economic Reconstruction and Development Plan (ERRP) in October 2020. The ERRP is aimed at stimulating equitable and inclusive growth and identifies nine priority interventions to restore the economy. These nine priority interventions are:

- Aggressive infrastructure investment;
- Employment orientated strategic localisation, reindustrialisation and export promotion;
- Energy security;
- Support for tourism recovery and growth;
- Gender equality and economic inclusion of women and youth;
- Green economy interventions;
- Mass public employment interventions;

- Strengthening food security; and
- Macro-economic interventions.

In line with the ERRP, Cabinet approved the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan (TSRP) on 21 April 2021. The Plan represents the collective response by government and private stakeholders in the tourism sector to the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The main objective of the TSRP is to enable the tourism sector to recover to 2019 activity and employment levels by 2023. This will be done through targeted, coordinated actions to mitigate the impacts of the crisis. It is envisaged that the TSRP will set the tourism sector on the most optimal path towards recovery, transformation and long-term sustainability.

The fact that the ERRP highlights the “support for tourism recovery and growth” as a priority intervention, clearly emphasises the important contribution of the tourism sector to South Africa’s economic recovery and the role that tourism can play to stimulate South Africa’s economic. It is therefore critical that the entire tourism sector acts in unison to rebuild the tourism sector.

Current challenges affecting the tourism industry

The most pressing issues for the tourism industry can be summarised as follows:

- COVID-19 and Government’s efforts in the fight against COVID-19

The outbreak of the global pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns had a devastating effect on the tourism sector. The distribution of vaccines and management of the pandemic remains a key factor for the recovery of the tourism sector. Key sub sectors in the tourism sector, such as the Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibition (MICE) industries, private charters and couch businesses as well as others, are still unable to function due the restrictions imposed by Government’s Risk Adjusted Strategy. The restriction on domestic travel and other lockdown regulations remains a key obstacle for the recovery of the tourism sector.

- International Travel “Red List”

The COVID-19 pandemic had an adverse effect on international travel. Although many countries have opened their borders and allowed their citizens to travel internationally, some restrictions remain. One of the critical obstacles for South Africa is the fact that it is still on the United Kingdom’s “Red List,” which means that travellers returning from South Africa to the United Kingdom will need to hotel-quarantine for 10 days and take a coronavirus (COVID-19) test on or before day two and on or after day eight of quarantining. Considering that the United Kingdom is South Africa’s largest tourism source markets, the current restrictions by the British Government is having an adverse effect on South Africa’s tourism industry.

- E-Visas

Visa requirements for international travelers traveling to South Africa has a huge effect on South Africa’s tourism sector. The more stringent the visa requirement, the less likely tourists will consider a country as a destination. The relaxation of South Africa’s visa requirements as well as improved processing and systems plays a crucial role in promoting South Africa as a tourism destination of choice. However, the Department of Tourism is not the custodian of immigration regulations and is reliant on the Department of Home Affairs for issues relating to Visas. The Department of Home Affairs is currently in the process of implementing an E-Visa system to 15 countries that aims to simplify travel to South Africa.

- Vaccination Passport or Certificate

Closely linked to the E-Visa issue and COVID-19 travel requirements and regulations, the tourism sector under the leadership of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA), is calling for government to align the Department of Health’s Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS) with the relevant passport and immigration systems. The digitisation of proof of vaccination or results and PCR tests will contribute to seamless immigration processes, and ease of access to South Africa as a tourism destination. This matter is also an action listed in the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan.

- National Public Transport Regulator

The National Public Transport Regulator (NPTR), under the mandate of the Department of Transport and is currently one of the major stumble blocks for the Tourism Sector. The functions of the NPTR are:

- to monitor and oversee public transport in the country;
- receive and decide on applications relating to inter-provincial operating licenses, accreditation of tourist transport services; and
- oversees fares charged for public transport services throughout the country and advise the Minister on the making of regulations in relation to fares or fare structures.

The Department of Transport has been unable to appoint a new Adjudication Commission/Board due to legal technicalities. The absence of a functional NPTR board and subsequent delay in issuing operator licences, has been a major obstacle to tourism growth, with many tour operators facing closure of their businesses as a result of not receiving their licences on time. The fact that many of these operators were required to still pay for licensing and permits deprive being unable to operate, further contributed to their plight.

From the industry’s side, a reimbursement or relief mechanism in terms of licensing and registration of public transport vehicles is proposed. The latest development in this area is that an extension of permits and licenses were granted until March 2022.

- International Air Service Council

Similar to the NPTR, the International Air Service Council falls under the Department of Transport, who is the custodian of South Africa’s airlift strategy and is therefore a critical stakeholder for the Department of Tourism. Currently, one of the main challenges that exists in the area is the bottleneck caused by the fact that the International Air Service Council based in the Department of Transport has not been operational since 31 March 2021. The International Air Service Council is responsible for issuing licenses to South African operators wishing to operate air services to regional and international destinations.

- Safety and Security

Safety and security are vital to providing quality in tourism. More than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors. For South Africa, tourism safety has been consistently identified across a number of studies, media and crime reports as a challenge which threatens tourism growth and therefore, foreign direct investment, visitor spend and employment. Both the reality and perceptions regarding South Africa’s safety and security challenges remains a concern for the tourism sector.



“WE NEED TO REMAIN RESILIENT FOR THE ECONOMY TO GO ON...”

- TSHIVHENGWA

South Africa's tourism and hospitality sector is showing signs of recovery with Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) reporting a second consecutive month of growth in its Accommodation, as well as Food and Beverage performance reports.

“The largest positive month-on-month growth rates were recorded for guest houses and guest farms (30.3%), hotels (21.5%) and other accommodation (19.4%),” said Ms Rosemary Anderson, Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (FEDHASA) National Chairperson.

Stats SA's Food and Beverages' key report for September 2021 indicates that the total income generated by the industry increased by 23.4% in September 2021 in comparison to September 2020. The last annual growth rate was recorded for food sales (27.1%).

In September 2021, the main contributors to the 23.4% year-on-year increase were restaurants, coffee shops, as well as takeaway and fast-food outlets. Ms Anderson added that the hospitality industry is crawling its

way back to being a feasible industry, however, urged travellers to continue to comply with COVID-19 regulations. Be that as it may, with the recent reporting of the new COVID-19 variant Omicron steadily making its rounds in the country and the world, it seems this great progress may be hindered this coming festive season.

South African travellers have been banned from visiting international countries such as the United Kingdom, United States of America, Seychelles, Japan, France and the European Union, due to concerns around this new variant. This means that international tourists from the listed countries will not be landing on South African soil.

Expressing his concern over this abrupt ban, Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) Mr Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa said, “Every year that we do not adequately operate the international market, we lose around R120 billion. The situation is dire because every month and every day that we do not operate, we lose a lot of money. That equates to jobs that are going to be lost, entrepreneurs that are going to lose their livelihoods and big companies that are going to get into more debt.”

In response to President Cyril

Ramaphosa's address on 29 November 2021, Mr Tshivhengwa was relieved and highlighted that the only market we have left is the domestic one and that we need to allow it to fully operate to sustain the tourism industry in the short-term, whilst discussions around opening the international market are underway.

“The one thing that we have done right since the beginning of this pandemic, is to implement the protocols across the tourism value chain, to back it up with training and technology. The second part is that we now have widely available vaccines. We have been encouraging those within the tourism value chain to get vaccinated. We have launched various programmes such as Jab for Tourism through affiliate members so that we can instill confidence in both the domestic and international travelers that come to our establishments,” he added.

“We need to be the number one industry that has been vaccinated in higher numbers to make sure that we protect our livelihoods. We cannot be complacent and think that the virus is gone. It is still here and has proven that it can shake us at any time. We need to remain resilient and make sure we do everything in our power for us to be alive and for the economy to go on,” concluded Mr Tshivhengwa.

Tourism update





Mpumalanga is one of South Africa's provinces endowed with natural attractions and experiences bound to astound any traveller.

Expediently dubbed South Africa's adventure capital, Mpumalanga offers an array of activities ranging from, abseiling, white water river rafting, fly-fishing, paragliding, mountain biking, bungee jumping, hiking and 4X4 trails to name a few.

The province is undoubtedly the ultimate in terms of wildlife experience. The Kruger National Park, the Sabi Sands private game reserve and other game reserves dotted throughout the province offer an exhilarating and unequalled experience that brings visitors in close proximity to nature. The Kruger Park boasts a conservancy area spanning 2 million hectares rich with flora and fauna.

The Lowveld escarpment (Panorama Route) offers spectacular landscapes with attractions like the Blyde River Canyon (3rd largest in the world), majestic waterfalls and high altitude scenic drives leading to attractions like God's Window, Pinnacle rock, Bourke's Luck Potholes and the Three Rondavels.

The Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve is a 22 500ha reserve and is one of Mpumalanga's most accessible tourist attractions and is listed in the top ten "must see" destinations in South Africa. Hiking in the canyon is one of the most popular adventure activities. The Blydepoort Hiking Trail follows the contours across the face of the canyon through indigenous forests and

over rivers. Hikers can opt for varying duration hikes using any of the several overnight, self catering trail huts.

Mpumalanga has a highly visible cultural heritage which today mirrors the very evolution of Southern Africa. From the early San rock art to the beadwork of the modern day Swazi and Ndebele people. The province is a real treasure of artistic and cultural diversity. Apart from the displays found in museums and art galleries, the emphasis today is to recreate the past in living museums and villages where visitors can experience the many aspects of these interesting cultures.

The province also boasts a rich heritage, which is greatly unexplored. The myriad heritage sites include the Samora Machel monument near Mbuzini, Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains World Heritage Site boasting rock formations dating back to more than 3,5 billion years. Other sites not to be missed are the mining village of Pilgrim's Rest, the Highveld Heritage Route abound with adventurous tales into history, the stone circles of Mpumalanga, Goliath's footprint to name just a few.

Dr Esther Mahlangu is one of the icons in the province that continues to promote the Ndebele culture. Following traditions passed down from her mother and grandmother, she learned traditional Ndebele wall painting and beadwork as a child. She became an expert in executing murals as a teenager, using a widening range of paint colours that emerged in the 1940s. Today she is a renowned icon with her work being recognised world wide.

The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency identified the need to establish a Liberation Heritage Route within the province that highlights the key freedom fighters, who fought for justice and freedom from oppression, as well as the destinations that featured prominently during the liberation struggle

Bird watchers can have a glimpse of more than 500 different birds endemic in the Kruger Park or the Chrissiesmeer areas in the southern part of the province.

The midveld, offers trout fishing opportunities in pristine rivers and dams with Dullstroom referred to as South Africa's trout-fishing Mecca. The Ndebele culture in the Highveld region boasts icons like Sarah Mahlangu who have managed to preserve, package and export the colourful culture to international countries.

Mpumalanga is an ideal golf destination with a myriad of world class golf estates and courses that provide sheer enjoyment of the game in complete serenity.

Get off the beaten track and explore the many other offerings on offer. Visit www.mpumalanga.com for more information.

Follow us on the following social media platforms:

- Facebook: Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency
- Twitter: @Mtpatourism.
- Instagram: @mpumalangatourism

Gauteng Tourism invites unvaccinated tourism and hospitality frontline workers to participate in the #Jab4Tourism drive at Vilakazi Street.



The Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) visited Vilakazi Street in Soweto in October 2021 to urge unvaccinated frontline tourism and hospitality industry employees to join the #Jab4Tourism campaign and get vaccinated ahead of the festive summer period.

The #Jab4tourism campaign promotes vaccination in order to attract both domestic and international visitors to South Africa during the holiday summer season. Another goal of the campaign is to save the employment and livelihoods of individuals who have been affected by the pandemic in the sector. Waiters, waitrons, chefs, security guards, tourist guides, and bartenders were among those targeted for vaccination. This iconic street and a well-known precinct was chosen for this activation since they are home to a number of tourist and hospitality businesses.

The campaign was backed, amongst others, by the District Health Office, which ensured that the vaccination site was set up and ready to accept employees who were willing to be vaccinated. Barba Gaogenediwe-Matsogo, the GTA's acting CEO at the time, said, "Vaccines save lives, and we need to

get vaccinated in order to reignite the economy. The tourism industry has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic due to a massive fall in international demand amid global travel restrictions. A high vaccination rate is a competitive advantage for tourism destinations".

Gauteng as a province aspires to attain herd immunity, in which the virus does not pass from person to person. The goal is to reassure visitors that Gauteng is ready and safe to welcome them back.

According to the GTA, countries that are economically reliant on tourism have made a deliberate effort to prioritise vaccination in order to safeguard jobs, livelihoods, and reignite the economy.

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NORTH WEST PROMOTES CULTURAL TOURISM

Mahikeng. The North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) hosted a cultural tourism development seminar under the theme “**The year of Charlotte Maxeke: Celebrating South Africa’s Intangible Cultural Heritage**” with tourism stakeholders, in Mahikeng.

The seminar seeks to stimulate culture and heritage as pillars of the tourism sector in the province. This will be leveraged to demonstrate the rich history of the province and showcase its diversity to tourists and local communities.

Mr. Gabriel Dichabe; Director: Tourist Guiding said the Department is responsible for the regulation of tourist guiding and therefore have to empower them to be well informed and able to share information that portrays the beauty of North West as a cultural and heritage province. “Through this seminar we are creating a platform for our tourist guides especially those promoting cultural tourism to be able to mediate between the attractions by interpreting the cultural sites, museum artefact or intangible heritage to the tourists,” said Dichabe. Dichabe indicated that they had invited experts to come and share their knowledge on true stories and authentic interpretations of culture and history of the province and the country at large.

The content gathered during the seminar will be used as repository of knowledge about cultural and heritage sites found in all districts of the North



West. The Department will package the information into various materials which will be shared with all tour guides and other relevant stakeholders within the tourism industry.

Amongst the presenters were Kgosi Jeffrey Montshioa of Barolong boora Tshidi who shared the lineage of Barolong boora Tshidi and the role of traditional leadership in governance, culture and heritage.

Participants were equipped with knowledge on culture and heritage sites by the finest minds and practitioners which include Mr Mpho Molapisi of the Lichtenburg Agriculture and Cultural museum, as well as by multiple award winning cultural tour guide; Mr Mncedise Thambe who gave insights into the case study of Mphebotho Museum as a leading heritage product in the Province. Furthermore a linkage between cultural tourism and indigenous knowledge systems was presented focusing on the uniqueness of the Batswana culture.

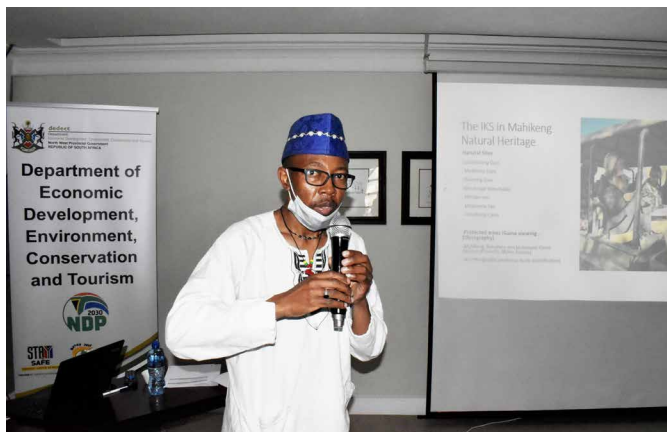
Mr. Pablo Mogotsi, a cultural tour guide, focused on exploring indigenous knowledge systems in the cultural,



historical and natural heritage of Mahikeng as a unique cultural tourism destination. The session concluded with a presentation by researcher, Advocate Sipho Mantula on promoting social cohesion and nation building through cultural tourism. To this end the province will further explore indigenous knowledge systems in culture and nature as it would create a unique tourism offering within the province.

The seminar came up with ways of promoting culture tourism which has now been of interest to domestic and international tourists and also to young people who have seen opportunity in the tourism sector. This includes customs and traditions of the people, heritage, history and ways of life.

In his concluding remarks Mr. Dichabe highlighted the fact that the department together with the Tourism Board will package information for tour guides which will focus on indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, places, objects, artefacts and more, in order to mediate between the attraction, by interpreting our culture and intangible heritage for tourists.



Mr. Gabriel Dichabe: Director Tourist Guiding



Advocate Sipho Mantula on promoting social cohesion and nation building through cultural tourism



YOUTH AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IMBIZO AT EBUTSINI



Deputy Minister of Tourism Mr Fish Mahlalela engaged with Mpumalanga Youth and Women in Tourism Entrepreneurs in the tourism value chain about the opportunities available in various industries of the tourism sector as part of government commitments towards youth and women.

The engagement took place in a form of an Imbizo on 26 October 2021 at Ebutsini Cultural Village in Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality in Mpumalanga province.

Tourism sector remains a key driver of South Africa's national economy and contributes to economic growth and job creation. It is in this context that government continues to create a conducive environment for youth and women in tourism to pursue tourism careers including entrepreneurship.

Statistics South Africa recently reported an increase of 0.6% unemployment rate amongst the youth in the first quarter of 2021. Not much has changed for better ever since the release of the statistics. These alarming numbers are a cause for concern and requires deliberate and measured interventions from government.

The objectives of these engagements are to influence an entrepreneurial culture among youth that fosters business development and economic growth, influence national appreciation and support for entrepreneurship as a viable career option. Facilitating access to traditional and non-traditional financing options is done in partnership with National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), building a strong linkage with agencies that

promote entrepreneurial development and provide innovative and dynamic training for small business development and sustainability.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the lives of ordinary South Africans. It has glaringly exposed the socio-economic fault lines of the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Women were the hardest hit as there was an extra burden on women-headed households," said Deputy Minister Mahlalela.

He continued by saying, "Together we must do more to ensure that our vision of an equal and just society becomes a lived reality for women. The empowerment of women is an integral part of our effort to achieve inclusive growth, create jobs and expand economic opportunities for all."

Deputy Minister Mahlalela further emphasised that, "The late Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr Kofi Annan, says this about women empowerment, 'there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.' It is to this end that our intervention through the Women in Tourism Programme are aimed at accelerating the development and empowerment of women."

Since its inception in 2013, the Women in Tourism Programme has to date included training on personal development, supporting women to develop a competitive advantage in their businesses and provision of capacity building initiatives. Participants in the programme include entrepreneurs, women working in the sector, students and women from the informal sector who seek to enter the tourism value chain.

Through the Department's Executive Development Programme, 20 African women managers have been capacitated with an NQF Level 8 at the University of South Africa. The programme is meant to create a pool from which employers can tap into to close the gap of African women in executive management positions in the sector.

Ultimately, it is to prepare them for board and shareholder responsibilities in the higher echelons of a transformed tourism industry we seek to build and achieve 30% representation of women in leadership and ownership levels in the next five years.

"In addition to these development programmes, the Department continues to expand initiatives and creation of an enabling environment to accelerate women's participation in supply chains through preferential procurement in the public and private sector and our financing and relief mechanisms have remained unashamedly biased towards women and youth," alluded Deputy Minister Mahlalela.

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) aims to promote employment opportunities and the transfer of skills to members of the community aimed at supporting the development of community-based tourism, thereby stimulating job creation, sector transformation,



economic empowerment, community benefit and geographic spread of tourism investment.

The training programmes of the Department of Tourism are aimed at giving learners industry accredited qualifications which exposes them to the work environment and prepares them for a career in tourism.

The Hospitality Youth Training Programme is a 12-months learnership programme targeting the unemployed youth. Learners are being trained in tourism and hospitality related fields to enable them to gain experience in the overall operations of the hospitality industry.

The National Tourism Monitors Programme is targeted to train and deploy youth to assist with the safety of the tourists at key tourism sites with high volumes of tourists or those sites that have a high potential of personal risk to tourists.

The National Youth Chefs Training Programme is implemented in partnership with South African Chefs Association to address the urgent need for cooks and chefs in South Africa's growing hospitality subsector.

The Wine Service Youth Training Programme is implemented to train unemployed youth on Bar Attendant, Drink Services and Customer Care and to place them in various establishments for experiential learning for the duration of the project.

The Food Safety Programme where hospitality and tourism unemployed graduates from Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges are trained and hosted in partnership with private sector as Food Safety Assurers.

Tourist guiding is a critical component of the tourism value chain as it plays an essential role in creating a positive image of our country. In South Africa, tourist guiding is a regulated profession governed by national legislation and policies. In order to improve our service offering and enhance the tourism experience, Tourist Guides were also trained in Mandarin, to address the need of our Chinese markets.

Young people with an aptitude for business are encouraged to grab entrepreneurial opportunities available and start their own businesses. These programmes will empower and assist youth to be confident of their future as Franklin D Roosevelt has correctly put it when he says, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."

Deputy Minister Mahlalela concluded by calling upon the tourism stakeholders, especially youth and women in tourism, to lobby for the development of these tourism assets ensuring that some of the plans for critical infrastructure to unlock the value of tourism are built into the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), in order to attract funding from strategic funding partners.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING AWARDS CEREMONY

The Women Entrepreneurship Empowerment Programme was internationally designed to address and provide solutions to the constraints encountered by women entrepreneurs in relations to E-Commerce with regard to accessing social media platforms on how to do product photography, legal training specific to SMME's, pricing and costing of products and emotional and mental wellbeing through customised capacity building.

Turkish Corporation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), hosted the 2021 Women Entrepreneurship Training Awards ceremony on 28 September at Protea Hotel in Menlyn. 35 women were issued with certificates since they have successfully completed the programme.

The growth of women owned manufacturing businesses are very limited and challenging due to lack of support and skills. The most important targets for the program are to screen and profile women entrepreneurs for growth orientation, train and coach growth orientated women entrepreneurs, assist participants to mobilise finance, link participating women-owned enterprises to new markets and facilitate access to Turkish markets for those whose products can be sold within the country and also sourcing incentives and exports support for growth-oriented enterprises.

TIKA is inspired by the implementing principle of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda – leave no one behind. South Africa and Turkey have enjoyed sound bilateral relations and continues to explore synergies in areas of mutual interest. Tourism is a people-orientated sector and economic development is not possible without people development.

“Most of the women entrepreneur businesses were affected by the pandemic and this training offered by



TIKA played a pivotal role in keeping their businesses operational. TIKA also plans to create market access for them even beyond the borders of South Africa as some of these entrepreneurial products will be showcased in Turkey,” said Head of Office, Ms Pretty Ngubeni-Maluleka on behalf of Deputy Minister of Tourism at the awards ceremony.

She highlighted that Tourism has the potential to address the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality through job creation. Apart from generating revenue, tourism provides economic opportunities for women and youth, supports the development of SMMEs and has the potential to foster social cohesion. This strategic pillar of South Africa's economy has an extensive value chain and has multiple linkages with other sectors of the economy which generates significant multiplier effects.

“To make tourism as inclusive as possible, an enabling environment is needed in which it can grow and prosper. The Department of Tourism has such enabling structures in place. Through the Enterprise Development and Transformation Programme, we are introducing new players in the tourism economy and contribute to the competitiveness of tourism destinations,” said Ms Ngubeni-Maluleka.

The Enterprise Development and Transformation Portal serves as an online supplier marketplace for SMMEs in order to promote sector transformation and job creation. It is recognised that technology will drive provision of government services into the future.

Another pivotal enabler is the Women in Tourism Programme which is an

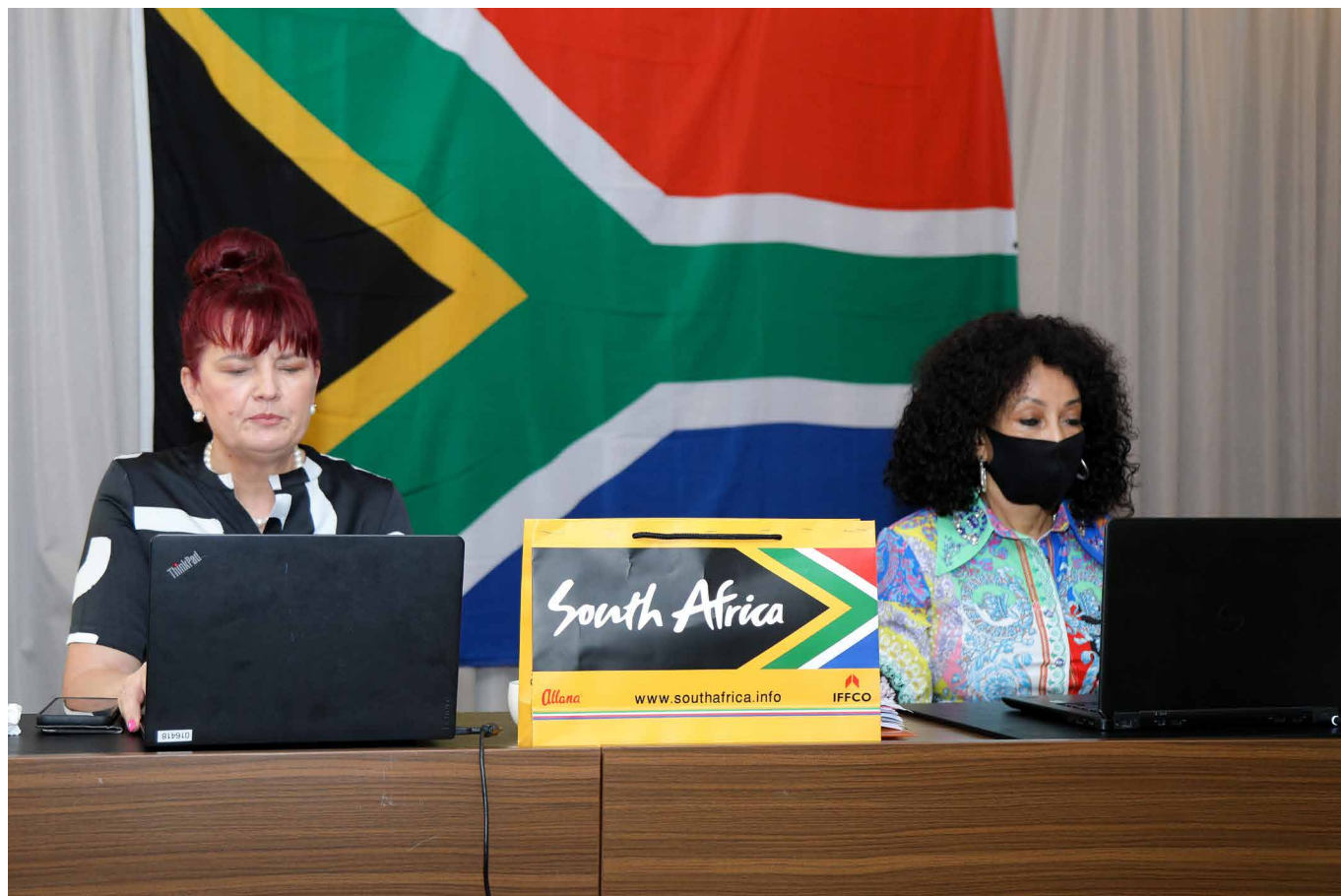
initiative that advances and supports the development and empowerment of women in the tourism sector. Since its inception in 2013, the programme has served as a mechanism to elevate the status of women in the sector by providing training, empowerment and networking opportunities.

Ms Ngubeni-Maluleka further said that, “This platform recognised the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs who are often at the bottom end of the tourism economic value chain.”

A woman entrepreneur is an individual who identifies opportunities, allocates resources, and creates value for their clients while still making a profit. This creation of value is often through the identification of needs or through the identification of opportunities for change.

Furthermore, Status of Women Entrepreneurship in South Africa, despite the potential contribution of women to economic development, women remain on the periphery of the economy, dominating the informal economy. According to the FNB 2011 White Paper on Female Entrepreneurship, only 38% of established business enterprises are owned by women.

“I wish to commend TIKA in making an investment towards building emerging women entrepreneurs in South Africa. Together with the Department of Small Business Development, this initiative demonstrates the excellent socio-economic spinoffs that we can realise through partnerships. This entrepreneurship development initiative will go a long way in alleviating unemployment and catalysing business acumen among small businesses,” concluded Ms Ngubeni-Maluleka.



MINISTER LINDIWE SISULU MET WITH THE SA DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Minister Lindiwe Sisulu says South Africa should continue to prioritise the Middle East because it holds two strategic Air hubs in Dubai and Doha.

Addressing the South African Diplomatic Missions of the Middle East and North Africa, Minister Sisulu stressed that it is important to align strategies as a sector to ensure that we increase tourist arrivals into the country. "South Africa should continue to align tourism products and experiences to provide seamless service to the Muslim traveller", said the Minister.

Inbound tourism from the Middle East market and tourist spend has improved over the past years.

Arrivals from the Middle East to South Africa from 2016 to 2020 shows that Saudi Arabia is leading on inbound tourism in the region.

The Minister also acknowledged the role played by the SA Diplomatic Missions. They are critical players in marketing and upholding brand South Africa globally, amid the negative publicity due to the association of the COVID-19 variant to South Africa.

The Diplomatic Missions expressed appreciation of the engagement with the Minister. They requested that visa waivers should be extended to other parts of the region. Minister Sisulu said she would escalate the matter to her cabinet colleagues to ensure that South Africa is profiled as a warm and welcoming destination with limited barriers to ease of access.

Engagement with the diplomatic community was aimed at assessing the contribution of the region onto Tourism Recovery Plan as well as to facilitate South Africa's reintegration into the Tourism value chain and seek to remove all travel bans imposed on SA passport holders in selected countries.

2021 TOURISM PUBLIC LECTURE



The World Tourism Day and its related activities are aimed at raising awareness among the international and local community about the importance of tourism and its social, environmental and economic values. "Tourism for Inclusive Growth" has been adopted by the United Nations Tourism World Organisation (UNTWO) as the theme to celebrate the 2021 World Tourism Day and Tourism Month.

Globally, tourism stakeholders and organisations, as well as government agencies with a special interest in tourism, celebrate Tourism Day on the 27th of September each year through organising and coordinating of special tourism activities.

To foster stakeholder engagements and partnerships as well as to gain expert industry insights, Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA) together with the Central University of Technology (CUT) hosted the Tourism Month Public Lecture on 17 September 2021 at CUT in Bloemfontein.

"The year 2020 was a year unlike any other with unprecedented events sweeping across the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound adverse impact on the global tourism sector and directly restricted the movement of people, as well as goods and services globally, with a concomitant adverse impact on the tourism sector. Our sector is arguably one of the most impacted in the world, being at the forefront of

this epidemiological storm which has highlighted the need for interventions to keep the sector afloat," said Deputy Minister of Tourism Mr Fish Mahlalela.

The lecture by Professor Leslie Bank of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) promoted transparent and open dialogues between government and its stakeholders. Stability and support for the tourism sector was established to get back to its glory days whilst operating under the new normal.

The panel of experts included Lehlogonolo Mokoena facilitating the discussions, Soza Simango, Keamogetswe Thole and Nthabiseng Malongoana who unpacked this year's Tourism Month theme, "Tourism for Inclusive Growth" as well as discussing and deliberating on the impact of COVID-19 in the Free State tourism sector.

The tourism sector is resilient and will bounce back. With the move to Adjusted Level Two, it is with confidence that tourism growth is on the uptake. The implementation of the Recovery Plan will lend impetus to this and Tourism Month is perfectly positioned to reignite demand that will accelerate growth to rest the sector and to position it on a growth trajectory. The Department of Tourism has developed Norms and Standards aligned to the protocols in support of ensuring a safe and compliant tourism and hospitality sector.

Deputy Minister Mahlalela further emphasised that: "A robust vaccination programme is essential to restoring

consumer confidence. The proportion of travellers vaccinated will be an indicator for tourism revival and the possibility of increased tourist numbers. We continue to urge our people to vaccinate as well as to observe non-pharmaceutical procedures, which are mask wearing, sanitisation and social distancing."

"Tourism is so much more than generating revenue. It also promotes goodwill, social cohesion and nation-building. South Africans are the best proponents and ambassadors for brand South Africa. Let us take ownership of this beautiful country as tourism is everybody's business. It is ours to travel, it is ours to do tourism and it is ours to enjoy. While we welcome the world back to our shores, we also welcome all South Africans to travel in their country. We invite you to take a *Sho't Left* and experience our beautiful country and its melting pot of people and cultures," concluded Deputy Minister Mahlalela.

On the same day of the lecture, Deputy Minister Mahlalela and Free State Member of Executive Council Mr Makola Mohale hosted a community radio Imbizo discussion on tourism for inclusive growth. The 90 minutes discussion highlighted policy initiatives that range from Skills Development Programmes, to incentivised business funding initiatives that will be implemented as part of the objectives of the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) and the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan.

"NORTH WEST, WE CAN DO IT", LET'S CLEAN OUR PROVINCE - SAYS MEC MOSENOGI



North West MEC for Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism, Kenetswe Mosenogi says it is time for a massive clean-up campaign throughout the province in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, starting with Mahikeng as a capital city of the province.

Speaking at the meeting with government officials and ward councillors of Mahikeng, MEC Mosenogi said the province through her department aims to pull all strings to ensure that all the regions are free of litter and illegal dumping sites. "This is a provincial environmental programme that proposes a simple but bold blueprint for what we all can do as individuals, organisations, communities and as a nation to bring about the realisation of a cleaner and more environmentally and respectable province that can attract investors confidence at the first value".

She further emphasised that the main purpose is to change people's attitudes and behaviour towards waste management and create awareness on the opportunities available towards the development of the local economy, as well as to begin taking charge and responsibility of keeping the areas clean.

MEC Mosenogi together with MEC for Public Works & Roads, Gaoage Oageng Molapisi, and Danville Ward Councillors led the second phase of the Clean-up Campaign and Infrastructure Renewal Programme, which took place in Danville township, Mahikeng recently. The delegation accompanied by government officials and community members embarked on a two-day massive cleaning and waste picking at

illegal dumping sites and in the streets of Danville.

The campaign which was launched by Premier Bushy Maape last month aims to mobilize communities and various stakeholders to support and participate in the cleaning and greening

of Mahikeng town, industrial area and its surrounding areas. The intention includes the eradication of all illegal waste dumping hotspots, cleaning main corridors of towns including entrance and exit routes, improving environmental awareness, resealing of roads and patching of potholes.





MEC highlighted that the province's clean-up programme is in support of the Good Green Deeds programme which was launched by President Ramaphosa in 2019, in which every inhabitant of South Africa, from the President to the ordinary person must take part in cleaning their neighbourhood and ensure that our country is clean and free from litter and illegal dumps.

In addition, MEC Mosenogi indicated that plan is to instil environmental friendly behaviour and create a culture in which citizenry is aware of its role in attaining a cleaner and healthy environment through a litter-free behaviour, waste minimization through the establishment of buy-back centres and advocating for entrepreneurship

in the waste industry and access to the green economy.

"We are certain that this campaign will contribute significantly to reducing climate change impacts caused by poor waste management. The generation of methane gas from waste dumping hotspots and burning of waste will reduce significantly, as a result, it will reduce air contamination and improve the air quality of the receiving environment", said the MEC.

MEC added that the programme will be extended to other local and district municipalities and eventually cover the whole province. "In this medium-term phase, our focus includes removal and eradication of all dumping

sites in the province, through the implementation of the North West Rural Waste Management Strategy and Integrated Waste Management Plan. Whereas, the long term phase will focus mainly on the sustainability and monitoring of the programme and all participating departments will continue to provide support to the municipalities

Community members and private sector are encouraged to partner with government as it is the collective responsibility of every human to clean the environment and protect the planet from environmental degradation. We all need to be responsible citizens and maintain sustainable waste practices such as recycling, reusing and reducing waste wherever possible.

MANDARIN LANGUAGE TRAINING GRADUATION CEREMONY

Statistical trends show just how important the Chinese market is to the global tourism market. South Africa's diverse offerings present a further opportunity to lure the Chinese market to South Africa with local tourist guides that are conversant in the Mandarin language acting as a drawcard. The Department of Tourism took a decision that it would focus on Mandarin language training as a means to up-skill Tourist Guides.

On 4 November 2021 at Kopanong Hotel and Conference in Benoni, 15 Tourist Guides graduated from three different provinces in South Africa after being trained in Mandarin language.

Addressing the graduates, Deputy Director-General Ms Mmaditlonki Setwaba said that she is proud of the efforts and commitment the Guides have shown throughout their training and that they are prepared to serve the tourists well as soon as South African borders are open. "You have learned a lot about the Chinese culture, when they come through give them excellent service," said Ms Setwaba.

The Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) is an international standardised (writing, reading and listening) examination that has six levels (1 - 6). The Mandarin language training programme which the Department is rolling out will be implemented in all provinces following a phased approach over a three years period.

The first phase of the training programme focuses on the successful completion of HSK level one. The second phase of the training programme entails the attainment of HSK level two and those learners who have acquired the necessary language skills will be exposed to possible trade show opportunities and other marketing platforms.

The final phase of the programme includes practical exposure in the form of a cultural immersion phase where learners who meet the prescribed criteria will be selected to participate in the language programme in China.

Ms Setwaba further said, "Go out there and make us proud, keep in touch with your team and the Department to be able to refresh and also alert us on the gaps you might experience."

During the 2019/2020 financial year, 20 Tourist Guides from the Western Cape, Gauteng and Eastern Cape provinces, successfully participated and completed the first phase of the Mandarin language training programme. For the 2020/2021 financial year, the intake consisted of 20 Tourist Guides from Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.

For the current 2021/2022 financial year the Department has trained 15 Tourist Guides from the Free State, Northern Cape and North-West provinces. These 15 Guides started with the training on 27 September 2021 at a training venue in Gauteng and completed the first phase of the training programme on 6 November 2021. The formal HSK1 exam was written on 30 October 2021 and based on learners' performance and conduct during the implementation of the training, suitable candidates for the next phase of the programme will be identified and selected for participation.

The Department has already advertised the training opportunity for Tourist Guides located in the Free State, Northern Cape and North-West provinces who will form part of the training beneficiaries for the 2021/2022 financial year.

"Tourist Guides are the face of tourism, you are the first people to meet the tourists and you are also the last people to see the tourists, make us shine to make tourists visit South Africa again," concluded Deputy Director-General Setwaba.





SOUTH AFRICAN BEACHES GLIDE BLUE FLAG

27 October 2021 was a beautiful sunny day at Hermanus Grotto Beach in Overstrand Municipality in the Western Cape where Department of Tourism together with Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), hosted the Blue Flag Beach award ceremony.

The Tourism Blue Flag Programme is funded through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and is implemented in three provinces namely, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. It aims to improve tourism facilities and services offered at the 48 full and 19 pilot-status beaches, whilst providing youth employment and training opportunities. This support extends to the six marinas and for tourism boat operators.

The event was graced with the presence of Deputy Director-General of Department of Tourism, Ms Shamilla Chettiar, Chief Executive Officer of WESSA, Dr Andrew Baxter, Mayor of Overstrand Municipality, Mr Dudley Coetzer and Western Cape MEC of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr David John Maynier.

"Today's event gives expression to the Tourism Recovery Plan whereby we are reigniting demand through the development of our destinations. This is done through the coordination and development of amenities, facilities, products and infrastructure to deliver quality visitor experiences." said Ms Chettiar during her keynote address.

The Blue Flag is an international award for beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators. In order to qualify for the Blue Flag, a voluntary programme, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety, and

accessibility criteria must be met and maintained. The Blue Flag is operated by the non-governmental, non-profit organisation called the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). The FEE consists of 65 organisations in 60 countries. WESSA is the South African National Operator for Blue Flag.

Ms Chettiar further said that, "Following our recent removal from the United Kingdom's red list, we look forward to welcoming the world back to our shores and there is no better way to do it than with our pristine coastline and beaches."

Annually, 100 young people referred to as Beach Stewards, are enrolled in the Programme and are deployed at different sites to provide support in adhering to Blue Flag criteria aiming at promoting responsible tourism. Beach Stewards are hosted by local municipalities operating these sites. There are 32 Beach Stewards in the Western Cape, 32 in the Eastern Cape and 36 in KwaZulu-Natal.



During the 12-month period of the project, the Beach Stewards receive training in National Certificate Skills Programme "Nature Site Guide" with 72 credits. After successful completion of this programme, the Beach Stewards are able to register as Nature Site

Guides. Several other non-accredited and accredited training interventions are also provided to the Beach Stewards.

The Department of Tourism is continuously investing in tourism services and facilities in order to provide domestic and international tourists with an exceptional experience. Providing world-class beach facilities in a country where beach tourism is an important part of our product offering, is therefore essential. Offering international and domestic tourists opportunities to choose destinations which have Blue Flag beaches certainly helps in positioning South Africa's competitiveness in the global market.

Annually, since 2001, WESSA has launched the South African Blue Flag season to award Blue Flag sites before the start of the new holiday season. The Blue Flag has become a highly respected and recognised eco-label in South Africa working to bring together the tourism and environmental sectors at local, regional and national levels.

"As we learn to navigate the pandemic, let us all do our part and join in the vaccination drive as well as remember to observe the non-pharmaceutical interventions of social distance, wearing a mask and washing our hands," concluded Ms Chettiar.





THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY FEARS ANOTHER IMPENDING HARD LOCKDOWN

The restaurant industry suffered a crippling blow in last year's hard lockdown. Many doors were forced to close, some indefinitely, due to the hard lockdown restrictions that were implemented last year.

With the announcement of the new Omicron variant that is responsible for a number of the latest COVID-19 positive cases across the country, as well as talks around a possible fourth wave, the restaurant industry fears another impending hard lockdown.

According to Business Insider South Africa, in January 2019 alone, the sale of food at restaurants, coffee shops and fast-food outlets contributed R4.7 billion to the economy. Also, in 2017 the tourism sector created 31 000 jobs – more than mining and manufacturing. The restaurant industry is a key contributor to not only creating jobs but boosting an already bleeding economy.

Last year, the 1 Million Seats on The Streets protest saw scores of restaurant workers around South Africa peacefully protest against their industry being brought to its knees during the COVID-19 lockdown. This action was to also protect the other spheres of the tourism value chain, such as the alcohol industry.

South Africa's alcohol industry is estimated to have lost R36.3 billion in retail sales revenues in the on and off liquor bans between 2020, when the lockdown began, and when the latest one ended in February 2021, according to a report. It is also estimated that the loss of sales has put more than 200 000 jobs at risk across the formal and informal sectors.

The Restaurant Association of South Africa (RASA) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ms Wendy Alberts, has pleaded for a meeting with President Cyril Ramaphosa to discuss the sector's fears of another hard lockdown. "We cannot allow our industry's lights to be switched off again. It is irresponsible not to engage with us to remedy a solution that will not impact employment job security, industry moral pride, the recent opening of the economy and the opportunity to financially recover. It is unacceptable that we are facing another threat of lockdown," said Ms Alberts.

She added that the poorly handled announcement regarding the new Omicron variant of COVID-19 had caused "unnecessary trauma and fear in a time we should be embracing that

the country is being responsible and doing what we can to begin mobilising business and forging economical recovery."

As the country approaches the holiday season, one of the busiest times of the year, attracting international tourists and much needed foreign currency. "The international market is destroyed for the season, everyone is cancelling trips. The country is now reliant on the local economy, largely tourism hospitality and restaurants, to support the economy," Ms Alberts highlighted.

Furthermore, she said that the restaurant industry needs to be acknowledged for its responsible contributions to execution of protocols and directives, their role in promoting vaccinations and keeping their patrons and staff safe. That we need to recover the economy and allow confidence in employment and job retention.

"Government must start to compensate these industries who continue to be banned and restricted from trading at the drop of a hat. Any further restrictions will kill the rest of the SMMEs currently struggling to survive," concluded Ms Alberts.



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