



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, DEPUTY  
MINISTER AF MAHLALELA, AT THE TOURISM SECTOR RECOVERY PLAN  
WEBINAR, 14 AUGUST 2020**

Programme director/facilitator

Minister of Tourism, Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane

Mr Mduduzi Mbongwe - Deputy General-Secretary: SACCAWU

Mr Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa – CEO: TBCSA

Ms Nina Freysen-Pretorius - CEO: The Conference Company

Mr Nhlanha Ndlovu - CEO: NEDLAC Community Trust

DGs and DDGs

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Day,

I would like to enter the platform by requesting you all to join me in congratulating our Minister, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane as she joins other global leaders as a member of the newly established **World Economic Forum’s Global Future Council on Sustainable Tourism**.

This Council is tasked to promote innovative thinking to shape a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future. This is a boost, not only for Tourism but to the whole country as we strive towards recovering from the economic down-turn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We congratulate you, Minister.

I would firstly like to thank our panelists for agreeing to participate in this important platform. Your cooperation and participation are a clear indication that the Tourism sector, including government, labour and the private sector are capable and ready to work together to rebuild the tourism sector following the devastating effects of the COVID – 19 pandemic.

I would also like to thank the moderator, Ms Nkadimeng, for the professional way in which she has guided the discussions. A special word of thanks to the members of the public who joined the webinar.

As I appreciate the quality of engagements that have taken place on this platform today, I would like to borrow a quotation from the Obama quotes that says: *'When disaster strikes, it tears the curtain away from the festering problems that we have beneath them'*. Our inputs today have indicated the truth in this quote.

The COVID-19 pandemic struck the world when the economy that was already unstable.

As the country, already there were challenges of corruption that were being investigated. The challenges of retrenchments were also at its pinnacle. The triple challenges to our socio-economic environment of poverty, unemployment and inequality were so real before us. As a country we had made a realisation that the economic growth strategies that were being implemented were unsustainable and could not solve these challenges at the pace that were envisaging.

The financial sector was already feeling the pinch of the unstable economy and that was the reason why a number of banks were moving towards e-banking over than the traditional methods that they used before. This move saw a number of skilled individuals leaving the sector.

We were moving swiftly towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and believe that we are moving towards the attainment of the goal of economic transformation that supports labour-intensive growth and creating globally competitive economic growth.

As we engaged on this platform, we continued to reflect that the disaster hit us whilst there were problems and challenges already in the industry, not only in our country, but globally.

As we strive towards the recovery of the sector, we have to work together. In her opening remarks, the Minister emphasised that we will weather the storm only if we work together.

The sentiments from the panellists illustrated that we should shift to a more integrated approach as we seek for better strategies to revive our sector. It will be suicidal of us to ignore the role of the local municipalities and the provincial authorities in the recovery of Tourism.

This makes it very urgent for the tourism sector to integrate its plans in the District Development Model, as launched by the State President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa towards the end of 2019.

You have clearly given us a winning strategy: To plan together and work together as government departments, as we respond to the challenges caused by the pandemic.

The engagement today has further indicated that we are not an island, as the Tourism sector. We will only succeed if we strike the right chord in bringing all the stakeholders together, not leaving our communities behind.

Sharing information on this platform has brought to life the words of Nelson Mandela when he said: *“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

During the COVID-19 phase, we will continue to utilise this platform and many others to solicit ideas from our stakeholders and to share information that will enable us recover from this disaster.

The Minister has already indicated that scientists are telling us that there might never be a post-Covid-19 pandemic period, therefore we might have to learn to live with a virus.

Your inputs have surely enriched the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan.

Indeed, the first signs of recovery will be when workers return to work, accommodation establishments accept bookings, restaurants have patrons, and when South Africans begin to travel again.

The main objective of the recovery plan is to resume tourism operations as early as it is safe to do so, and as the Department of Tourism, we are committed to the recovery of the sector.

While the plan is in paper, it must be a living document, to which we refer and refine, as we learn and innovate to rebuild our sector.

The road to recovery will indeed have to be transformative, because we can't solve problems the same way that they were created.

Throughout this process, we will have to shake-up our institutions, re-write the rules, bring in smarter ideas, and re-invest in new skills as we market our destination differently, and un-avoidably develop and sell new products to new customers, our tourists.

I would therefore like to encourage all stakeholders to remain steadfast in their efforts in recovering the sector. To quote the captain of our ship, Minister Kubayi-Ngubane, “If we work together, we will weather the storm”.

I thank you