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Media Statement

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Minister Lindiwe Sisulu meets 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.

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