



Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

Media Statement

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Racism affects tourism, Says Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu

Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu has encouraged South Africans to take advantage of the diverse tourism products, assets and offerings including the rich history of different spaces to foster national unity, cohesion and to reject the stereotypes and practices that sought to deny to anyone enjoyment of this country.

“No racial group should take advantage of the industry to discriminate and act violently against any other racial group in indulging in any niceties presented by this industry,” Minister Sisulu said.

Two weeks ago, a video clip shared on social media captured part of the incident at the resort, where two boys were allegedly racially abused. It depicted white men ordering a black teenager out of the water, then hitting or shoving him back in, grabbing a child by the throat and pulling his hair as the fracas escalated. One man was also seen holding a youngster under the water.

Three suspects were subsequently arrested and are all out on bail.

The incident happened at a resort outside Bloemfontein in the Free State on Christmas Day.

Sisulu highlighted that the incident was an embarrassment to government and to tourism in the country.

“This has tarnished tourism in the country.”

Minister wishes to express her misgivings that until now the resort has not unequivocally condemned the bullish and racist behaviour of its patrons.

On Saturday, Sisulu met Brain Nakedi, his wife and son, to apologise on behalf of the South African government for the incident.

“I am sorry that during our leadership your family experienced such discrimination. We apologise that we as government couldn’t protect you from such people,” She said.

Sisulu also offered psychological help for the family.

Nakedi thanked government for all the assistance. Nakedi also highlighted that it was the second time that his family experience racism at the resort.

“In 2017 we experienced similar incident, but my children were too young to fight back then. We kept it to ourselves. When it happened again, my sons were much older and stood up for themselves,” he said.

Speaking at stakeholder engagement, Sisulu said the tourism industry is very central to economic growth and development and should be nurtured in such a way that it knows no racial, sexual or any stereotypical cleavages.

“It is an industry that must be deracialised including its ownership.”

She said any racial tendency has to be isolated and exorcised by the players in the industry who are very committed to ensuring the economy and this sector thrive.

“Tourism provides us an immediate communication platform to sell to the world the beautiful nation we are and our commitment to become a prosperous destination full of offerings for the visitors.”

Globally tourism is considered as a vital sector to economic growth. The UNWTO noted that it contributes 10% of the global GDP. In South Africa the percentage contribution to the National GDP is 15% and testimony that Tourism occupies a significant contributory position to the South African economy. Tourism role must be reimagined and redesigned for the future in keeping with the thinking of the UNWTO 117th Executive Council which was held in Morocco, November 2022.

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Steve Motale on 0837840719

MLO Mpumzi Zuzile on 0725509019 / 0609559035

Tourism House, Sunnyside, Pretoria, 0001