



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF TOURISM, HON MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI-  
NGUBANE, AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, TSHWANE, 03 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**Programme director**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

**Good Morning**

Thank you for inviting me for this engagement this morning. Let me take this opportunity to thank you as media practitioners for affording us the various platform to communicate with our stakeholders especially during these very abnormal times. As you are aware the past four months of lockdown have been very difficult for the tourism sector and we are grateful that the media has been instrumental in ensuring we kept the sector informed of the efforts we were making towards reopening the sector in the midst of a pandemic, thus enkindling a sense of hope in the sector.

Beginning of this week we hosted a media launch in which we kick-started a series of activities which will be happening to celebrate tourism month, the September month. Two or three months ago, it was doubtful whether we would have anything to celebrate as a sector during this tourism month.

At level 5 and level 4 of the risk-adjusted strategy the tourism sector was totally inactive, save for the few accommodation facilities that still accommodated international tourists before they were repatriated. At that point, you will remember that tourism activities were expected to resume only at level 1.

By the end of May, business closures in the sector were already at alarming levels with 30% of restaurants already facing permanent closures. We also learned at that time that without intervention, the sector was on course for a job loss of between 500,000 and 600,000.

Faced with sceptics who could not wrap their heads around the idea of the tourism sector operating in the midst of pandemic, we worked collaboratively with a broad spectrum of stakeholders to develop protocols and guidelines for the operation of the sector, turning sceptics into cheerleaders of the sector. Since the time we moved to level 3, we managed to open subsectors incrementally, one step a time, until we secured inter-provincial travel, at level 2, which has been a great boost for the recovery of the sector.

Over the past three months, and in consultation with various stakeholders, we started working on a draft plan which we released for public comments from the first to fifteenth of August. After incorporating all the valuable comments, we are almost ready to submit the plan to Cabinet for approval. We have firm believe that tourism will be one of the fastest growing sectors in the recovery period and it will be one of the key sectors that will drive the overall economic recovery. The plan is a roadmap that will help us achieve this level of growth.

The plan is anchored on three pillars which include:

- Protecting and Rejuvenating Supply – focusing on business continuity risks, aligning the value-chain to new biosecurity standards, preserving air access, as well as investment facilitation and market access
- Reigniting demand – this will require a robust domestic marketing strategy, the agility to respond decisively to an uncertain global environment and responsiveness to changes in consumer preference.
- Strengthening Enabling Capability – implementing mechanisms to increase ease of travel through activities such as piloting and roll-out of the proposed e-visa system to simplify the visa and entry process

This plan had envisaged a scenario in which virus spread stabilises by September and we are quite happy that our plan was not off the mark. In this regard our plan predicted that the recovery will experience a number of phases, from hyper-local community attractions, through to broader domestic tourism, regional land and air markets, and lastly, resumption of world-wide international travel.

Since we moved to level 2, we have seen an upsurge in demand driven by domestic travelers. We believe with proper messaging and targeted marketing the domestic demand can reignite the sector and put the tourism industry on a growth trajectory and put our recovery on firm footing.

Correspondently, owners of establishments, that is the supply side of the market, has to be adaptive and meet the needs of the domestic who mostly fall within the following characterisations:

- They want attractions and tourism activities with strict adherence to the health and safety protocols
- They are yearning to travel to escape the lockdown and discover previously undiscovered local attractions with renewed appreciation of local culture, history and nature.
- They are yearning large open spaces with adventures.
- Most importantly, they are also looking for affordable travel packages in which they can take their families and friends and have memorable experiences

I am confident that the diversity of our product offering as a country, from our coastline, through adventure attractions to our wildlife, is sufficient to meet the needs of all segments of travellers.

Our next step is to work towards the reopening of international travel. We are monitoring the risk of the virus spread and we are satisfied the current downward trend of new infections, if sustained, can fast-track the reopening regional borders soon. In this way, through regional coordination with our regional partners, we could create a regional travel bubble. Africa land markets forms the bedrock of tourism in South Africa. This region alone accounts for 71% of international arrivals. This would give a further boost to the recovery efforts of the sector.

The rise in domestic tourism together with regional travel will help us build confidence for global travellers so that when we eventually open all are borders, we will be able to attract traveller as a safe destination.

In the meantime, my message to South Africans is: let's all get out there and explore our country and get to know the beautiful country that is South Africa. Let us do so safely.

Let's protect ourselves, let's wear masks, let's wash our hands and let's continue to practice social distancing.

I thank you.