

Address by Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela during the Ministerial Crime Prevention Community Engagement in Fouriesburg, Free State

11 March 2022

The recovery of tourism is a critical component of the country's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and related pandemics. It plays a significant role building and rebuilding trust and traveller confidence.

As an enabler to the Tourism Recovery Plan, a social compact was formed with the industry on the formulation of norms and standards.

Norms and Standards were gazetted for the safer operations of the Tourism Sector in context of Coronavirus COVID-19 and beyond. It was driven by the need to:

- Provide assurance to potential visitors and all stakeholders that South Africa's tourism products and services are equipped to operate safely whilst the COVID-19 persists guided by globally accepted principles.
- Promote traveller confidence in support of resurgent demand.
- Reinstatement of tourism's continued significance in the government's economic development plans.

The norms and standards are a product of the collaboration with key stakeholders from government, the tourism sector and other social partners. It aims to provide minimum universal practices which the tourism sector must abide by to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and related pandemics.

The scope of the Norms and Standards include: operational readiness; self, operational, staff and hosts preparedness; safe attractions and experiences and rebuilding trust and confidence.

The norms and standards provide common minimum health and safety measures that will ensure uniformity across the tourism sector. They will cover services such as accommodation, food, tour operators, casinos, weddings and other related activities.

It provides uniformity across the destination in view of tools that have been compiled by industry associations and some sub-national entities.

It ensures common minimum health and safety measures across tourism products and services for safe operations in the context of Coronavirus COVID-19 and related pandemics.

The Department of Tourism and provinces will play a lead coordinating role for implementation through its various cooperative governance and intergovernmental work streams with quarterly reporting. Two hundred and twenty-five SMMEs were trained on Norms and Standards for safe tourism operations in all nine provinces targeting Villages, Townships, and Small Towns: 25 per province; Capacity Building Programmes inclusive of training on norms and standards and a Tourism Monitoring Programme inclusive of norms and standards training

International tourism trends indicate that personal safety and security issues are of high importance in potential tourist's choice of a destination. To ensure that South Africa remains a destination of choice, we need to make sure that tourism safety is a priority. To this end, the Department of Tourism has been working with various stakeholders to compile a safety plan of which the Tourism Monitors Programme forms part of.

This programme involves the recruitment, training and deployment of 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 Tourism Monitor's role is to among other things: raise awareness about safety & security matters to tourists; coordinate emergency and other relevant support for tourists; guide tourists on safest routes and areas as well as report incidences of crime against tourists.

This programme is being successfully implemented throughout the country.

The Department of Tourism has compiled the following safety tips to ensure a memorable visitor experience. With the extra caution of observing these COVID-19 protocols, please keep these

measures in mind while travelling while being assured that the vaccination programme will be intensified.

- **Your health comes first**

With the pandemic still with us, we need to navigate the new normal with extreme caution. Let's keep each other safe by wearing your mask at all times, sanitise often and remember to observe social distancing.

- **Be mindful of all cultures and traditions**

South Africa is a vast melting pot of people and cultures. Learn as much as you can and take time to understand the customs and norms of our rainbow nation. To enhance your experience, always be tolerant and respect diversity while you observe social and cultural traditions and practices. Extra precaution must be taken to avoid large gatherings. Please also observe the regulations for the current alert level.

- **Use registered guides and operators**

While it is safe to travel throughout the country; certain areas however would be best explored through the services of a registered Tour Operator or Tourist Guide. Always remember to wear your mask.

- **Get reliable information**

To enhance your travel experience, details of where to go and things to do, can be obtained at the various local Visitors Information Centres located throughout the country.

- **Observe beach safety**

Most of our beaches carry a Blue Flag status. Take care when swimming as rip currents tend to be very strong. Be sure to read and follow any signs at swimming areas and note that lifeguards are available to assist. As we in the fourth wave, please refrain from large gatherings.

- **Be safe**

Always be alert and make responsible decisions about your safety when travelling. Familiarise yourself with the area you are visiting or staying in and check with your hotel before going for a walk alone. Never hike alone, but rather join a small hiking group or friends. Be sure to follow safety tips provided by registered places of accommodation and by local authorities.

- **Be careful**

Take care with your personal possessions and travel documents when travelling in cities and other popular destinations. Leave your passport and other documents in a safe place and carry a copy of another form of identification with you. Always keep your valuables in sight. Kindly adhere to the regulated curfew. Make use of tourism monitors strategically placed to enhance tourism safety awareness at key tourism attractions to reduce tourist vulnerabilities.

Let us all do our part in ensuring that South Africa remains a safe destination of choice. Safe travels!

Thank you