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Comair's imminent closure unfortunate, says Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu

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Minister of Tourism Lindiwe Sisulu says the imminent closure of Comair in South Africa is unfortunate and will have a negative impact on tourism in the country.

The company's business rescue practitioners have given notice that they no longer believe that there is a reasonable prospect that the company can be rescued.

A week ago, Comair announced the suspension all its kulula.com flights and the British Airways flights it operates under a licence agreement.

This comes shortly after the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) grounded Comair on 13 March 2022. Comair flight equates to about 40% of the country's aviation capacity.

Comair employs 1,200 people.

Four out of every 10 domestic tickets sold in SA are BA or Kulula tickets, and Comair said recently it had been on track to fly 4-million passengers this year.

However, Sisulu expressed regret at the issues besetting Comair and its eminent closure of British Airways and Kulula flights, which could have a dampening effect on this strong recovery.

"This development is really unfortunate especially at the time when we are making progress in terms of the recovery of our sector. This essentially results in a limited distribution network where there is limited capacity for both domestic and international travellers to reach and explore the length and breadth of our beautiful country," adds Minister.

"Air travel is a key pillar for South Africa's tourism recovery and I am confident that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) SA Tourism recently signed with Emirates Airlines to grow the tourism market in South Africa will bear fruits soon," said Sisulu. "Similar effort is underway with Qatar Airways and other airlines will hopefully serve to fill this gap".

"Affordability and access are already a big consideration for travellers. We hope the grounding of Comair flights does not result in other airlines raising their prices. For our sector to continue to recover we need to partner and find a solution that will not put travellers in a worse off position."

This comes as Minister Sisulu has just expressed excitement at the latest data from Statistics South Africa relating to Tourist Accommodation figures for March 2022. Total income from accommodation increased to R1,7billion, an 88% increase compared to March 2021. For the entire first quarter of 2022, income from tourism accommodation rose 83%.

**Issued by Ministry of Tourism**

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