



**Speech by Mr. Fish Mahlalela, Deputy Minister of Tourism during the Tourism Monitors Programme graduation ceremony at Skukuza, Kruger National Park
21 February 2023**

Programme Director, let me express my profound gratitude for being accorded the privilege to address this graduation ceremony today. In the same vein, congratulate all our students who completed their Tourism Monitors Programme.

With this ceremony we are ushering you out there to play a critical role in Tourism safety, recently our country has experienced tragic spates of tourists' attacks, which militated against our efforts to recuperate the sector after the devastating effects of the epidemic.

The main task of the Tourism Monitor is to enhance the tourists' experience as well as improve their safety by interacting with them and patrolling identified tourist hotspots to ensure they are safe and reporting any incidents to relevant enforcement agencies.

In October last year, we coordinated a stakeholder engagement summit focussing solely on tourism safety with all critical stakeholders to design and develop a coordinated approach in dealing with tourists' safety.

Those collective efforts of all our stakeholders demonstrated a greater commitment to the safety of all our visitors, thereby ensuring that South Africa remains a destination of choice and proves that tourism is everybody's enterprise.

We all emerge out of that Summit undoubtedly with clear understanding of the increased role played by the Tourism Monitors in the fight against tourists' attacks.

The Tourism Monitors Programme seeks primarily to enhance tourism safety awareness at key tourism attraction points and consequently reduce the number of criminal incidents that are directed against tourist, to eliminate opportunities for such crime and to integrate current tourism safety and awareness initiatives into sustainable programmes.

The tourism sector measured against other industries contributed 3,7% to GDP in 2019 making the tourism sector becoming larger than agriculture, utilities (electricity, gas & water), and construction.

Pre-Covid 19 the tourism activities and their associated tourism expenditure directly contributed R209 billion to the national economy in 2019.

Tourism directly employed 4,7% of the total work force which is simply translated to about 773 533 people employed in the formal sector in 2019, which translates to about 1 in every 21 employed individuals.

Therefore, jobs in the tourism sector depend on a steady stream of visitors and their related tourism expenditure. Internal (non-resident and domestic) visitors spent R451,5 billion in 2019, providing much needed money for the industry.

It therefore goes without saying that the safety in this sector should be the priority of any government taking socio-economic development very seriously.

Our government believes that skills development should be an essential tool to address poverty alleviation and job creation. The Tourism Monitors Programme is part of the broader government intervention that involves training, mentorship and deployment of unemployed youth in identified tourism attractions and sites.

We today celebrating these outstanding performances especially from dedicated and determined women and men against all odds, by recognizing their achievements and reflecting on the three-years of memories and experiences the training has offered.

The Programme therefore affords participants an opportunity to gain valuable experiential training and acquire an academic qualification.

Our partnership with Kruger National Park through this graduation ceremony aims exactly to highlight this significant achievement

This ceremony as well, seek to highlight the importance of training young participants through the formal on-the-job training through to accredited skills programmes and learnerships as outlined in Expanded Public Works Programme.

We all wish to use this graduation as a benchmark for other EPWP projects to implement training and development interventions that offer better exit opportunities for the participants beyond their EPWP employment.

We entered into an agreement with South African National Parks in 2019 for a period of three year to implement the Tourism Monitors Programme in all the National Parks within South Africa.

It was appointed to manage the training and monitoring of the unemployed youth and place them in 21 national parks experiential learning for the duration of 24 months, amongst them, the Kruger National Park.

It has permanently employed about 114 Tourism Monitors in different departments within their various parks with a larger portion of that 41 being employed at the Kruger National Park in various sections such as hut attendants or general workers, security guards and dog handlers.

The guaranteed safety of our visitors will ensure the growth of our economy and the growth of our economy will ensure better life for all, including all of you.

Our icon President Nelson Mandela, while addressing the Safety and Security summit in 1994 had this to say "Now is the time to unite and deal crime and violence a fatal blow. Now is the time to make South Africa a safe place for all its people; for investors and for our visitors."

Let me thank and congratulate the partnership we have with the Kruger National Park and the incredible progress they have made thus far.

The task now is upon your shoulders as graduates to navigate through, by becoming active and loyal servants of the tourism sector.

I thank you