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Tourism Minister welcomes the return of some source market flights

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South Africa welcomes the gradual return of flights from important source markets. This in the aftermath of yet another travel ban imposed on South Africa and other African countries by some countries following the diligent identification and genomic sequencing of the Omicron variant by South African scientists.

The UK's rushed announcement to place South Africa back on its Red List, France's placement of South Africa on its new 'scarlet red' list and consequent knee-jerk reaction from other governments has had wreaked havoc on existing and future business as South Africa enters its peak inbound international tourism period.

World Health Organisation (WHO) officials called on countries to show unity in this time of crisis and warned the bans could be divisive. "With the omicron variant now detected in several regions of the world, putting in place travel bans that target Africa attacks global solidarity," said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO regional director for Africa. "COVID-19 constantly exploits our divisions. We will only get the better of the virus if we work together for solutions."

Earlier this week, the German government announced that Lufthansa will continue to fly to South Africa and that German nationals may visit South Africa. An additional number of airlines have eased outbound travel restrictions and South Africa welcomes these markets to its shores ahead of its summer season. Qatar Airways and Air France also announced the resumption of inbound and outbound flights to South Africa. At this stage, this arrangement is not yet reciprocal and South Africa is in continuous dialogue with these countries to lobby for the ban to be lifted in full.

The Minister of Tourism, Lindiwe Sisulu said: "We will continue to call on all countries to follow the WHO advice, to rescind all selective travel bans and re-open their borders to South Africa. We advocate global solidarity in the fight against the pandemic."

South Africa remains proudly committed to its excellence in science and will continue its vigilant fight against the pandemic. Indeed, South Africa is open for business and continues to be a safe destination of choice with a diverse tourism products and experiences. To ensure the safety of tourists and the sector, Norms and Standards for the Safe Operation of the Tourism Sector in the context of the Covid-19 and beyond had been implemented.

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