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MEDIA STATEMENT

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TOURISM MONITORS DEPLOYED TO ENHANCE TOURISM SAFETY AHEAD OF PEAK SUMMER HOLIDAY PERIOD

As part of the National Tourism Safety Strategy, today, together with the Deputy Minister, Fish Mahlalela, the Mpumalanga Police Commissioner, Lieutenant General Semakaleng Manamela, the CEO of the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency, Mr Mduduzi Vilikazi and other tourism stakeholders, we launched and deployed the first group of Tourism Monitors in Hazyview in Mpumalanga.

The Tourism Monitors Programme is an initiative by the Department of Tourism to supplement safety and security measures by the South African Police Service to enhance tourism safety.

The deployment of the Tourism Monitors is part of the broader tourism safety measures identified in the National Tourism Safety Strategy.

The Strategy contains measures identified by partners who form the National Tourism Safety Forum which comprises all three spheres of government, the South African Police Service, the National Prosecuting Authority and the private sector as represented by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) as well as local and provincial tourism authorities and agencies.

Today, the National Tourism Safety Forum also held its third meeting for the year where all partners provided updates on measures to enhance tourism safety for all visitors.

South Africa is a popular destination to local and international travellers, however, crime is an unfortunate reality that has affected tourists. While it is the mandate of the police to provide safety and security services, the Department of Tourism, all three spheres of government and the private sector have come together to do our part with additional measures to enhance tourist safety.

The safety of all tourists is paramount and we are determined to do all we can to ensure that all tourists have a safe and memorable experience in South Africa.

As part of the National Tourism Safety Strategy, the Department of Tourism has a Memorandum of Understanding with SAPS and we have been implementing a number of initiatives. Some of the initiatives implemented are:

- Joint safety awareness sessions;

- SAPS assisting the department with the vetting of Tourism Monitors;
- SAPS has developed a coding system that will be provided to all police stations to use in the capturing of information related to crimes against tourists. The system will assist in providing a clear profile of the types of crimes against tourists;
- SAPS has also developed a Safety Learning and Development Programmed for the Tourism Monitors.

Earlier this year, the private sector launched the Secura Traveller tourism safety app and operations center to assist tourists with a range of services they may need in the event of any incident. The app links tourists to more than 200 service providers including private security companies, medical and translation services.

One of the measures to enhance tourist safety by the National Department of Tourism is the Tourism Monitors programme, which is also a job creation project, where Tourism Monitors are trained to help tourists with any assistance they may need.

The Department has set aside R174.5million from this year's budget to deploy just over 2 300 Tourism Monitors at key tourist attractions across the country.

The Tourism Monitors will be deployed at strategic ports of entry, national parks and other attractions across the country to assist with tourism and safety related information and matters.

The deployment of 2300 Tourism Monitors in all nine provinces, in entities managed by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) Gardens, iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Ezemvelo Nature Reserve, in the national parks managed by the South African National Parks (SANParks), and at airports managed by Airports Company South Africa (ACSA).

The Tourism Monitors Programme forms part of the wider National Tourism Safety Strategy's first key pillar, which is Proactive measures.

This pillar focuses on addressing issues that can minimise the potential of incidents that adversely impact on tourist safety. It is about putting in place mechanisms to ensure that tourists, both domestic and international, feel safe even before arriving at the destination.

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.

The key objectives of the programme include: enhancing tourism safety awareness at key tourism attractions and sites, upskilling of unemployed youth and reducing tourist vulnerabilities.

The Tourism Monitors are placed in key attractions/sites with high volumes of tourists or in areas posing a high potential risk to tourists.

The key performance areas of the appointed Tourism Monitors include:

- Patrolling within the identified attractions and sites/ areas.
- Raise tourism awareness and provide information to tourists about attractions and the country.
- Report any crime incidents to SAPS and other relevant enforcement agencies.
- Assist in tourist victim support. Notably, this province – along with the Western Cape – have successful aftercare services in the form of Victim Support Programmes

The focus of the training for Tourism Monitors will be on an accredited General Security Practices NQF 3: (National Certificate on Safety and Security).

The SAPS has also developed a Learning and Development programme through its Human Resource Development unit.

The Learning Programme will cover: Crowd Management, Reporting - Duties of first responder; gathering information; basic interviewing skills; incident reporting and statement making), Crime Prevention, Guarding and Patrols.

The Tourism Monitors will be equipped with the MySAPS app which includes a tourist safety guide and the Secura Traveller app which has been set up by the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, which will give them access to a host of private security companies and health institutions at a click of a button to allow them to assist tourists in need.

We encourage tourists to download the app too, as it brings a host of emergency and other service providers to their fingertips.

Today we deployed the first batch of just over 100 young men and women, who will assist in enhancing our tourists' visitor experience and ensure that South Africa remains a destination of choice this festive season and beyond.

We have worked closely with the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority on finalising the appointment and deployment of the 100 Tourism Monitors who will be deployed in various areas including the Graskop/Blyde River area and Hazyview. In total, 220 Tourism Monitors will be deployed here in Mpumalanga.

Some of the areas the Tourism Monitors will be placed in, in Mpumalanga includes: in the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality: Lowveld View, God's Window, Pinnacle, Berlin Falls, Mac Falls, Sabie Town, Graskop Town, Pilgrims Rest, Gorge Lift and Lydenburg.

In the Nkomazi Municipality: Lebombo Border Post and Jeppe's Reef Border Post.

In Mbombela: Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport as well as sites in the Hazyview, Albert Luthuli, Msukalingwe and Emakhazeni Municipalities

The placement of Tourism Monitors in the remainder of the provinces will take place in the coming weeks. They will all be clearly identifiable by their uniforms.

The 2 305 Tourism Monitors will be deployed as follows:

Province/Entity	Number of Tourism Monitors
Eastern Cape	150
Free State	150
Western Cape	250
Gauteng	100
Limpopo	100
KwaZulu Natal	200
Mpumalanga	220

North West	100
Northern Cape	70
iSimangaliso Wetland Park	200
Ezemvelo Nature Reserve	150
SANBI Gardens	130
ACSA Airports	135
SANParks	350
Total	2 305

As part of the National Tourism Safety work, in mid-November, I also held a Tourism Safety engagement with members of the Diplomatic Corps. The session was attended by 115 participants including Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Attachés' as well as the embassy officials who included the locally recruited personnel.

The purpose of the session was to amongst others share South Africa's programmes, interventions and strategies towards tourist safety. The session provided prerequisite information with a view to enable the Diplomatic Community to appreciate South Africa's efforts towards tourist safety and to further transmit the information to their citizens in countries of origin who are planning to visit South Africa in the near future.

Another aspect of the National Tourism Safety Strategy is the Victim Support Programme (VSP) running in some provinces to support victims of crime.

The Department held a Victim Support Programme (VSP) workshop earlier this year to create a Standard Operation Procedure/ "How-to Guide" for the establishment of the VSP in other provinces.

The Standard Operating Procedure for the VSP been finalised and will be shared with all provinces to ensure that the remaining provinces start the process to establish their own VSP.

We are well aware that there have been several attacks on tourists in various areas in recent weeks and months but we are determined to work together with all stakeholders to enhance tourism safety measures.

Together with all three spheres of government, the South African Police Service, Provincial Tourism and Law Enforcement Authorities, the private sector and communities, we will ensure that our beautiful country, with all its magnificent sites and people, is safe for domestic and international tourists to explore.

As we head into our peak summer tourism period, we also call on all South Africans to showcase our warm and friendly South African hospitality so that we remain a top tourist destination that will keep tourists coming back. The success and growth of the tourism sector will ensure that we grow our economy and create more much-needed jobs for our people.

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