



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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MEDIA STATEMENT

**Tourism prioritises safety ahead of Tourism Month celebrations
*#TourismSafety #WEDOTourism***

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The Deputy Minister of Tourism Mr. Fish Mahlalela called on the industry and communities to prioritise safety at the country's tourism destinations, and grow the tourism sector.

Speaking at a breakfast event yesterday that brought together tourism stakeholders and communities to discuss safety, the Deputy Minister appealed to the delegates, as patriotic South Africans, to proactively participate in initiatives and efforts to curb incidences of crime hampering tourism growth in the Mpumalanga Province.

“Ensuring the integrity of South Africa as a safe destination is critical in growing the domestic tourism market, and international arrivals.”

“Crime poses a threat to sector growth and foreign direct investment, stifling the much-needed opportunities that could alleviate the poverty, inequality and unemployment in our communities.”

“It is imperative that we all proactively participate in the safety initiatives we are driving with the South Africa Police Services (SAPS), in partnership with tourism trade, to safeguard our communities, and assure visitors of safe attractions wherein they can create memorable experiences,” said Deputy Minister Mahlalela.

The Mpumalanga Province is recognised globally for its breath-taking natural attractions, and its wildlife experiences that draw international visitors to the Kruger National Park. Out of the 21 National Parks in the country, the Kruger National Park enjoys a large influx of visitors, thus contributing to South Africa's competitiveness globally. Incidents of crime have a negative impact on the growth of tourism overall, more so on provincial economies that have the potential to thrive through tourism. Curbing such incidents should be a collective responsibility, says Vusi Mkhathswa - MEC of Economic Development and Tourism in Mpumalanga.

“Tourism has the potential to be a driver of economic recovery in the Province. We need to work together, with our communities, to fight crime and instability. Marketing the Province is everyone's business, and our efforts should yield a narrative that Mpumalanga is ready to welcome visitors to have a once in a lifetime experience” added MEC Mkhathswa.

The stakeholder event in the Mpumalanga Province is the third instalment of engagements the Department is hosting to share its Tourism Safety Strategy. The Tourism Safety Strategy that is centred on three pillars that includes proactive measures to ensure that tourists are safe; responsive measures that ensure quick and effective turnaround time in attending to tourists in distress; and an aftercare programme that provides care and comfort to a tourist in distress after an incident.

Partnership with the private sector through the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) has played an integral part in addressing safety issues at tourism attractions across the country. TBCSA CEO Tshifiwa Tshivhengwa believes protecting the sector will go a long way in creating opportunities that will help South Africa attain its growth target of 21 million international tourist arrivals by 2030.

“As TBCSA, we represent the interests of the private sector in the tourism space. Tourism is important to the economy, and safeguarding it will secure jobs in both the public and the private sector. We remain committed to finding workable and sustainable solutions to safety issues. This will allow tourism to grow and create multiple opportunities,” said Tshivhengwa.

Since the development of the Safety Strategy, the Department has initiated multiple interventions to support the sector with regards to safety at tourism attractions. The Tourism Monitors programmes has been implemented nationally, with youth assisting SAPS to monitor and report incidents of crime. They have also been instrumental in providing aftercare to tourist who have been victims of crime.

As September is Tourism Month, the Department encourages travellers to “*Re-Think Tourism*”, and explore the opportunities that await in the sector in a responsible and safe manner.

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For Further Information on the Tourism Safety Strategy, the Tourism Monitors Programme, and safety tips whilst travelling in South Africa visit www.tourism.gov.za

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