



## **Remarks by Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, at Tourism Month media launch**

31 August 2020

Programme director

The Deputy Minister of Tourism, Mr Fish Mahlalela

MEC of Economic Development, Agriculture and Rural Development – Ms Mosupye Morakane

Black Business Council: CEO Kganki Matabane and Secretary General Ms Judy Nwokedi

SAT Board Chairperson: Mr Siyabonga Dube

BBBEE council: Ms. Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo: Chairperson and Mr. Jeremiah Mabena: Deputy Chairperson

SAT CEO: Sisa Ntshona

Mr Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa – CEO: TBCSA

Mr Nhlanhla Ndlovu - CEO: NEDLAC Community Trust

DGs, HOD and DDGs

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning

Let me start by welcoming everybody who joined us here today for the second day of the Tourism Month Media Launch.

Let me also pay a special tribute to all the women who have joined us as we mark the last day of women's month. This media launch marks the kick-off of a series of tourism events that will happen during the month of September, culminating with the celebration of the World Tourism Day on the 27th of September, whose celebration will be in the Gauteng province.

The 2020 theme for Tourism Month is **TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**. This year's theme was conceptualised, as a recognition of the important role that tourism plays in the development of rural communities by way of poverty alleviation, employment creation and overall stimulation of economic activities. Yet it is these communities that have suffered the most from the devastating impact the pandemic has had on the tourism sector. Without tourism, many of these communities have no other form of economic activity that can help them generate income.

Under this theme, we will undertake a set of activities to foster tourism awareness in local communities especially within less visited rural areas of each province.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been with us for a little over four months yet it feels as though it has been with us longer. This is because its impact has been felt in every sphere of our lives. By all indications the worst is behind us. Though we are not oblivious to the health risks that still remain and may be with us for months to come, we are happy that the people of the world and here at home have begun to embrace living in the new normal.

When we started working on preparing the sector to reopen in accordance with the risk-adjusted strategy, we said that this would happen one step at a time and that is precisely what happened. Step by step, over time we managed to convince the sceptics that the tourism sector could operate safely in the midst of the pandemic. Incrementally, we reopened subsectors helping to restore livelihoods to many South Africans who were destitute while maintaining health and safety standards to protect tourists, employees and South Africans in general.

Our next step is to work towards the reopening of international travel. With the risk of the virus spread on a downward trend, we are hopeful that the opening of our borders will happen sooner than we are expecting. Again, I need to emphasise that the level of risk, as assessed by the experts, will be determinant of when this will happen. In terms of demand stimulation, our short term focus, for now, will be on domestic tourism. We believe that domestic tourism, South Africans travelling and getting to know their own country, can drive market demand to unprecedented levels.

Indeed we had envisaged that domestic tourism will be the first pillar upon which the tourism recovery will kick-start. During this Tourism Month, we will be driving our domestic tourism campaign aimed at getting South Africans to travel and explore the splendour of their country responsibly, under the guidance of the health and safety protocols.

For our marketing efforts to have an impact, we have taken some effort to understand the needs of domestic tourists so that we can pitch our message at the right level. The indications are the domestic travellers fall within the following characterisations:

- All travellers want attractions and tourism activities with strict adherence to the health and safety protocols
- They are yearning to travel to escape the lockdown and discover previously undiscovered local attractions with renewed appreciation of local culture, history and nature.

- South Africans have been cooped up their houses for too long and they are yearning large open spaces with adventures. I must say that I went for adventure in the Vaal two weeks ago and it was a weekend to remember.
- Domestic travellers are also looking for affordable travel packages in which they can take their families and friends and have memorable experiences

South Africa has a diverse tourist attractions offering and I have no doubt that the varied needs of the travellers will not only but they will be exceeded.

Our domestic tourism campaign will stimulate demand that will have to be met with sufficient supply. We are mindful that the pandemic has devastated a significant portion of the supply market, however, we are confident that we still have enough tourism products to meet the demand. The supply market that is normally geared for international tourism will have to be innovative and quickly adapt to the needs of the local market. Incentives such as affordable rates, discounts, upgrades and enticing packages will play a critical role in getting South Africans to travel their own country. I invite all sector players in the private sector to collaborate with us in creating a conducive environment to entice South Africans to travel their country.

In his classic song Knysna Blue, the world renowned South African Jazz Pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, laments the fact that though he was born and raised in Cape Town, before the end of apartheid, he had never been to the top of the Table Mountain. It was only after the fall of apartheid that he got to appreciate the beauty of Cape Town. He further observed that for many decades, racial segregation and repression had denied the majority of South Africans many things including exploration their own country and for this reason many of them don't even know their country.

South Africans today have no valid reason not to explore their own country. How many tourist attractions are in our backyards that we have never thought to visit? Let us get out and explore and get to know the beautiful country that is South Africa.

Let's protect ourselves, let's wear masks, let's wash our hands and let's continue to practice social distancing.

I thank you.