



**MINISTRY : TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**MINISTER LINDIWE SISULU RETURNS FROM A SUCCESSFUL UNWTO
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu has successfully lobbied the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to back South Africa and other African states and called on the world to reopen their borders. This follows the recent announcement that the country is back on the UK's red list, which triggered travel restrictions being imposed by several other countries on Southern African countries, as a result of the identification of the new Omicron Covid-19 variant by South African scientists,.

Last week's 24th UNWTO General Assembly saw countries from all global regions expressing their solidarity with Southern African states, calling for the immediate lifting of travel bans and for freedom of international travel to be upheld.

The UNWTO reminded countries that the imposition of blanket restrictions on travel is discriminatory, ineffective and contrary to WHO recommendations. Blanket restrictions may also stigmatize countries or whole regions.

During the UNWTO General Assembly, Members States and partners, including voices from international organizations and across the private sector, echoed WHO's advice that travel restrictions should only be imposed as a very last resort in response to changing circumstances.

On the side lines of the General Assembly Minister Sisulu met with Spain's Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism Ms Maria Reyes Maroto Illera. The Ministers noted that Spain has destined 40 million vaccine doses for donation to African nations.

Spain has developed rapid antigen testing kits and has liberated it from Intellectual property and patent rights, and would be willing to make the technology and knowhow available to South Africa;

The Ministers further agreed that digital health technicians and experts could be shared as part of joint partnership programmes and Spain has furthermore expressed willingness to provide information on the creation of digital vaccine certificates which may in future assist to ease free movement of people.

Minister Sisulu also met her Venezuelan counterpart Minister Ali Ernesto Padron Paredes in Madrid for brief bilateral consultations and the ministers agreed to cooperate in promoting tourism between the two countries.

Minister Sisulu also met her Algerian counterpart Minister Yacine Hamadi. Both Ministers agreed to cooperate in promoting tourism between the two countries. Algeria has identified tourism as a priority economic sector and sees South Africa as an important partner in tourism.

Minister Sisulu also met her Mauritius counterpart Minister Louis Steven Ebeegado where both ministers raised concerns about the negative impact on tourism caused by the imposition of travel restrictions on southern African countries by some European, North American and Asian countries.

The ministers agreed to cooperate in influencing the UNWTO to take a stand against the travel restrictions. The Ministers also agreed to continue cooperation in promoting tourism between the two countries and in southern Africa and the African continent.

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