



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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COVID-19 INTERVENTIONS FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR

Yesterday, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced new measures that have been effected including a nationwide lockdown to safeguard the well-being of all South Africans.

The introduction of the measures, as announced by the President, are a response to the unprecedented crisis facing our country and the world over. The number of Coronavirus (COVID-19) infections continues to increase, world markets have gone into a tail spin and the pandemic threatens human lives in all parts of the world and has altered life as we know it.

The enforcement of a nationwide lockdown imposing restrictions on movement for 21 days with effect from midnight on Thursday, 26 March 2020 until midnight on Thursday, 16 April 2020 - means that all South Africans will have to stay at home. No one will be allowed to leave their homes except under strictly controlled circumstances, such as to seek medical care, buy food, medicine and other supplies or to collect a social grant. No business is allowed to operate, including restaurants among others. This will no doubt impact on the tourism sector as it comes with additional measures which are enforceable and which we must all adhere to, as follows:

- South African citizens and residents arriving from high-risk countries will automatically be placed under quarantine for 14 days.
- Foreign nationals arriving on flights from high-risk countries were prohibited a week ago and will be turned back.
- International flights to Lanseria Airport will be temporarily suspended.
- International travellers who arrived in South Africa after 9 March 2020 from high-risk countries will be confined to their hotels until they have completed a 14-day period of quarantine.

All tourists from high-risk countries have already had their visas revoked last week when the State of Disaster was declared by the President, alongside travel bans of people from countries that have been heavily impacted by Covid-19 including China, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, South Korea, Switzerland and the United States.

We urge all tourism stakeholders particularly accommodation owners to cooperate and make sure no one leaves unless they have a ticket booked and are catching the next flight home. We appeal to tour operators and tourist guides to act responsibly so that the country can avoid risky situations wherein a person or persons are tested positive but still do tours in the country. As

per the government instructions, all tourist attractions must be closed so that we not only protect South African citizens but tourists themselves.

A letter has been issued to all establishments including AirBnB immediately to provide details of tourists who are still accommodated within in their establishments, their activity/ movement and itinerary, and date of arrival in the country. All these details should be urgently sent to South African Tourism. Further information and related details have been provided to TBCSA and all travel and tourism associations. Information about this process also can also be accessed through the Department of Tourism website (www.tourism.gov.za).

Tourists who are staying must be placed under quarantine effective immediately. Tourists leaving the country will be subjected to mandatory testing at the following airports ahead of boarding a flight:

- OR Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, Gauteng
- Cape Town International Airport, Western Cape and
- King Shaka International, Durban, KwaZulu Natal

It is therefore prudent to plan for an additional hour before boarding to allow for exit testing. Again, we are appealing for everyone to act responsibly and in the interest of our country and should not be driven by selfish interest to make profit.

Assistance for Business enterprises in distress

Over the last few weeks, COVID-19 has compelled countries, including our government, to devise a set of measures ranging from travel bans to events cancellations and now a lockdown in two days in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus.

The impact of these measures on big business as well as small, micro and medium enterprises (SMME) will be devastating and will vary in accordance with the size of the enterprise in short to medium term. The nature of SMMEs is such that the dearth of business activities for more than a month, could spell the end for such enterprises.

In light of a constrained fiscus, we have worked closely with all stakeholders to find short-term measures that could assist to bring relief to affected businesses and other supportive mechanisms. We are highly concerned about the potential loss of livelihood by workers in these establishments and they are integral to these measures.

Concerning large businesses, we have looked at relief measures for those registered with the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

Tourism Relief Funding

The Department of Tourism has made an additional R200 million available to assist SMMEs in the tourism and hospitality sector who are under particular stress due to the new travel restrictions. This is amongst the interventions we believe will help to cushion our society from economic difficulties.

We are committed to putting people and their well-being first, ahead of profits as part of a response to COVID-19. At the same time, we are committed to see the sector being able to pick up the pieces post the COVID-19, thus our role will be to respond and support the industry during this period.

The fund will be administered to benefit SMMEs in all the 9 provinces and various tourism sub-sectors. Necessarily and rightly there will be a degree of bias towards rural areas, townships, women, young people and people with disabilities.

In line with our Amended Codes on BBB-EE the following categories will apply:-

- **Accommodation:** Hotels; Resort properties and Bed and Breakfast (B&B's)
- **Hospitality and Related Services:** Restaurants (not attached to hotels); Conference (not attached to hotels), Professional catering; Attractions
- **Travel and Related Services:** Tour operators; Travel agents; Tourist guides; Car rental companies; and Coach Operators.

There will also be an equitable balance between businesses that are in the tourism incentive programme of the Department of Tourism and businesses that are not benefiting from such programmes through a transparent application process, and the criteria outlined above.

Application Qualifying Criteria

- Must be a formally registered business with Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).
- Turnover must not exceed R2.5 million per year.
- Must have a valid tax clearance certificate.
- Guaranteed employment for a minimum number of staff for a period of 3 months.
- Proof of minimum wage compliance.
- Must provide proof of UIF registration for employees employed by the business.
- Be an existing tourism-specific establishment as outline in the scope of application (suppliers and intermediaries are not eligible).
- Must be in existence for at least one business financial year.
- Prove that the relief is required as a result of the impact of COVID-19.
- Must submit statements of financial position; over 12 months' bank statement, balance sheet, income statements, cash flow statements.
- Indicate the intended use of the resources.

Delivery Mechanisms

- The relief will be distributed in a spatially equitable manner to ensure that all provinces benefit.
- At least 70% of beneficiaries will be businesses that are Black owned.
- At least 50% of beneficiaries will be businesses that are women owned.
- At least 30% of beneficiaries will be businesses that are youth owned.
- At least 4% of beneficiaries will be businesses that are owned by people with disabilities.

Other Short-term measures

Plans are well underway to establish the Tourism Services Call Centre where affected businesses can get information on the available relief measures, postponements of events and will act as a helpline for tourists. We have also worked with the health authorities and industry to develop standard minimum guidelines for hospitality on how to conduct operations during this period.

We have met with industry stakeholders to find solutions in response to the crisis that confronts us and we wish to reiterate the importance of strong public-private partnerships and greater

cooperation in order to respond and overcome the challenges faced by the sector during the management and recovery from COVID-19.

A special thanks goes to the staff and management at The Ranch Hotel in Limpopo, for acting in the interest of the country and allowing the country, in time of need, to use your facilities for quarantine. We, therefore, call on the public and private sector to assist the national effort and consider availing facilities that could be used for self-isolation with the necessary support in terms of applicable health protocols. It is in times like these that the country will know that they have caring tourism industry.

We will continue to work together with all the tourism stakeholders in implementing a set of interventions so that we can quickly recover from this temporary setback. These will include readiness for the rollout of the e-visa system, resolving the challenges around the issuance of licenses for tour operators, ensuring that all our campaigns globally and domestically and associated enabling partnerships are in place and ready to be rolled out.

Our message to travelers and tourists is **DON'T CANCEL, POSTPONE** so that you can enjoy your holiday once the spread of the virus is contained.

We can never over-emphasise the need for all of us to play our part and do everything within our means to avoid contact with other people as we work towards a common goal to reduce the overall number of infections, and to delay the spread of infection over a longer period – what is known as flattening the curve of infections.

This national emergency certainly demands cooperation, collaboration and common action. As we join the world to step up efforts to combat COVID-19.

Ends

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