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28 February 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

MIXED FORTUNES FOR TOURISM IN THE CABINET RESHUFFLE

Tourism Business Council responds to changes in the National Executive

Pretoria, South Africa: *The latest Cabinet reshuffle presents mixed fortunes for the travel and tourism sector says the Tourism Business Council of Africa (TBCSA).*

This is after President Cyril Ramaphosa, announced his new Cabinet, which includes notable leadership changes in the portfolios of Finance, Public Enterprises, Transport, Home Affairs and Tourism in particular. As a result, the sector fondly bids farewell to Minister Tokozile Xasa, who will now take over the reigns of the Sports and Recreation portfolio, paving the way for the return of Derek Hanekom as Minister of Tourism.

Responding to the President's announcement, TBCSA Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Mmatšatši Ramawela says: "Whilst we are sad to bid farewell to Minister Xasa, we thank her for her leadership and contribution to the sector even though it was for a short period. In her role as Deputy-Minister, and in recent times as Minister, she has played the important role of continuing with the agenda of building a growing and inclusive tourism economy. We will fondly remember her, particularly for the role she has played in pressing for transformation by providing tangible support to small and emerging entrepreneurs and the empowerment of women in our sector."

"In the same vein," says Ramawela "we wish to welcome the return of Minister Derek Hanekom to the Tourism portfolio," The TBCSA believes the decision to re-appoint Hanekom is a sturdy one, and confirms the President's commitment to place tourism at the centre of economic growth in the country. "Hanekom's appointment allows for continuity as he is already familiar with the sector, the various role-players, its dynamics and has a firm understanding of what is required to lead the sector to double-digit growth in line with the bold vision of the National Tourism Sector Strategy" explains Ramawela.

Commenting on the other Cabinet changes, the TBCSA applauds the decision to deploy new leadership in the critical portfolios of Public Enterprises, Energy and Finance. It says this sends the right signals to both local and international investors, as well as the ratings agencies that government 'means business' when it comes to restoring governance and credibility to key institutions. Furthermore, the Council views the appointment of Minister Naledi Pandor to Higher Education and Training as a sound one, in light of the current process of rolling-out fee-free education and the implementation of the National Skills Development



Strategy. Going forward, Ramawela says it is critical that the authorities in the institutions of higher learning and training are engaged on the need to ensure quality learning and training in the country if we are to meet the needs of a developing economy.

The Council says it remains to be seen how the appointment of former Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande in the Transport portfolio will impact the sector, which continues to experience many regulatory challenges. “From airlift to road transport, there are many facets of the this Ministry which interface directly with travel and tourism, thus we look forward to establishing good working relations with the new Minister to unlock our sector’s growth prospects,” says Ramawela.

On the appointment of former Minister of Finance, Malusi Gigaba to Home Affairs, the Ramawela says the TBCSA recognizes the opportunity to establish a new rapport with the Minister and his team. “Our relationship with Minister Gigaba started on the wrong foot back in 2014 with the introduction of new immigration regulations. However, Home Affairs is one of our foremost important department and we view his re-appointment as a chance to build strong partnership and collaboration alongside the National Department of Tourism. We look forward to the opportunity to engage with Minister Gigaba, particularly in light of the President’s promise to take further steps to reduce regulatory barriers for tourism” says Ramawela.

Similarly, the TBCSA welcomes the appointment of Bheki Cele as the new Minister of Police. “We hope that the Minister will bring his experience and leadership from his days as the National Police Commissioner into his portfolio. We look forward to working closely with Minister Cele to deal with incidences such as the airport and follow-home robberies, burglaries in the accommodation sector and other contact crimes affecting tourists”, explains Ramawela. “It is common cause that safety and security, especially the challenge of personal safety stands as one of the major reasons for South Africa not attracting its fair share of international tourist arrivals.”

The TBCSA acknowledges the tough balancing act the President had to content with in reshaping Cabinet. In the Council’s view, this is a good start in line with the President’s pronouncement of ensuring that government delivers to the people of South Africa. The TBCSA looks forward to the President’s commitment to reconfigure the size and structure of Cabinet, which will definitely contribute to cost cutting and more focus within Government. Ends

Editors Notes:

Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) is the umbrella organisation for business in the travel and tourism industry. We are a non-profit, member-centric organisation representing the unified voice of business. We serve to unite and influence the diverse travel and tourism industry to contribute to a competitive, responsible and inclusive travel and tourism (and South African) economy.

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