

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

VOTE NO 38 - TOURISM

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Tuesday, 08 July 2025

PROCEEDINGS OF MINI PLRNARY SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Members of the mini plenary session met in Committee Room M46 at 14:00.

The House Chairperson (Mr W Horn), as Chairperson, took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers and meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 38 - Tourism:

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Hon House Chairperson, good afternoon ...

Afrikaans:

... goeie middagag ...

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Arabic:

... as-salaamu alaikum ...

IsiXhosa:

... molweni.

English:

House Chairperson, greetings to my Deputy Minister, hon Soty, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism, Ms Ronalda Schivonne Nalumango, all the portfolio committee members that are here today, the Director-General of Tourism, Victor Vele, the CFO Ms Maponya, the CEO of SA Tourism, Nombulelo Guliwe, all the enterprise representatives, colleagues and guests. It is my honour to present the Tourism Budget Vote 38 for the 2025/26 financial year. Today I will demonstrate how our R2,434 four billion budget builds on the achievements of the last year of the sixth administration how we are planning for the future and how we are addressing oversight concerns raised by the portfolio committee in the Budget Report.

This budget is based on the Government of National Unity, GNU's programme of action for the next five years, which aims

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to drive rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create jobs, reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living building a capable, ethical and developmental state. However, government cannot do it alone and we must stop repeating the same actions, expecting different results. Our mission is clear, is to elevate the profile of tourism as a key driver of economic growth and job creation as it is identified in the National Development Plan, Vision 2030, NDP, and in the Tourism Master Plan.

Together with the private sector and our communities, we are transforming tourism into a turbo charger for inclusive growth, jobs and community upliftment. The budget at a glance, I am here today to discuss the future and what the tourism budget of R2,434 four billion will deliver to South Africans, as well as the impact on our people's lives. So, the main allocation of the budget are as follows: R1,3 billion to SA Tourism and R331 million for Destination Development. The majority will go to the Working in Tourism Programme, R331 million for the tourism sector support services, which will include the Tourism Incentive Programme, like the Green Tourism Incentive Programme, the Market Access Programme, the

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Tourism Grading Programme and also the Tourism Transformation Fund.

Hon Chair and members, I want to address the oversight issues and concerns raised by the portfolio. I would like to demonstrate how we are addressing the concerns raised by the portfolio committee's budget report. For the legislative and policy reviews, the department will finalise and table the Tourist Amendment Bill, aligning it with the White Paper with a focus on short-term rentals, grading enforcement and governance. We will review outdated strategies including the heritage and cultural tourism, domestic growth, rural tourism, service excellence and climate change. We will enhance all new fund contracts for the Green Tourism Incentive Programme, GTIP, the Tourism Equity Fund, the Tourism Transformation Fund to include clear deliverables. This will include 60-day approval targets and consequence management when we fail to raise these targets.

We will ensure the implementation of our Community Tourism After Care Programme, providing post-handover support to community lodges, including business mentorship, market linkages, governance, training and maintenance. House

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Chairperson, we are focusing on the future also, through the digital transformation and risk management initiatives, which include developing a digital maturity roadmap, a real time tourism dashboard, data analytics and mobile tools. We will implement the sector risk and mitigation plan with a focus on climate change, health, safety and governance. We will enhance governance and oversight to ensure we meet the objectives outlined in the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

Other interventions to improve governance, include quarterly public dashboards for Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP, placements, fund disbursements, policy reviews and risk matrix. We will strengthen internal control, our audit committees and contract and consequence management framework. The Deputy Minister and I appreciate the concerns raised by the portfolio committee and we will work together with the portfolio committee to find lasting solutions.

Few of the successes of the past year. We have seen and experienced an upswing in tourism, with an increase of international visitors reaching a peak of 9,1 million. Domestic overnight travel continued its upward trajectory with 40 million trips recorded up from 37,7 million. International

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tourists brought with them a total foreign direct expenditure of R92,8 billion in the previous financial year. While domestic tourism grew by 7,6% rising from R130 billion to R133,1 billion.

Domestic tourism is the bedrock of our sector and to strengthen it further, the Department of Tourism and South African Tourism will provide support for events. We directed 76% of our budget to growth and job initiatives with 40% procurement from small, medium and micro-sized enterprises, SMMEs and 40% from women-owned businesses. We paid 100% compliant invoices within 30 days and our Green Tourism Incentive Programme, retrofitted 103 properties. We supported 266 SMMEs in participating in global trade shows through the Market Access Programme. We spent a further R144 million to train and deploy 2 300 tourism monitors.

On a policy level, we completed and implemented the Tourism Master Plan and we also finalised the Tourism White Paper and the Tourism Route Development Marketing Strategy. For our two major source markets, in collaboration with the Department of Home Affairs, we implemented and marketed the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme, welcoming our first Chinese and Indian

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travellers via a digital visa. In our Tourism Growth Sector Growth Partnership Plan, we, last year, undertook a full review of all the department's policy documents that were implemented during the sixth administration and even before, including the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, ERRP, the Tourism Master Plan, the White Paper and the National Development Plan, Vision 2030 targets.

House Chairperson, out of this, we set ourselves an ambitious and practical guide on how to jump start and sustain in tourism growth. The Tourism Growth Plan identifies five core pillars for sector-wide action and implementation. Firstly, ease of access, visa reform, air connectivity and road transport. Secondly, a co-ordinated destination marketing for international, continental, domestic and Mice segments, tourist safety and security awareness campaigns, responsive support and crisis management, tourism product development, quality infrastructure and immersive route design, job creation for youth, acceleration and skills development pathways.

So, the five pillars Tourism Growth Partnership Plan sets targets for government, the sector and the whole of society to

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achieved by 2030. The Department of Tourism, together with sector leaders, will host an execution lab later this month to discuss practical ways to achieve the targets set by the growth plan, including who, when and how. Co-ordinated destination marketing, our flagship global programme, "South Africa Awaits – Come Find Your Joy!" campaign resonated in seven key markets Asia, Europe, the Americas and Africa boosting website traffic by 35% and generating R1,2 million digital engagements.

Domestically, our Sho't Left Travel Week and summer campaigns drove a 9% increase in South Africans travel across provinces supporting 920 Sho't Left deals and 940 new jobs. This year we will spend R20 million on marketing our national domestic tourism. We utilise data-driven decision-making and foster better partnerships to plan and execute effective marketing campaigns. We also commission five new tracking surveys for departures, domestic, business events, public relations sentiment and brand perception. That is giving us a real time insight into arrival spent, the visitor's mood and so our corporate index arose from 71,8 to 74,2%.

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We are also sharpening our game to remain Africa's premier hub for meetings, incentives, conferences and hosting meetings. Africa Travel Indaba from 2026 will be refined with a more effective business model to enhance sustainability and promote a 15% increase in exhibited diversity. We will support 105 mice bid submissions aiming to convert 25 into closed winds worth R120 million rand in economic impact and host also 10 events in villages, townships, small dorpias for an inclusive regional uplift.

So, the department will invest R95 million in 10 high impact maintenance and enhanced projects on the department's own sites. We will also complete 25 community-based tourist lodges and branded routes in villages, townships and small towns. We will host our first tourism investment summit as part of the G20 to showcase prioritised projects and attract five new anchor investment on 09-10 September here in Cape Town. We will also launch our tourism investment booklet together with the United Nations Tourism. We are also working to finalise condition assessment for five heritage sites and prepare detailed conservation plans. We will finalise the short-term rental framework in consultation with the industry.

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In conclusion, House Chair, this vote represents our commitment to action legislative, operational and strategic. It aligns resources to remove barriers to strengthen partnerships and embed innovation and technology so that tourism can realise the full potential of our people and of our places. Together we will create a resilient and inclusive tourism sector that powers South Africa's future. I thank you, hon Chair.

Ms R S NALUMANGO: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, hon members, director-general, DG, of the department and your team, fellow South Africa, as we celebrate 70 years of the Freedom Charter, we are reminded of the visionary leadership of Professor ZK Matthews, who in 1953 proposed the establishment of a National Convention inclusive of all groupings of society to consider what they envisioned for a liberated South Africa. This multitude of youth contributed to the formulation of the Freedom Charter as adopted in Kliptown on 26 June 1955.

It is this historical account of events that informs our resolve in support for the national dialogue as pronounced by President Ramaphosa. This dialogue will provide an opportune

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moment for the people of South Africa to unite behind a common cause to effectively address our structural challenges of a stagnant economy which reproduces poverty, unemployment, and inequality. It is this spirit that we stand here today to advocate for a more vibrant, inclusive, and transformed tourism sector.

The ANC has over the years called for a whole-of-government approach to tourism that is also underpinned by healthy public-private partnerships that can boost our economy and create jobs on a large scale. Similarly, more attention and resources need to be channelled towards growing the local tourism economy. A more concrete plan needs to be developed to support heritage, culture and the informal tourism economy that sustains many of our residents in the townships, age groups and small *dorpië*[towns]. A deliberate effort must be made to target rural, impoverished communities to ensure their participation in the mainstream tourism economy. We need an economy that works for all. It is for this reason that we view corruption as a direct attack on the development of this country.

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The ANC calls on the department and South African tourism to urgently brief the committee on the alleged mismanagement of tender processes implicating Palm Express and MMC Business Solutions. We condemn all acts of corruption with the contempt that it deserves and urge that action be taken against those who are found guilty of any acts of corruption.

Hon Chairperson, we are convinced that tourism has the potential to be the leading force behind employment creation and poverty alleviation both from a departmental and sectoral standpoint. As expressed in the portfolio committee, we remain concerned about the department's vacancy rate, which has been maintained at 13,2% for a while now. Out of 2 037 targeted work opportunities for quarter four, only 66 were created, citing an insufficient number of high labour intensity projects implemented through the Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP.

Additionally, programme three faces a nominal decrease of 10% from R367,8 million. In 2024/25 to R331,1 million in 2025/26. This has a direct implication on the working for tourism, EPWP, which will now be decreased by 13,81% in nominal terms for the new financial year. Thereby only creating 4 200 work

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opportunities over the medium term, which is a massive decline. When compared to the 17 988 that were planned for the South African Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement, MTBPS, for 2024/25.

We implore the department to find an alternative source to supplement this programme and increase work opportunities. Hon members, over the MTBPS, the department will receive a total budget of R7,6 billion transfers to the SA Tourism account for an estimated 53,4%, which equates to R4,1 billion of this amount over this financial year. Budget allocations are expected to increase at an average annual rate of 3,8% from R2,4 billion in 2024/25 to R2,7 billion in 2027/28. We will be keeping a close eye on the SA Tourism entity to ensure that they adequately respond to their mandate, which encompasses marketing South Africa as a preferred destination of choice to the international, regional and domestic market, opening the country up for business events, managing the tourism grading system.

Hon Chairperson, we have high expectations that SA Tourism will return to its good performance and good audit results after the setback and qualified opinion with findings given

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the significant deterioration in the control environment and the poor quality of the financial statements presented and the failure to prevent irregular expenditure among other factors. We believe that the filling of critical positions such as that of chief executive officer, CEO, chief financial officer, CFO, chief marketing officer, CMO, and company secretary is a step in the right direction to ensure stability and optimal functioning of the company.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the committee members for their contribution to the strong recommendations as outlined in the report and also emphasise the need for urgent intervention by sister departments in areas where there are convergences, such as Sanparks, Mapungubwe and iSimangaliso, which fall under the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and the Department of Environmental Affairs, Robben Island, which falls under the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, and the security issues that we are addressing in collaboration with the South African Police Service, SAPS.

We must also emphasise the need to ensure that the jobs created by the Ministry not only reflect the 1 400 jobs created through the Tourism Monitors Programme but that more

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jobs are created and captured through infrastructure projects implemented by the Development Bank Southern African among other projects. Noting that the annual sector target is 5 994 jobs work opportunities. And a catch-up plan needs to be developed and reported to the committee as a matter of urgency. The ANC supports this budget [Applause.] Thank you.

Mr S R MOODLEY: House Chair, colleagues, Minister, Deputy Minister, friends, I stand before you here, not very happy with what I saw in the last portfolio committee meeting. In fact, from what we saw last week, it changed my mind and the perception of how this committee works. The MK party rejects the Report on Vote 38 of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism on the basis that the tourism sector remains untransformed. It focuses on the already privileged, underfunded rural and township economies and has abandoned the transformation agenda.

The South African government's failure to transform the tourism sector reflects a missed opportunity to use tourism as a powerful tool for economic transformation. Tourism currently employs 1,8 million people and contributes 8,8% to the gross domestic product, GDP, as of 2024, yet this massive sector

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remains dominated by white-owned enterprises, while black workers are concentrated in low-paying positions.

The current government's promises of inclusive growth and job creation through tourism are hollow promises; it is only a promise in words. The Government of National Unity, GNU, will continue to fail because instead of using the R7,6 billion Tourism budget to drive real transformation, it continues to channel resources to benefit the same privileged tourism operators. An unjustifiable 53,4% of the budget, which is R4,1 billion, is transferred to SA Tourism - an entity that markets South Africa to international tourists while excluding domestic tourism that could benefit our people, and that is key for me.

For three decades, the government focused on appeasing the established white-owned tourism industry while neglecting community-based tourism initiatives, and I heard the Chair speaking about that. Research confirms that South Africa's tourism industry remains predominantly dominated by white-owned enterprises, despite the Tourism Transformation Fund being established with R1,2 billion specifically for black or black operators has been at a snail's pace while established

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operators continue to benefit from the government's partnership. The government's devastating failure is evident in the numbers. The Working for Tourism Programme has been slashed from R297 million to R256,6 million, representing a crashing 13,81% decrease. Meanwhile, job creation targets have plummeted from 17 988 opportunities to a mere 1 400 in 2025-26, a staggering 92% reduction in employment opportunities for our people. This collapse ultimately affects black workers who make up most tourism employees but lack ownership and decision-making power. The proposed 3,8% annual budget increase for tourism falls short of what is needed to transform the sector. International visitors' spending reached only R116,5 billion in 2024, still trailing 2019 levels by R37,7 billion, yet the government continues focusing on international markets rather than building domestic tourism capacity. Despite the global community-based tourism market being valued at R575,9 billion and projected to reach R2 trillion by 2030, South Africa continues to neglect this proven model for inclusive development.

The underfunding of the transformation initiative is symptomatic of a lack of vision in the government's approach. Domestic tourism recorded R37,7 million overnight trips,

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contributing R123,8 billion, yet domestic tourism programmes remain disjointed with campaigns that are not co-ordinated at a strategic level. The voluntary grading system allows big hotel chains to operate without proper oversight while small community-owned establishments struggle to access support.

A robust tourism transformation infrastructure is the backbone of a credible economic empowerment policy. The government's underinvestment in the transformation initiative undermines its ability to use tourism as a tool for economic liberation. Despite tourism's contribution increasing to 8,8% of gross domestic product, GDP, employment patterns showed that the black workers remain concentrated in low-skilled jobs and low-skilled positions, whilst ownership patterns remain unchanged from apartheid times. Without deliberate intervention to prioritise the previously disadvantaged communities, government promises of reducing poverty and inequality through tourism will always remain hollow and a pipe dream, indeed, a pipe dream. Fancy words.

The statistics speak for themselves. While tourism contributes billions to the economy and employs millions, ownership and control remain in the hands of the privileged few,

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perpetuating the economic exclusion of the black majority. The MK party rejects the inadequate approach to tourism development as it will not transform the sector to serve the interests of the people and will ultimately perpetuate economic exclusion of the black majority for the benefit of for the benefits of tourism.

Just one thing in closing before I leave this podium, Madam Minister, the last portfolio committee meeting we had - and I need to say this - this is where I made up my mind that things are not running right in Tourism, it is a talk show, and if you look at it, you are talking about the Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP, we have monies that are returned to Treasury and people are hungry, they want jobs and yet we could not employ people in the Expanded Public Works Programme, and you know that, you heard it yourself, and that is when I knew that tourism needs to change. If people cannot do their jobs, fire them. Why keep people there if all we hear are fancy words. I want to see jobs, see that our people get jobs, and we move forward. At the beginning. I thought you knew. When I first ... [Time expired.] ... when I joined here, I thought we were okay. I reject this budget with all the contempt it deserves. Thank you.

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Afrikaans:

Me E LINDE: Agb Voorsitter, hierdie begroting laat my dink aan 'n roosterkoek by n padstal - kort nog botter en veel meer konfyt. Ons sien 'n R2,4 miljard-begroting wat soos 'n mislukte masafari voel. Dit het soveel beloftes, min wild en geen spoor van die beloofde ekonomiese reënboog nie. Dis 'n begroting, waarvan meer as die helfte, R1,3 miljard, soos 'n oorvol reisbrosjyre in die posbus van die swak presterende Suid-Afrika-toerisme val, 'n entiteit wat nog nie die kuns bemeester het om werk te skep nie.

Intussen bly binnelandse toerisme, agterweë soos 'n motor sonder brandstof. Waar is die plan om Suid-Afrikaners te laat reis. In 2024 het binnelandse toerisme slegs R12 miljard ingebring, wat verdubbel kon gewees het met 'n slim bemarkings plan. Bemark ons land vir Suid-Afrikaners eers, dan vir die wêreld.

Die DA verwelkom die voorneme om 'n toerismevennootskap model te ontwikkel. Ons waardeer die erkenning van digitale transformasie as 'n prioriteit, maar dit moet verder strek as 'n verslag; dit moet werklik toegang verbeter en besluitneming datagedrewe maak. Ons is dankbaar dat die DA se voorstel dat

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transformasie uitkomsgebaseerd en in lyn met die volhoubare ontwikkelingsdoelwitte van geen armoede, behoorlike werk, en verminderde ongelykheid nou deel van die begrotingsverslag se aanbevelings is.

Die administrasieprogram kry R364 miljoen, sonder duidelike meetbare produkte. Die enigste gegewe is 'n skandelige R44 miljoen wat begroot word vir kantoorakkommodasie, dit terwyl ons gemeenskappe beswaar kry. Minister De Lille, sny die vet van die administrasie af en plaas die fokus op implementering, impak en streng oorsig.

Die transformasie en billikheidsfondse is vasgevang in 'n ou struktuur en swak implementering. Trek die remme stywer, Minister. Verander die implementeerders, verhoog prestasieverwagtinge en koppel die billikheidsfonds aan die APP-doelwitte. Wys dat u regtig vir opkomende entrepreneurs omgee. Ons kan nie hierdie jaar weer net 'n handjie vol klein besighede ondersteun nie.

Die DA glo en toerisme se potensiaal, maar nie in nog 'n verslag wat jaar na jaar dieselfde lyk nie. Maak toerisme toeganklik met gratis hoëspoed Wi-Fi en interaktiewe

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tegnologie in ons nasionale parke, erfenisterreine en kultuurgebiede. Belê in regte infrastruktuur, soos toegeruste rusareas en skoon toiletgeriewe langs toeristepaaie, markstalletjies, en veilige parkeerareas by ons toeriste-aantreklikhede.

Toerisme is meer as hotelle en landskappe. Dis ook landbou, plaaslewe, kultuur en ekonomiese selfstandigheid. Daarom stel die DA voor, dat die departement 'n toegewyde Agritoerismeprogram in vennootskap met landbou en plaaslike owerhede ontwikkel.

Agritoerisme is die sleutel tot ekonomiese groei. Dit bied enorme potensiaal vir werkskepping, entrepreneurskap en plaaslike ontwikkeling, veral in landelike streke, van plaasverblyf tot plaasmarkte, wyn- en olyfroetes, boerdery-ervarings en meer. Dit is 'n sektor wat wag om ontgin te word in plattelandse gebiede.

Ontwikkel 'n wolskaaproete in die Karoo met plaaslike wolmarkte en sentrums, wat wolwas, skeer en handwerk demonstreer. Ontwikkel Limpopo se vrugte-corridor deur

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opleiding in vrugteverwerking te gee. Lei die jongmense van Musina en Makhado op as toergidse.

Laat ons toerisme in al ons gemeenskappe plant, nie net in brosjures nie, en beslis nie in R44 miljoen-kantore en buitensporige salarisrekeninge van R358 miljoen nie. Ons kan blindelings R1 miljard vir 'n onderpresterende entiteit gee, om nog korrupte tenders toe te ken, of ons kan belê in Agritoerisme wat standhoudende werke vir duisende Suid-Afrikaanse gesinne kan skep.

Laat ons nie hierdie begroting onthou as nog 'n gemorste kans nie, maar as die jaar waarin toerisme werklik Suid-Afrika geword het. Kom ons skep werk, kom ons gee hoop, kom ons laat toerisme in Suid-Afrika floreer. Ek dank u. [Applous.]

Setswana:

Moh L F TITO: Modulasetilo, ke rata go dumedisa Moporesitente wa rona e leng, Rre Sello Julius Malema, badiredi, dikomissare, balwantwa le baagi ba rona ba Aforikaborwa.

English:

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The EFF firmly rejects this Budget Vote 38 on Tourism. Our rejection is rooted in the fact that this budget fails to adequately address the urgent needs of those working in and depend on the tourism sector. This proposed budget is neither pro-poor, nor aligned with the transformative developmental agenda. Instead of uplifting historically disadvantaged communities, and supporting inclusive economic growth, this budget continues to reinforce existing inequalities in the sector, thus perpetuating unequal redistribution of resources.

The foundation of South African tourism was built around natural landscape escarpments, caves, mountains and vast bushvelds, teeming with wildlife that originally belonged to the indigenous people of this land. Over time, these spaces were fenced off, commodified and rendered inaccessible to the very communities whose heritage we represented.

This is a direct result of colonial and apartheid era dispossession. It is therefore imperative that this budget seeks to correct these historical injustices by ensuring equitable access, ownership and participation in the tourism economy for the historically marginalised. A budget that does

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not address these realities fails in its constitutional and developmental obligations.

To drive this point home, allow me to pause and pose a rhetorical question. How many Africans, South Africans, in particular, own a cheetah, a lion or a giraffe? And please do not bring up the isolated case of a single black man with a big nose, who owns a few buffaloes. That is not transformation; that is tokenism. We are speaking here of real transformation, systematic change that redistribute ownership, access and economic benefit in a sector, historically defined by exclusion and dispossession.

The Seventh Administration should hang its head in shame for squandering a historic opportunity to bring transformation and dignity to the tourism sector, instead of advancing black ownership and genuine economic participation. This budget reflects business as usual.

Almost 54% of this budget has been conspicuously allocated to the tourism sector through transfers and subsidies, but let us be clear, subsidies are often just a sophisticated way of enriching the already wealthy, while the poor remain trapped

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in poverty. This funding should have been explicitly and strategically tied to a black empowerment agenda in tourism, ensuring that these subsidies advance transformation, inclusivity and ownership by those who were historically excluded.

We must be intentional and unwavering in our efforts to redress the imbalances of the past. Community-based tourism initiatives and the support of local arts, crafts and curios are critical to place money directly into the hands of the previously disadvantaged communities of South Africa. Greater investment should have been channeled into grassroots tourism development, supporting the intangible cultural heritage in the form of cultural dance groups, promoting local African cuisines and enabling meaningful local ownership in major tourism enterprises, such as the Kruger National Park, Table Mountain and their surrounding ecosystems.

Without such a transformative approach, it is unsurprising that the modest 3,8% increment in the tourism budget offers little hope of meaningful change. It is clear that this increment was never truly intended to uplift our people. A budget allocation of R2,7 billion, when compared to the

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national budget in its entirety is barely a minimum. It reflects a lack of urgency and political will by the so-called Government of National Unity, which has now become the government of national disunity to confront and correct the deep-rooted injustices of the past, in which the animals and natural wonders of this land were claimed in the name of the Queen of England.

Africans are not asking merely to alleviate poverty through tourism; they are demanding the right to create wealth from their own natural endowments. They want full ownership of the means of production in tourism. Aligned with the broader progressive movements across the globalising world that advocates for economic justice and self-determination, this budget is rejected, because it fails to address urgent priorities. Instead, it panders to the wealthy allies who have controlled tourism since the apartheid era. Real transformation demands a budget 10 times larger, with at least 70% focusing on correcting historical injustices and empowering the marginalised. Anything less is an insult to economic justice. The EFF rejects this budget. [Applause.]

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Mr N M HADEBE: House Chairperson, Budget Vote 38 holds ...

[Interjections.]

Mrs E N NTLANGWINI: On a point of order, House Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Hon Hadebe ... [Inaudible.]

... Yes, hon member, why do you want to be recognised?

Mrs E N NTLANGWINI: Two things, House Chair: The translation services is a total disgrace for both isiXhosa and isiZulu. Utter disgrace on what they are translating because I listened to the previous speaker in terms of when they translate from Afrikaans to isiXhosa and isiZulu, utter disgrace.

Secondly, can we just tell our audience in the gallery that they can't participate in the events of the day. Their role here is just to observe and look pretty. Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Thank you. On the point you made around translation services I will try and escalate that so that it be improved. To members in the public gallery, both downstairs and those who were able to join us in the gallery upstairs, while we really appreciate your presence, we are a

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legislature that prides ourselves in transparency and accountability. The friendly request is that you be reminded that your role is to observe and not to participate. So, in practical terms that would mean that we, in a friendly way, request that you do not applaud or interject but that you listen and observe in silence the input of the hon members who represent all of you in this House. Thank you.

Hon Hadebe, my apologies, please proceed.

Mr N M HADEBE: Hon House Chairperson, my six seconds. Budget Vote 38 holds the power to transform our nation with vision, determination and political will. The Department of Tourism can drive real economic growth, create much needed jobs and uplift our country as a whole.

I would like to start with the tale of the two city countries. Thailand, with a similar population size and a slightly larger gross domestic product, GDP, has made tourism a core pillar of its economy. Both South Africa and Thailand are known for sunny skies, friendly people and beautiful beaches. Yet in 2024, Thailand welcomed 35,5 million visitors, almost four times the number that visited our shores. Their success stems

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from safety, an efficient public transport system, vibrant local businesses owned by Thai entrepreneurs and visible tourist policing, creating an environment where tourists feel safe and welcomed.

In contrast, South Africa faces serious challenges, safety concerns, illegal migration, unregulated businesses and unsafe public transport. If these issues remain unaddressed our crime levels will continue to tarnish our image, deter potential visitors and hinder industry growth.

The Department of Tourism's White Paper on the development and promotion of tourism gazetted for implementation in October 2024 acknowledges these issues. It proposes critical interventions such as establishing a specialised police unit to handle tourist incidents. Minister, it is clear that a partnership model with measurable outcomes outlining specific roles to various partners is needed without further delay. If not, this White Paper will remain but a plan good on paper but lacking implementation.

The IFP also welcomes the portfolio committee's recommendations that all government departments involved in

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tourism collaborate to remove barriers to growth. There are several departments that stand in the way of tourism's growth, for example, crime severely impacts us all, but tourists are especially vulnerable. In hotspots near Cape Town International Airport gangs target vehicles, robbing passengers of their belongings, especially cell phones, while waiting at traffic lights. Why is there no visible policing by the SA Police Service, SAPS, in these areas? How many tourists have fallen victim? These questions demand urgent action.

The pending Tourism Amendment Act, vital for regulating unregulated industries like Airbnb, Uber and Bolt remains stalled. The IFP urges the department to prioritise this legislative review urgently.

South African tourism receives over half of our tourism budget via transfer, but is plagued by scandals, instability, and allegations of corruption. Those responsible for governance failures must face consequences. The Tourism Equity Fund, designed to support youth, rural and township entrepreneurs, has been mismanaged and is now in crisis, far from empowering marginalised communities. It has left many businesses excluded and unsupported. Only R125 million of the R465 million

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allocated has been dispersed, leaving many applicants, mostly women, youth and persons with disabilities, waiting in vain.

In closing, the future of South African tourism industry depends on our collective to address these challenges head on. Only then can we truly harness the greatness of our nation through tourism. In consideration of the challenges raised above, hon Minister, the IFP supports this Budget Vote. I thank you. [Applause.]

Ms J A BASSON: Hon House Chair, hon Minister, Deputy Minister, hon members and fellow South Africans, the Patriotic Alliance stands in support of Budget Vote 38 on the tourism portfolio, recognising the critical role that tourism plays in the economic growth, job creation and social development in South Africa.

We commend the efforts to revitalise the sector's past pandemic and acknowledges its potential to uplift marginalised communities. However, our support comes with a firm call to action. This budget must prioritise and expand opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, and the youth in South Africa.

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Tourism is not just about businesses and international investors. It must be a vehicle for grassroots economic empowerment. We demand increased funding and access to grants for small tourist enterprises, especially those owned by historically disadvantaged individuals, to ensure they benefit from tourism directly, youth focused skills programmes that equip South Africans with the tools to thrive in this sector, preferential procurement policies that prioritise local SMMEs in the government and private sector, ensuring that economic benefits remain within our communities and reduced bureaucratic barriers for small businesses to enter the tourism market including simplified licensing processes and target financial support.

The Patriotic Alliance believes that tourism can be a powerful tool in enforcing inclusive government transformation, but only if the budget is implemented with deliberate focus on SMMEs and the youth. We will hold government accountable and ensure that that this budget does not merely strive for established role players but opens doors for everyone left behind. Tourism must work for everyone in South Africa and not just a few. I thank you. [Applause.]

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Mr A D BEESLEY: Hon House Chairperson, Minister, Deputy Minister, Director-General, hon members and fellow South Africans, Action SA will support this budget. Tourism remains a powerful engine for inclusive economic growth and job creation, especially in communities where opportunity is otherwise scarce. However, our support comes with an urgent call. This department must begin to speak with a louder, clearer and more principled voice on the governance issues undermining the tourism sector. It cannot continue to operate in silos while the industry around it struggles.

Action SA is deeply concerned that several key sector strategies have not been updated in over a decade. These include the National Heritage and cultural Tourism Strategy 2013, the 2012 Domestic Growth Strategy, the 2012 National Rural Tourism Strategy and the 2012 Tourism Service Excellent Strategy. These outdated documents cannot serve as an effective road map in a vastly changed world.

These policies, as a matter of urgency, must be updated so that we have clear measurable goals and strategies to grow this vital job creating industry. The global tourism landscape

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has shifted significantly since 2012. South Africa must keep up or we will be left behind.

To support the tourist sector, Action SA calls for urgent reform of tourist and business visa processes. Action SA supports expanding visa free and visa on arrival access to more countries to unlock economic growth and make South Africa a more accessible destination.

Hon Minister nowhere is the need for proactive and accountable leadership more urgent than in my own city eThekweni. As an avid surfer and lover of the ocean, it has been devastating to witness the deterioration of Durban's once glorious beaches. EThekweni, with its warm winters and golden coastline should be a year-round hotspot, instead, we are now warning visitors not to swim because of E. coli contamination. Who can blame tourists for staying away when our ocean has become a public health hazard?

Whilst we acknowledge that water and sanitation are not under this department's mandate, somebody must speak up. Somebody must stand up for the tourism industry, for the hospitality business being decimated and for the thousands of workers

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whose jobs are on the line. Minister, that voice must be yours.

In conclusion, Action SA urges the Minister with this budget to break down interdepartmental silos and begin addressing the critical needs of the tourism sector. Let's update our tourism strategy, let's reform our tourism visa, let's get eThekweni tourism back on its feet, and most importantly let's welcome the world to our shores with pride. Tourism has the potential to be one of South Africa's greatest sources of sustainable employment. Let us treat it with the seriousness it deserves. As stated, Action SA supports this budget. I thank you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM: House Chairperson, Minister of Tourism, Ms Patricia de Lille, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism, Ms Ronalda Nalumango, hon Members of Parliament, Director-General and your team from the department, ladies and gentlemen, as we still grieve our late Portfolio Committee chairperson, Ms Lungi Mnganga-Gcabashe and our former Deputy President, the late Mr David Mabuza, affectionately known as the cat, we also continue to celebrate our other great icon, our former President Rolihlahla Mandela in this July month, under the theme, I quote, "it's still in

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our hands to combat poverty and inequity," which is the 2025 theme for the Nelson Mandela International Day on 18 July 2025. Yes, House Chairperson, it is indeed still in our hands to do tourism that is a vehicle for creating jobs and for destroying poverty for an inclusive economic growth and sustainability. The nation had given this Government of National Unity, GNU, a clear mandate to turn South Africa into a successful tourism nation, and to unite all of us, citizens, visitors and tourists alike, in the joy of discovering our country, discovering each other, and in the shared hope of equality for all. In his state of the nation address, Sona, the President mentioned the recovery of the tourism sector and its potential for further growth. This included the tourism-impact areas such as the Master Plan for job creation, and expanding support for small and medium enterprises, SMEs, within the tourism sector.

House Chairperson, sustainable SMEs are key drivers of inclusive growth and poverty eradication. Therefore, an economic growth without transformation entrenches exclusion, and transformation without growth is unsustainable. As a department together with the entity, the South African tourism, we thrive to champion the conditions for a possible

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sustainability. In this instance, to lower many barriers that inhibit SMEs' entry into hotel industry for example, the Department has a programme called the Tourism Grading Support Programme, TGSP, which is continuing to subsidise grading costs. In 2024-25 financial year, the TGSP supported 2 970 establishments, encouraging active participation in the TGCSA's grading system. These efforts contribute to the standardisation of service excellence, helping South Africa to remain competitive in global tourism markets. To sustain profits and benefit local economy, our department will continue to support the tourism industry to reach for a threshold of local development. Some big hotels do not appear in the list of graded establishments on the website of the Tourism Grading Council but, still sell themselves as 5-star hotels. To ensure that the grading system remains world-class and relevant to our local environment in South Africa, we have initiated the Grading Criteria Review which will be finalised this financial year.

Grading of touristic establishments that host international events is a crucial factor in sustainability of economic growth and job creation. It is with this reason that the SA National Conventions Bureau, SANCB, through the Meetings,

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Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions, MICE, subsector, will focus on capitalising on previous successes to accelerate growth through the consolidation of multiple national efforts when bidding for international meetings. The secured conferences will also contribute to the regional spread of business events. Given that tourism is a highly labour-intensive industry, people will rightfully expect to see significant local employment within these successfully bided international conferences. Let us think about all the possible jobs that are connected to this tourism subsector, whether it is drivers, messengers, cleaners, waitresses, chefs, tour guides, tour operators, event planners and owners of establishments like hotels and resorts. There is no doubt that this sector has big potential to create many jobs. Hon Chair, for the tourism sector to promote pro-poor growth, the employment level of local South African citizens in each of the nine provinces must rise as much as their representation in the managerial positions. The people-centred District Development Model, DDM, will thus be another vehicle to transform the tourism industry for the better.

Hon members, the biggest international conference, as the Minister alluded to, yet to be held in South Africa later this

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year, the G20, will definitely be a catalyst for this yearned job creation. South Africa hosts the G20 Presidency, which presents an opportunity to showcase the nation's unparalleled hospitality, world-class infrastructure, quality-assured accommodations, and experiences, as well as its ability to host global events. As the department, we are very committed to ensure that no one is left behind on the knowledge, importance and benefit of this G20. Our first G20 Community and Stakeholder Outreach Programme, hon Tito, was held in Northern Cape last week, indeed, proved this inclusivity, by engaging stakeholders and communities in a meaningful dialogue. During this G20 Outreach we had built trust, established transparency, and encouraged active participation in the National Agenda of G20. Without community involvement, tourism projects may fail to gain the necessary support and could lead to adverse outcomes. Therefore, fostering strong community and stakeholder engagement is essential for the long-term success of tourism core purposes, initiatives, and ultimate outcomes. The people of the Northern Cape who participated in the G20 Community Outreach Programme felt that it was an exciting time for South Africa, as the first African nation, to preside over and host the G20 Presidency and Summit.

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Tourism is about the people of South Africa. It is about a guest house owned in Bizana, sharing the great cultures and heritage of the Eastern Cape, it's about learners visiting for free of charge, the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre in the Free State, the Square Kilometre Array, SKA, and MeerKAT telescopes in Northern Cape to learn more about great important scientific discoveries. This includes, roads, telecommunication systems, water supply and sanitation, and safety and security to enhance the appeal to all touristic destinations in South Africa when it comes to Safety and security in the country, whereas, in preventing criminal activities that are aimed at robbing our tourists. House Chairperson, we have looked in the mirror and seen some challenges in the tourism industry, but there are also real strength, deep resilience and huge potential in our country's tourism sector. We must expand the benefits from tourism activity to ensure that the growth we are seeking is inclusive.

In conclusion, House Chairperson, to my Minister, De Lille, I appreciate the leadership you have provided throughout this past year and looking forward to continue working together to see through our given mandate to transform and thrive the

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tourism sector, for job creation and inclusive economic growth for all South Africans. I also would like to appreciate the positive diligence and support role of the portfolio committee as led by our chairperson, the Director-General, Mr Vele, and your team, thank you very much for your support, and I extend my gratitude for the good work done over the past year, and our partners in the forest - in the tourist industry, I'm sorry about that, I come from forestry, - and their dedicated work in support of tourism. I thank you very much. [Applause.]

Mr W M THRING: Hon House Chairperson, the ACDP notes this department's budget allocation of R243 billion for the 2025-26 financial year. The ACDP is cognisant that the tourism sector has the potential to uplift communities especially in rural areas, to create a myriad of jobs from accommodating guests to guiding entertainment as well as in craft production. Tourism revenue frequently brings in foreign currency and often supports the improvement of our roads, sanitation and public services that enhance the quality of life for locals.

The South African Ministry of Tourism is, however, unstable. It has faced budget underspending, stalled infrastructure projects, irregular expenditure and weak oversight with the

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entity having faced repeated leadership challenges or changes since 2023 amidst allegations of misconduct. It is irrational that Tourism's acting CEO should be retained despite being named 46 times in a forensic report on the Dinokeng Festival scandal. The ACDP calls for her immediate axing following due process.

This year, the Ministry risks forfeiting over R800 million in unused funds to the National Treasury due to poor budget execution. Additionally, a R35 million payment for services not rendered was processed through the SA Tourism offices in South Africa and the US. These payments were signed off by the former executives just days before the financial year ended bypassing banking controls. It would be foolish not to suspect skulduggery. These failures are unconscionable in our world in one country with its unique blend of cultural heritage, iconic landmarks, diverse wildlife, extraordinary natural beauty, where tourism is a low-hanging fruit with passionate operators and workers, success ought to be easy.

However, the ACDP calls on the department to uphold ethical leadership by collaborating and fostering partnerships with international bodies to boost international arrivals by

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supporting small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, and initiating infrastructure upgrades with the glaring example of the Robben Island Museum.

The ACDP calls for the prioritisation of rural and township tourism. The entire tourism sector needs upgraded technology such as smart tourism systems, data analytics and digital platforms to enable monitoring and managing visitor flows.

Finally, as kingdom builders, the ACDP supports the call of the Minister to consider placing the SA Tourism, SAT, under administration to restore public trust and operational integrity. I thank you.

IsiXhosa:

Mnu. N L S KWANKWA: Sihlalo ohloniphekileyo, namhlanje ndihamba nomntwana wam, uMamTshawe, uhleli phaya ecaleni. Malibongwe!

English:

This department has been struggling to prioritise extensive tourism marketing and awareness programmes. Tourism infrastructure is facing challenges right across the country.

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In fact, if one were to look at some of the examples is that *Business Tech* recently reported how a tourism project in Limpopo, built with R58 million of state funds has remained closed and unused for the past two decades.

Minister, as you understand and know that in 2015, an official estimate indicated that of the 22% to 25% of the international tourists that travel to Cape Town engaged back then in some form of township tourism and because of crime these statistics have reduced significantly. But it is not very difficult to find reliable statistics of what the impact of violent crime, especially in the townships as well as extortion have had on township businesses. Quite a number, especially the beds and breakfast, BnBs, have closed down due to a lack of business. Also, a lot of township businesses face competition from your well established predominantly white-owned tourist operators or companies that operate in the country as they decide where tourists can visit and go in the country considering those very same safety issues I have highlighted.

The failure of the department to invest in projects affects all provinces. For example, the Eastern Cape is so-called the home of legends, but there's nothing legendary about the

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service delivery and the state of the province. It is one of the highest tourism revenue generators in the country, however, it remains. The tourism sites are underdeveloped and key infrastructure projects are neglected. This is not just a missed opportunity, but a pressing issue that needs immediate attention.

Minister, as you know, South Africa's townships and rural areas hold immense potential for tourism-led economic development, but this is undermined by some of the issues I have already raised. If you were to look at grassroots initiatives like Uncuthu Tours in Mdantsane and the bicycle tours in Cape Town townships they showcase the rich landscape, cultural heritage and community spirit of these regions but struggled due to inadequate infrastructure, limited municipal support, weak promotional efforts and inadequate tourism awareness in the communities they serve as the residents do not become an integral part of the tourism strategy of that particular community, as is the case in other jurisdictions such as Thailand and so on. We support the Budget Vote. Thank you.

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Mr S S ZIBI: Hon Chair, I rise on two areas relating to this Budget Vote. Firstly, is to talk about the land of beauty and opportunity from which I come. This is the area between the Great Kei River, Inciba River in the south and the Mtamvuna River in the north. It is a land of enormous contradiction. To drive from East London along the N2, branching off the right after Qunu Village towards Mvezo and Elliotdale, you get to experience what poor infrastructure looks like. Roads nearly impassible during the rainy season, rutted and bumpy in winter.

To travel all the way towards Coffee Bay from there is a taste of endurance, yet the land is beautiful and fertile. The people are gentle and friendly, yet many are poor. If we had policy and budget focus on agriculture, tourism and infrastructure for these lands, my fellow residents of the Bomvana land, Amakhosa to the south, Abathembu to the northwest and Amampondo to the north, would not end up here living in informal settlements in this town and other metros. They would live well in their own land close to their families and communities. This land could be like Africa's version of the south of France to which people from all over the world pay obscene amounts of money just to visit.

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Minister, I know you care very deeply about this stuff. I am calling for better co-ordination between your Ministry, agriculture, provincial governments and district municipalities to mine our own climate friendly gold.

But I speak of contradictions. I have also been to an even more beautiful land just south of the Mtamvuna River where the N2 bypass the Amadiba in Exolobeni, the project is so hotly contested. The people there are also beautiful. They are patient and deeply rooted in the land. They are calling for a balanced development so that they can preserve access to this climate friendly gold I am talking about. Being able to live off the land and the sea to have development in a way that preserves that to which they are so spiritually connected. This is our natural resources.

I know the project is well underway, but they deserve further engagement and support by me, by the members of this House, by you Minister and indeed, the Minister of Transport. Rise Mzansi supports this Budget Vote. Thank you.

Ms A S HLONGO: Chairperson, hon Minister De Lille, Deputy Minister Soty, director-general, DG, officials of the

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department, chairperson of the portfolio committee, hon Nalumango, hon members and fellow South Africans ...

Siswati:

... ngiyanibingelela nonkhe.

English:

It is with great sadness that we participate in this Budget Vote today just five days ago we learnt of the passing of Comrade David Dabede Mabuza, former Deputy President of the ANC and the country. Comrade David Dabete, DD, was a dedicated activist, a seasoned educator and a sharp minded political strategist who led and counselled many of us throughout our political journey and activism in the ANC. He will forever be remembered for his strong character and a visionary leadership. May his soul rest in peace!

Hon Chairperson, Vote 38 remains central to government's commitment to driving inclusive growth and job creation. As outlined in the ANC's 55th national conference resolution, the tourism sector plays a vital role in stimulating South Africa's economy. Through its multiplier effect it supports

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various sectors and is able to absorb different skill levels through employment.

More importantly, tourism is a powerful tool for transformation, empowerment and upliftment of marginalised and previously disadvantaged. Black women, youth and persons with disabilities must take centre stage in redressing the injustices of the past and no longer shall they remain on the margins as general workers, cleaners, monitors and guides. Our government must create a conducive environment that allows them to find expression in ownership patterns, to become shareholders and executives in this sector.

It is for this reason that we implore the government of national unity to intensify its resolve to safeguard transformative policies such as the Employment Equity Act and the broad-based black economic empowerment, B-BBEE, which are meant to level the playing field and acknowledge the legacy of inequality inherited from the apartheid era. We are encouraged by the department's efforts to deepen this understanding and ensure inclusion. Their annual performance plan, APP, reports the following.

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The target for senior management service, SMS, women representation was 50% and the department achieved 50,8%. For persons with disabilities the target was 3%, they achieved 4,8%. Forty percent of spending on goods and services was directed to SMMEs and women-owned businesses.

The department must sharpen its instruments and create fertile ground for meaningful transformation. Central to this is the implementation of the tourism equity fund, the tourism transformation fund and the tourism grading system, all of which we believe must be expedited as per the committee's recommendations.

Against this backdrop, we welcome the increase in the budget allocation for Programme 4, which grows by 4,2% in nominal terms from R318,1 million in 2024-25 to R331,6 million in 2025-26. The Tourism Incentive subprogramme at R197,2 million is the main cost driver in this programme. It aims to aims to incentivises priority areas including market access support, tourism grading, implementation of energy efficiency initiatives and funding for transformation initiatives in the sector. These efforts are all geared towards unlocking capital investment for black tourism entrepreneurship. They align with

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the department's strategic priorities of economic transformation, responsible tourism and job creation. The allocation to this subprogramme increases by 3% in nominal terms.

As I conclude, the ANC welcomes the department's edition of a new target on digital transformation. This is in line with global trends which are integrating technologies such as artificial intelligence, block chain and immense platform to drive a more innovative and competitive tourism experience. As the ANC we support this Budget Vote. I thank you. [Applause.]

Afrikaans:

Mnr P A van STADEN: Voorsitter, toerisme is 'n bron van groot inkomste vir Suid-Afrika. Daar moet in alle erns gepoog word om Suid-Afrika so aantreklik as moontlik vir buitelandse toeriste te maak, dat hulle met 'n oop gemoed, sonder enige bekommernis na Suid-Afrika kan reis, om ons wonderlike land met sy pragtige natuurskoon, te kan beleef en te kan geniet.

English:

This can only be fully achieved when we clamp down on crime. Crime keeps tourists away and crime has a huge impact on our

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country's income. It has an impact on our country's image. We must fix this. Otherwise, in a few years' time, we will have a situation where tourists don't want to come and visit us due to our high crime levels. During February of this year, the FF Plus had made an urgent request to the Minister to take the necessary steps to ensure that communities, especially the tourist resorts on the bank of the Vaal River are not again devastated by floods due to the negligence of the water authorities. We cannot have a situation again as in February 2023 where 10s of millions of rand of damage were caused to resorts along the Vaal River after they were unexpectedly overwhelmed by strong flooding due to poor co-ordination between the different authorities responsible for regulating the outflow from the Vaal Dam.

Afrikaans:

Die VF Plus verwelkom die opening van die Dinosaurussentrum in die Golden Gate Hoogland Nasionale Park in die Vrystaat.

Uiteindelik het die departement hierin geslaag, om hierdie sentrum op die been te bring. Die departement se begroting vir die 2025-26-boekjaar van R2,43 miljard, die onderspandering van hierdie departement, soos in die 2024-25-boekjaar, wat R800 miljoen beloop het, mag nie weer gebeur nie, aangesien

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toerisme belangrik is vir die ekonomie van Suid-Afrika. Die risiko's wat met onderspandering gepaard gaan is enorm en dit kan en mag nie meer toegelaat word nie.

Die Vredefortkoepel-besoekersentrum staan egter tans verwaarloos en daadwerklike pogings sal aangewend moet word, om hierdie swak projek, wat teen 'n koste van R11 miljoen in Augustus 2008 voltooi is, te red, om toe te sien dat toerismekaanloklikheid in die gebied weer op dreef kom. Hierdie gebied is 'n erfenisjuweel en dit kan 'n groot inkomste vir die land wees, indien daar daadwerklike pogings aangewend word, om die skade wat deur hierdie projek aangerig is te herstel. In stede daarvan om honderde miljoene rande te verbeer aan die Nasionale Tesourie, kon hierdie geld eerder aangewend word het om probleme by die Vredefortkoepel uit te sorter, of om ander toerismeaantreklikhede in Mpumalanga en Limpopo en ander dele in die land op te gradeer en meer aantreklik te maak, nie net vir buitelandse toeriste nie, maar ook vir Suid-afrikaners. Laastens, ...

English:

... We also have a concern regarding the Bloemhof Dam's structural problems that could be a threat to tourism in the

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region and FF Plus has already posed questions in this regard to the Minister of Water and Sanitation. This Minister informed us that upstream repairs would include the collapsing slabs will start on 1 July this year. And I want to ask the Minister of Tourism to follow up on this matter to ensure that the tourism industry and the income of these towns and region relating to guesthouses, resorts and guest farms in the Bloemhof and Christiana areas in North West are not negatively affected in this regard. Thank you, Chair.

Ms H ISMAIL: Hon Chairperson, hon members, fellow South Africans, tourism should be one of South Africa's most powerful tools for inclusion and job creation, especially in places where no other industry will go. Spending properly, the Department of Tourism's budget could inspire recovery in this crucial sector. We are concerned, however, that money is being spent in the wrong places and with the wrong people.

We will use the full extent of our oversight powers to ensure the department is using taxpayers' monies how it should, not how it wants to. Let's start with the facts. The department is allocated R2,43 billion for the 2025-2026 financial year. Over 53% of this, which is about R1,3 billion, goes to SA Tourism,

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SAT, mostly for business and leisure marketing. Now, let me be clear, marketing is important, but marketing without measurable outcomes, without a return on investment, without strategic focus on a domestic tourism strategy, and without any credible plan to deal with seasonability is a shot in the dark. Glossy campaigns won't rescue a crumbling sector. While the department parades around performance statistics, the truth is that rural township and small-town tourism businesses are struggling. We are the jobs, Minister? Let us talk about what really matters, jobs, jobs and more jobs. A 13,8% cut to the Working for Tourism Programme slash job targets from nearly 18 000 to just 1 400 this year. Even worse, in the last quarter, the department promised 2 037 work opportunities and delivered only 66. Yes, 66. At a time when South Africa is facing a youth unemployment crisis, this is not just a failure, it's a betrayal.

While the Minister spins progress and the department touts 100% achievement, audit findings show ineffective oversight and a lack of consequence and risk management. We are spending billions through SA Tourism and the Development Bank of Southern Africa, DBSA, yet when projects fail or stall, nobody is held accountable. Risk registers are being closed, but the

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risks themselves remain wide open. That is why we must welcome the committee's support for the DA's proposals to ensure that the department and SAT make the link between programme implementation and performance audits, and to support our call for an independent review of all DBSA-managed projects.

The committee has been willing to put aside political differences in the interest of transparency and accountability. We hope that the Minister will do the same and provide full transparency over the findings and details of both independent audits of the SAT tender fraud allegations. As we reflect on the promises made at the launch of the Tourism Equity Fund, one can't help but ask, how did we get here? The Tourism Equity Fund was meant to empower youth-owned, women-led and township-based enterprises. R466 million was committed, but only R125 million has been disbursed. The rest is frozen, locked behind bureaucratic delays and a culture of excuse-making.

Implementing agents shift deadlines with no oversight, while real entrepreneurs are left in limbo. This is not transformation. This is exclusion. We need to stop confusing compliance with impact. More broadly, we must rethink our

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approach to empowerment in tourism. Transformation cannot be a tick-box exercise based on narrow BBEE scorecards. It must be outcome-based. It's about tangible outcomes. How many township-based tourism businesses are thriving? How many rural communities saw real economic growth? How many sustainable jobs were created? The department has not been asking the right questions.

We have made comprehensive submissions with many proposals and recommendations to transform tourism for the better. Today, however, I will focus on just five key priorities; practical, measurable and urgent, that show what real leadership looks like. One, reform the Transformation Equity Fund, TFN, and Transformation Fund. Shift from grants to low-interest loans tied directly to job creation with full transparency and accountability. Two, stop funding infrastructure the department doesn't own. Why is tourism paying to maintain facilities it neither manages nor controls? Three, rebalance the budget. Reduce spending on marketing and increase investment in catalytic infrastructure and enterprise support, especially in villages, townships and small dorpiés [towns].

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Four, modernise outdated laws and strategies. The Tourism Act 2014 is over a decade old. There are serious gaps in areas like unregulated short-term rentals and voluntary grading, which undermine both quality assurance and fairness in the sector. Key strategies like the Heritage Tourism Plan 2013 and Rural Strategy 2012 have not been reviewed in over a decade as well. The Minister must prioritise the tabling of the Tourism Amendment Bill in this Seventh Parliament. If we are serious about building a professional, competitive and inclusive tourism sector, then our legislation must reflect 21st century realities. Five, track return on investment in every market. SA Tourism must publish return on investment ROI metrics per international market and justify every rand spent. No more fiscal dumping. Cape Town has become one of the continent's most successful tourism cities. Not because of slogans, but because of smart governance, public-private partnerships and a relentless focus on safety and delivery. This is the model we should be scaling. Minister, with all due respect, tourism does not need a caretaker, it needs a champion. The department cannot continue to underdeliver on jobs, mismanage transformation and hide behind compliance targets that mean nothing to the unemployed young person in a forgotten town.

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The DA supports this Budget Vote with urgency in our voice and oversight in our hands and we will hold you to every line item and every promise you make. Because tourism can uplift. It can transform. It can employ, but only if we get the basics right. Outcomes over compliance, transparency over patronage and opportunity over rhetoric. Let us stop disempowering in the name of empowerment. True change will only take place when we reject false empowerment and deliver boldly, genuinely for the people of South Africa. I thank you. [Applause.]

Mr S M MAECO: Hon Chair, Deputy Minister and the Minister, the director-general, DG, of the department, hon members and fellow South Africans, I will start by just not to address our angry friends, but just to indicate that by rejecting the Budget Votes without offering alternative solutions, the angry parties demonstrate a lack of commitment to the people they claim to represent. This is a political posturing that only serves to perpetuate poverty and inequality, further entrenching the status quo. Their actions can be seen as a slap in the face to the very people who voted them into office, highlighting the crisis of representation. The Budget Vote is not just a financial exercise. It is a critical tool for social transformation and economic empowerment.

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Chair, as the ANC we must acknowledge the important role played by the Development Bank of Southern Africa, DBSA, in implementing 70 infrastructure projects on behalf of the department. This project ranges from the maintenance of national parks, provincial tourism assets to destination enhancement initiatives and community-based tourism projects. These are initiatives where large sums of public funds are invested and which many families depend on for their livelihoods. However, it is essential that DBSA urgently addresses growing concerns around the premature termination of contracts, the lack of clear and consistent communication with communities and the disturbing rise of the so-called construction mafia.

Hon Chair, these practices not only hinder the development but threatens to reverse our democratic gains. We must confront them decisively and without compromise. In the department's latest report on the audit outcomes for the Department of Tourism, the Auditor-General assessed the department's management of consequences and found that this was managed in line with legislation. This finding is indeed encouraging. It illustrates that the tone for good governance is set at the top and bodes well to address any irregularity and

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noncompliance within the department. The Minister must support the department's efforts on consequence management to ensure that the clean administration continues to be maintained. Such efforts provide essential characteristics for the Government of National Unity's, GNU, a priority of building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

As the ANC we welcome the committee's recommendations to ensure that there is effective consequence management for those who fail to comply with contractual obligations. We call for an urgent oversight visit to all projects under the DBSA. Equally, we want to see the department implements the resolution to develop an aftercare support programme for projects that are handed over to communities.

Hon Chairperson, as we respond to the call by this Government of National Unity to build an inclusive economy and society, the ANC supports the initiative by SA Tourism to drive business tourism over the medium-term. This will include bids to host corporate meetings, conferences, exhibitions in all provinces, including rural areas and small towns. The Minister must ensure that due attention is given to all elements of tourism broad-based black economic empowerment, BBBEE, sector

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codes, including improving ownership patterns within the sector. In line with the GNU priorities of inclusive economic growth, the department's programmes must intensify, not dilute their transformative impact. This programme should be designed to ensure that benefits reach communities and small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, directly and that they receive sustainable support that enables meaningful economic participation growth.

As the ANC we welcome the world to experience our wealth, cultural diversity and vibrant tourism offerings. We must remain committed to resolving barriers such as our visa regime and limited air access. Improved air connectivity, including more direct flights and efficient airport infrastructure will drive tourist arrivals and support broader economic growth. Government must work with stakeholders to address limitation in flight availability. This must include promoting airline competition, reducing barriers to entry for new operators and embracing technology to improve bookings and travel experiences. Let us work together to unlock the full potential of tourism as a driver of transformation.

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Collaboration with the SA Police Services, our tourism monitors and local communities is critical to ensuring the safety and protection of our tourists. We must commend the resilience of tourism workers and businesses who continues to shine despite adversity. We urge government to continue championing initiatives that compel all of us to act in defence of our country's progress and safeguard the hard-won gains of our democracy. As the ANC Chair, we support Budget 38 of the department. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Hon Chair and hon members, thank you for your input, your advice and your concerns and criticism. We take it that we can only build on that and learn from it. On the issue of Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP, for 2025-26, we have allocated R280 million, but we have also shifted EPWP programme away from destination development to tourism services support programme. We cannot afford another year where we do not spend all our budget on EPWP. I agree with the hon members, it is an indictment that you know we sit with money and there are so many hundreds and thousands of people that are unemployed in our country, and we will certainly correct that.

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Several members referred to transformation and yes, indeed, it is necessary, but we are also busy reviewing the structures that are responsible to drive transformation. What do you have in tourism? You do have a Tourism Transformation Council with 14 board members or council members. I appointed them in September, October last year. Their main task is to do a survey, research, to see transformation progress or lack of progress and what is the impact of transformation on the tourism sector? They still must do that research ...

[Interjections.] ... One day when you become a Minister, you will know. [Laughter.] [Applause.]

Therefore, our oversight ... and I have received several questions from the portfolio committee members about the Transformation Council. The Transformation Council received R5,2 million from the Tourism Business Council to do their work. Last week I had a meeting with them to give me progress. Instead, we got stuck because I was upset on the board fees that they were paying themselves with no research report. Therefore, I am working on that.

Then we also have the Transformation Fund. Again, with the Transformation Fund that we have the number of jobs that have

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been created through the money that we spent on transformation is very few. Again, those structures need to be reviewed, and we must make sure that we create more jobs with the money that government is putting into the Transformation Fund. Then have the Tourism Equity Fund, another mess. On advice from the National Treasury, I was advised to move the money from the Tourism Equity Fund that was administered by an implementing agent called Small Enterprise Finance Agency, Sefa, to another implementing agent. Since January this year up until July, I am still waiting on Sefa to give us a close-up report so that we can cede funding for the equity fund to another agency. You are still waiting.

Last week I was before the select committee in the NCOP. They came with a legal report that says that they cannot share information with the Minister or the department or the portfolio committee on the beneficiaries because of the Protection of Personal Information Act. I got a legal opinion to show them that they are wrong. The moment we can get our funding from Sefa, we can continue with the transformation in the sector ... [Interjections.] ... Then you must cry ...

Afrikaans:

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... Ai, siestog, man.

English:

You must cry. The EFF is always crying like babies, and I put a nappy on for you. Cry, cry ... [Laughter.] ... Now, several of the members also spoke about job creation and that's correct. In 2024 we created 1,6 million direct and indirect jobs in our country through tourism and also 8,3% of our gross domestic product, GDP, direct and indirect. Yes, I will agree with everyone. There is big room for improvement, the potential is there, and we need to collaborate more with the private sector and our communities. Hon Linde ...

Afrikaans:

Agb Linde, ek stem saam, AgriToerisme het groot potensiaal. En ons moet verbeter, wat ons alreeds doen, want daar is 'n groot potensiaal en ons kan ook meer werk verskaf. So, ek stem 100% saam met u dat ons baie, baie beter moet doen.

English:

A few members raised the issue about the Tourism Amendment Bill. Yes, we have started already. The Tourism Amendment Bill must be aligned to the new White Paper that was approved by

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Cabinet in October, November 2024. That is work in progress.

We have agreed with the Leader of Government Business that the Bill will not be introduced into the current parliamentary programme, but certainly it will be introduced next year.

Hon Beesley raised the issue about KwaZulu-Natal. Yes, we are working together with the Presidential Task Team that was appointed in eThekweni to deal with the number of problems there. I also worked closely with the premier and the member of executive, MEC, Zondi. Last year we assisted the province with marketing and getting the tourists back to Durban.

Therefore, I can share the work that we are doing there with hon Beesley. The ACDP, I wasn't quite sure, hon member, which department you were talking about, but I can't pick up on the issue of the R35 million in the 2023-24 financial year. You were correct that they waited until the last day of the financial year and then move money. That's it. Thank you very much. Didn't I have a minute? [Time expired.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): We added. [Laughter.]

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Thank you, hon members and God bless. Thank you. [Applause.]

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The CHAIRPERSON (Mr M G Mahlaule): Hon members, you are reminded that two debates are scheduled simultaneously for 16:30 today. The National Treasury Budget Vote debate will be held in the Good Hope Chamber, while the Land Reform and Rural Development Budget Vote ...

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary session rose at 15:45.