

UNREVISED HANSARD
MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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VOTE NO 38 - TOURISM

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PROCEEDINGS OF MINI-PLenary SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Members of the mini-plenary session met at Good Hope Chamber at 10:00.

House Chairperson, Mr W Horn, took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 38 - Tourism:

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Good morning hon House Chair and hon members, our Deputy Minister, the chairperson of the portfolio committee, hon members, our Director-General, leaders of SA Tourism, trade and entities, also captains of industry, small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, that are joining us today, distinguished guests and the media, it is with humility

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and deep responsibility that I rise to table Budget Vote 38 today, and I do so during Africa Month, a month in which we celebrate, not only our shared heritage as Africans, but our shared future.

Earlier this month, South Africa also marked 30-years of our Constitution which was built on dignity, equality and opportunity. I want to state clearly today that tourism is one of the most powerful tools that we have to realise some of those constitutional promises in the daily lives of our people, because tourism is not only about travel; tourism is about jobs, small businesses, dignity, economic inclusion and also tourism is putting food on the table. This is why we say tourism is part of South Africa's growth engine in action.

For 2026-27 financial year, the department has been allocated R2,4 billion, with R1,278 billion to be transferred to SA Tourism for marketing purposes. But let me also put this on the record that tourism policy is economic policy, and the numbers now prove that. According to Statistics SA's satellite account of 2024, Tourism contributed 4,9% to the Gross Domestic Product, GDP, outperforming sectors like agriculture,

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utilities and construction. It also created 954 000 direct jobs in 2024.

That means that one in every 18 South Africans are employed in tourism, and for every 13 international tourists who arrive in our country, one direct job is supported. That is why President Ramaphosa was absolutely correct when he said in Africa's Travel Indaba earlier this month, and I quote:

Tourism distributes economic activity across communities. Tourism is beneficial to the fortunes of our country, and that it has mass employment potential as a sector.

In 2025, we received 10.5 million arrivals in our country, and just in the first quarter of this year alone, between January and March, more than 2.9 million inbound travellers visited us, representing a 12.6% growth compared to last year. Domestic spend currently outweighs international spend. The domestic spend was R101.6 billion, while international spend accounts for R102.2 billion, reinforcing that domestic tourism is the bedrock of our sector.

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What does this mean? It means more jobs, more investment, more opportunities for all South Africans. To accelerate this growth, government and industry have jointly adopted the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, TGPP, approved by Cabinet also, and this is not just another strategy that will generate dust on the shelves; it is a working compact between public and private sectors, with measurable targets, shared accountability and clear implementation plan, because together we are pursuing ambitious targets, but it is achievable set in the National Development Plan, NDP, for 2030.

We need to increase domestic spend by R139,4 billion. We must increase international tourist spend, and domestic is the first one, international spend to R115 billion; we must increase tourist arrivals by R15 million; we must increase domestic trips by R41,5 million and increase direct employment to R1 million, and also increase direct and indirect jobs by R1,5 million. We certainly will do a midterm review in 2027 to see how far we are getting.

The Tourism Business Council SA, TBCSA, is funding a project management office, which has a dashboard that is able to track implementation of the five pillars of the Tourism Growth

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Partnership Plan, TGPP. I briefly deal with pillar number one, as air access and ease of access because if tourists cannot get to us easily, they will simply just go somewhere else. We have therefore prioritised visa reforms and air access. We are working closely with the Department of Home Affairs and the interministerial committee on the reform of visas, and I'm happy to report that the electronic travel authorisation system is now live in China, India, and Indonesia and Mexico.

Today's travellers from these source markets can now receive a visa within 24 hours. They can apply from the comfort of their home on their cell phones. So, this is indeed a big game changer for tourism. This is no longer a vision; this is now happening. Once fully rolled out, we estimate that the Electronic Travel Authorisation, ETA, will at least increase our arrivals between 80 000 to 100 000 annually. At the same time, we are also expanding air access. New routes have been launched between Johannesburg and Perth, between Cape Town and Mauritius, and soon Madrid and Johannesburg through Air Europe will be launched.

In Angola this year, we also secured a breakthrough to remove the passenger and cargo flight restrictions between our two

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countries. The war in the Middle East has had a knock-on effect on tourism. We've seen in Europe, for instance, where airfares rose by more than 20%. We also felt the impact locally with airfare increases, year two, but we continue to pray for peace in the Middle East. The second pillar, co-ordinated destination marketing. In today's world, perception shapes travel decision, and social media now influences tourism more than the traditional advertising that we ever did.

Like, for instance, when the English singer, Dua Lipa, posted photos from a Kruger National Park vacation, telling 87,4 million viewers and followers on Instagram, and I quote, she said: "I just had the most incredible trip of my life in South Africa". She became an authentic ambassador for our country. That visibility generated by her Instagram, translates into more bookings, flights, restaurants, township tours, and it finally translates into jobs. That is why we are increasing investment in digital destination marketing and global brand positioning.

South Africa is Insta-ready, and we must clock it. It is evident in the Top Billing Presenter Search, where contestants

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like Homba Mazaleni, bring to the fore our hidden gems like Wakkerstroom. The third pillar, of course, is tourism safety. Every tourist, whether domestic or international, must feel safe in our country. I would like to take this moment also to send my condolences to the friends and family of Dina and Ernest Marais from Mossel Bay. It is the first time in the history of 100 years of the Kruger National Park that such a regrettable incident happened.

While crime prevention is not the direct mandate of the Department of Tourism, we continue to work closely with the law enforcement agencies and stakeholders through the National Tourism Safety Forum, chaired by our Deputy Minister. The fourth pillar is tourism infrastructure and product development. This is where tourism becomes visible in our communities. Last year, together with the European Union, we launched the R120 million Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre in the Free State.

Since that time, more than 90 000 visitors have visited the site where the world's oldest dinosaur embryo was discovered, more than 2 million years old. This focus on tourism investment will also help us diversify geographical and spread

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economic benefits into smaller towns and communities. Also, last month, we officially opened the 82 million Agulhas Lighthouse Precinct in the most southern tip of Africa, where the Indian and Atlantic Ocean meets.

Also following the devastating floods in Limpopo and Mpumalanga earlier this year, the department made R56,3 million through Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP, support for mop-up operations of both public sector and private tourism facilities in the two provinces. Out of that amount, R36,4 million of this amount was allocated to the SA National Parks, SANParks, for rehabilitation efforts in the Kruger National Park.

This is how government is leading by example in investing in infrastructure. But the private sector is also showing confidence in our tourism sector. We've seen the investment of R24 billion in the waterfront, another R10 billion in the airport in Cape Winelands, and of course, a R2,5 billion investment in the Club Med. So, this year in October, we're having our second instalment of our investment conference in Gauteng. Tourism growth means nothing if it does not create opportunities, especially for our youth and women.

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Therefore, the Department of Tourism, in partnership with Harambee and the Youth Employment Service, YES, youth programme, we have placed more than 800 Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Tvet, students, into workplaces to complete practical training they required. Last year, also 48 youth representing 21 institutions, prepared for a hackathon. Another sector that's growing, is our MySector.

We have secured 66 international bids for the next few years, and that will contribute at least R1,2 billion to our economy, and we've made sure that they will take place across cities and towns, even Bela-Bela, Cape Town, Durban, Grabouw, Hermanus, all over the country. As travel evolves, government must also adapt. That is why we have gazetted the draft code of good practice for short-term rentals. We have received over 6 700 submissions, showing strong public interest in ensuring sustainable and fair growth in this rapidly changing part of our tourism.

These submissions will now be analysed, and we will then gazette a code, and members of the public can also watch our podcast concerning this matter. But in the House, today with us, we have got two of our market access programmes that we

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funded, the Twin Venture, which is a proudly 100% black-owned, woman-owned entity enterprise, joining us today, and also a family-run boutique company in the Winelands, which is currently going through a Market Access Support Programme, MASP, and welcome to both of our SMMEs here today.

Tourism is part of South Africa's growth engine, and I have illustrated this in action. South Africa is not only the cradle of humankind; we're also the cradle of culture. Therefore, with all the possibilities and to the world, I want to proudly say, welcome home. I thank you.

Ms R S NALUMANGO: Hon House Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, hon members, director-general of the department and your team, and fellow South Africans, the ANC supports Budget Vote No 38: Tourism.

However, we are concerned that, whilst the tourism sector continues to contribute significantly to the country's gross domestic product and job creation, the sector is still allocated a meagre budget in the Estimates of National Expenditure, with only R7,9 billion over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, period. We call upon the

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Ministers of Finance and Tourism to have robust engagements on mechanisms to increase the budget allocated to Vote No 38.

Whilst we welcome the growth in employment, the committee remains concerned that the recovery of the sector is confined to major tourism hubs such as the Kruger National Park and Cape Town. We call upon the Department of Tourism and SA Tourism to ensure that the recovery translates into all nine provinces.

We are concerned that the country still relies more on international arrivals, and this is not sustainable. As we continue to witness geopolitical instability that may scupper our marketing endeavours, we are also concerned about the proportion of jobs within the sector that are not occupied by South African citizens. Our engagements with the Department of Employment and Labour have highlighted this as a critical issue that requires co-ordinated government interventions. We must state it here today that we remain unequivocal in our conviction that South Africans must be given first preference and thereby dominate in all fields related to the tourism value chain. We call on the industry players to comply with the laws of this country and not seek to reverse our democratic gains by participating in illegal labour practices.

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Hon members, the department's entity, SA Tourism, plays a pivotal role in marketing South Africa to the rest of the world, thereby driving inbound tourism and attracting investments. To this end, 54% of the department's budget of R7,9 billion, which equates to R5,4 billion, goes to the entity in the MTEF. However, we remain concerned at the state of affairs at the entity. The entity has consecutively received qualified audits, primarily due to material financial misstatements, irregular expenditure, and instability at executive and board levels. In November last year, President Cyril Ramaphosa released a proclamation authorising the Special Investigating Unit to probe matters relating to allegations of serious maladministration, improper conduct, and procurement irregularities within SA Tourism. The portfolio committee expects full transparency in this regard, and we await the timely release of the findings, coupled with consequence management mechanisms to hold those implicated accountable. We call upon the Minister to please get her house in order, as the entity is on the brink of collapse on her watch. The board has even failed to appear before the portfolio committee to present the 2026-2027 annual performance plan. We view this as a dereliction of its

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fiduciary responsibilities and a disregard for parliamentary oversight. South Africans deserve better accountability.

We must concede that instability within SA Tourism has also been exacerbated by critical vacancies in key leadership positions. Whilst we welcome the appointment of the marketing executive, the prolonged uncertainty surrounding the chief executive officer position, marked by multiple acting appointments during the suspension of the contracted chief executive officer, has undermined organisational stability. In the same vein, we want to implore the department to fast-track the filling of vacancies and build a more stable leadership structure.

The above matters have been raised on several occasions in the portfolio committee, alongside concerns relating to the Tourism Amendment Bill. Whilst the Bill has been referenced in prior engagements with the Minister, there remains a lack of clarity as to when it will be formally tabled before Parliament. This legislative reform is critical for enabling meaningful structural improvements within the sector.

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We are hard at work in the portfolio committee dealing with various barriers that may hinder tourism growth in the country. We have engaged the Department of Transport and the National Public Transport Regulator to deal with the backlog in issuing tour operator licences. We also welcome the Department of Home Affairs' improvement in travel facilitation emanating from improved visa regimes through the rolling-out of an electronic travel authorisation system, expansion of trusted tour operator arrangements for China and India, and the Meetings, Events, Exhibitions and Tourism Scheme visa to attract more business events into South Africa.

We are enthused by the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan that facilitates collaboration between the South African government and the private sector to position tourism as a primary driver of inclusive growth and job creation. We also welcome the Tourism Route Development Marketing Plan, which is a blueprint designed to boost visitor numbers, increase length of stay, and stimulate the local economy.

Hon Chairperson, whilst we welcome the 2026-2027 annual performance plans for both the Department of Tourism and SA Tourism, we have indicated our dissatisfaction to the

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Minister with some aspects of these plans. We are therefore calling upon the Minister to table addendums to the Department of Tourism and SA Tourism 2026-2027 annual performance plans to include information such as clear targets, impact assessments on implementation programmes, return on investment for planned programmes, tracking of marketing campaigns to actual bookings, and specifying villages and small towns that will benefit from government tourism programmes.

I would like to end with a quotation by our founding and first President, Nelson Mandela, who said:

I believe that South Africa is the most beautiful place on earth. Admittedly, I am biased, but when you combine the natural beauty of sunny South Africa with the friendliness and cultural diversity of our people, and the fact that the region is a haven for Africa's most splendid wildlife, then I think that we have been blessed with a truly wonderful land.

These words are still true today. Thank you. [Time expired.]

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Ms N BUTHELEZI: Hon Chairperson, hon members, and, above all, the people of South Africa, before I speak about this budget, I must speak about something that should break every single heart in this House. Two tourists – visitors – who came to see our beautiful land were recently found brutally murdered in the Kruger National Park. Their bodies were found floating in the Luvuvhu River, stabbed, and their vehicle was stolen. On behalf of the MKP, I offer our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to their families. Wherever you are, we are sorry. This should never have happened. May their souls rest in peace.

Now, let me turn to this budget, and, I warn you, I will not be polite because the people I speak for have had enough of polite lies. We of the MKP rise to reject Budget Vote No 38: Tourism, not because we hate tourism, but because this budget hates the black child, the township grandmother, and the rural youth that wait for a job that never comes. Let me speak plainly so every South African listening at home can hear me when I say we, as citizens, are being failed. The truth shall set you free. There is a saying that honesty is the best policy, and the truth shall set you free.

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South Africans have now heard the truth. You have had fake recovery, temporary jobs, unsafe communities, broken infrastructure, and a Department of Tourism that talks about transformation whilst protecting the same old elite. The Government of National Unity tells you tourism is recovering: 10,5 million visitors, so they say. They celebrate. They pat each other on the back. However, let me ask you, and I want every person watching at home to think about this: Who owns these hotels? Who owns these game lodges? Who owns those buses? Is it you? Is it your neighbour? Is it the mother who sells sweets at the taxi rank? No. It is the same connected few, the same names, the same faces, and this government refuses to publish the names of people who receive public money from the Tourism Transformation Fund. Why? It is because they know that, if you saw those names, you would be angry. You would feel betrayed, and you would be right.

I demand ... No, the people demand publish every name, every cent, every beneficiary – no more secrets, no more hiding. Where are the jobs? It is not for you. They say tourism supports 1,8 million jobs. That sounds wonderful, does it not? However, let me read to you what their own report admits in black and white: There is no process to turn temporary jobs

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into permanent jobs. Do you understand what that means? It means you can wake up at 04:00, go to work, clean a footpath or fix a trail, and work like a donkey, and tomorrow it is over – no contract, no pension, no Unemployment Insurance Fund, no dignity. They call you a work opportunity, not a worker. They count you as a number, and then they forget your name. They train you for two weeks and then disappear. Nobody checks whether you ever find a real job. Nobody cares if you go back to sitting on the roadside waiting for nothing. I am angry. You should be angry.

We demand that every job paid for by our taxes must be a real, permanent job. Stop lying to our faces. They do not see you. The report admits – and I want you to hear this – tourism safety monitors are only deployed in mainstream destinations. That means Camps Bay. That means Sandton. That means private game reserves, but in your township, in your village, in your small shack, nothing, zero, nada.

Organisations such as SATOVITO know this. SATOVITO is the South African Township and Village Tourism Association. It is the unified national voice for township and village tourism across all nine provinces. It represents over 1 000 township

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and village tourism businesses, accommodation establishments, tour guides, cultural experiences, and more. It promotes authentic, indigenous tourism experiences from the people who actually live there but listen to this: SATOVITO operates as a nongovernmental organisation with no current government funding. They are doing this work on their own, with no budget, no support, and no resources from the very government that claims to care about rural and township development.

What does this budget do? Whilst SATOVITO struggles to survive, the Government of National Unity cuts the business events programme by 23%, cuts international relations by 29%, and cuts the Tourism Incentive Programme, the very fund that could help SATOVITO businesses, by 12%. SATOVITO has told Parliament directly that their members face poor infrastructure, lack of municipal support, limited access to finance, and complex bureaucratic processes that block them from government help.

Two tourists just died in a national park, and this government still has no plan to deploy safety monitors where ordinary people live, where tourists could be welcomed, and where jobs could be created. They know tourists are scared of your

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neighbourhood, but, instead of fixing safety for the people, they hide you away. They pretend you do not exist. I demand tourism monitors in every village, every township, and every small town, not just for tourists but for you as well, for your children and your grandmother. Your safety matters.

Now let us get into the board. Three times they failed. Listen to this: SA Tourism, an organisation that gets more than half of your tourism budget, has received qualified audits with material irregularities. That means serious problems, money wasted, controls broken. Their board refused to appear before Parliament. The Minister got an apology the same morning you did. The chief executive officer is suspended. The chief operating officer and chief financial officer have resigned – no arrest and no consequences. Here is the shameful truth: This is now the third time the Government of National Unity has tried to appoint a permanent board for SA Tourism. The call for nominations closed on 5 December 2025. The Minister promised Parliament in March 2026 that it would be finalised, yet we are here waiting – still no permanent board, still no permanent leadership. This is three times, three failures. Whilst you wait for jobs, for safety, for opportunity, they cannot even appoint a board.

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They cut your future and fill their own pockets, whilst you struggle to put food on the table. The Government of National Unity cut SA Tourism's budget by R125 million. They cut business events by 23%, the very programme that was supposed to bring conferences and visitors to rural areas.

On 21 and 22 June, we are going to register to vote in the local government election. On 4 November 2026, I request each and every South African, especially the youth to go out there and vote. Help the elderly. Help the disabled people at home. Make sure that you vote, and you vote for MKP.

IsiZulu:

Gwaza, Mkhonto, gwaza!

Ms E LINDE: Chairperson, Minister, hon members, South Africa, tourism is not only about holidays, hotels and glossy brochures. Indeed, tourism is also about jobs, dignity and opportunity. It is whether a young South African in a rural town can find work without leaving home to relocate to a city hundreds of kilometers away, where their local business can survive, and where South Africa is safe.

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The DA believes tourism should be one of South Africa's strongest economic growth sectors, yet this budget still lacks urgency, economically unaccountability, and has no measurable outcomes. This budget should have focused on effectively spending funds to create sustainable jobs, safer destinations and long-term growth.

Tourism will not grow if people do not feel safe. Safety should not be a side issue in tourism; it should be its foundation. Crime targeting South Africa harms South Africa's reputation, investor confidence, local businesses and jobs.

The brutal murder of Ernst and Dina Marias in Kruger Park last week is an incredible, serious matter, and their story should not be shoved. Tourism safety cannot be neglected. Tourists will not visit destinations where crime is rife and policing is absent.

Where is the safety strategy? The DA is still waiting for the Minister to table a tourism safety plan. We need practical partnerships among SAPS, municipalities, tourism bodies that are supported with visible policing, because every crime against the tourists is economic sabotage against jobs.

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Another concern is government's continued obsession with working opportunities being reported. South Africans don't want inflated statistics, Minister, they want permanent work. Every tourism programme should be measured against one simple question: How many permanent jobs were created? In this department, there are very little.

One major missed opportunity remains agritourism. The DA will continue to call for a dedicated national agritourism programme, because this can drive real, local, rural jobs, local enterprise development, food tourism, wine tourism, cultural tourism, eco- and aqua tourism and domestic travel.

Agritourism allows struggling towns, small dorpiess [towns] and villages, where young South Africans are desperate for work to become tourism economies while helping others.

The equity fund also remains a concern. Emerging tourism businesses need transparent funding access, less red tape, mentorship, marketing access, safety and infrastructure support, not the poorly structured excuses of incentive programmes you have now.

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Tourism businesses are battling rising costs, crime, collapsing infrastructure, weird municipalities and little support.

Tourism can become one of South Africa's strongest drivers of economic recovery, but only if the government focuses on safety, infrastructure delivery, measurable outcomes, investment confidence, rural and agritourism development, and permanent job creation.

Our Mzansi does not lack tourism potential. We lack the Minister's political will. We lack delivery. We lack accountability. Hon Minister, we understand that public and parliamentary support for your political party is waning, and your mind might be elsewhere, but we request that you please listen to the recommendations of this dedicated and competent portfolio committee. It is time, Minister, that you come to our table and work with us to make tourism great in this beautiful country of ours. Thank you.

Mr M SHIKWAMBANA: Hon House Chair, the EFF rejects Budget Vote 38 of the Department of Tourism. South Africa's tourism sector remains one of the country's most important economic sectors.

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According to the report before us, international arrivals reached 10,5 million in 2025, exceeding pre-pandemic levels and supporting approximately 1,8 million indirect jobs. The tourism industry in South Africa is a high growth industry, capable for absorbing a large number of job seekers, and yet it is still a very underdeveloped sector, struggling to break free from colonial and apartheid social stratification.

The majority of the workers doing manual jobs in the sector are black, while the majority of those who own a tourism establishment, guest houses, hotels and game reserves are all white. If we do not address this problem of demographic representation in the sector, then none of the interventions made by the department will be worth anything.

African people in Pafuri at the Kruger National Park, who were dispossessed of their land, must be given all the necessary support to take full ownership and benefits of their land. Similarly, the communities around Dwesa and Cwebe in the Eastern Cape must never be made spectators of activities that happen on their land. They must be the central focus of all government interventions.

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We have consistently called for the expansion of tourism destinations in the country to include such sites critical for the preservation of our heritage.

There is a vast untapped potential in almost all the provinces. And that we have not invested in the development of those alternative tourism routes is an indictment on the uselessness of those who have led and continue to lead this department.

Tourists still come to the same destination controlled by the old boys' club. We have not been able to diversify our tourist attractions to the rest of the country. Tourists still come mainly to three provinces, which are the Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. We have immense potential to diversify this sector into other provinces, such as the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga.

For those interested in historical and heritage tourism, we have not been able to expand the sector, because the very nature of the South African economy favours those who have accumulated property in the past, which mainly are white people.

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Further, there are no consequences for those resisting transformation in the sector. They are aided by the government in excluding black people from the industry. The stringent regulations put in place as entry requirements into the sector are exclusionary, leaving the sector for only white people, who have the land and the capital.

The overall black participation is less than 48%. Black women ownership is less than 10%. Black participation is only found in the provinces such as Limpopo and Mpumalanga, while the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng are mainly dominated by the white participants.

There are immediate things that could be done to address the skewed nature of ownership in this industry. You could become famous in enforcing national parks and state-owned nature reserve to work exclusively with black-owned tourist companies and establishments.

The government could also make it a law that state officials only use black-owned establishments for their accommodation, conferences and events. You are not doing any of these things

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because you have this disdainful attitude towards black-owned establishments. As the EFF, we reject this Budget Vote.

Ms L L VAN DER MERWE: House Chairperson, I hope I am audible.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr W Horn): Yes, you are. Please proceed.

Ms L L VAN DER MERWE: House Chairperson, the hon Minister of Tourism hon de Lille, colleagues, and all South Africans, South Africa is a nation of astonishing gifts. Our people, our valleys, our coasts, our small dorpiess, our food, and a culture of warmth that turns our visitors into friends. These assets are simply priceless. Yet beneath that beauty lies an urgent and painful truth – that we are failing to keep our people and our visitors safe.

Just this past weekend, as many hon members have said, the country learned of the brutal double murder of a retired couple from Mossel Bay while holidaying in the Kruger National Park, and the IFP would also like to extend our condolences to the Marais family. This tragedy made international headlines.

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Such horrific violence steals lives, but it also erodes confidence in our beloved country.

International domestic travellers will ask again whether it's safe to visit our parks, our cities and towns, and ultimately it will be small businesses and our communities that rely on tourism that will pay the price.

We know that tourism is an engine of growth and inclusion, which the Minister also highlighted when she reflected on the sector's contribution to the gross domestic product, GDP. With international arrivals reaching 10,5 million in 2025 and the sector supporting roughly 1,9 million jobs, its role in sustaining local economies, small medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs ... [Inaudible.] ... cannot be overstated.

On 3 October 2024, the hon Minister published the approved White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa for implementation. The tourism White Paper rightly recognised crime's destructive effect on tourism while calling for the better use of technology, stronger collaboration with law enforcement, and the rapid, let me repeat that, the rapid rollout of the Tourism Safety Strategy

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and the Tourism Monitors programme. Yet too much of these good plans remain on paper only.

Elevated travel advisories from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and elsewhere remain in place, directly translating into fewer visitors, lost revenue, and lost opportunities. We must be blunt, as the hon Minister had said. Perceptions shape our travel decisions, and therefore, if we are serious about growing this sector, we must be seen to be treating the safety of our tourists with the utmost priority and urgency. For example, we need visible, proactive tourism policing in hotspots, from our airports, especially around the Cape Town Airport, which has now become a perpetual crime scene, to popular townships and rural routes. This is urgent and long overdue.

Furthermore, the IFP supports the Budget Vote report's focus on accountability and good governance. Half of this department's budget is transferred to South African tourism, despite ongoing concerns about leadership instability, weak oversight, poor performance, and inadequate impact assessments. The IFP therefore supports the recommendation that the department and South African tourism must put in

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place sound measures to improve SA Tourism's governance, financial management, and the appointment of a competent permanent board is now urgent.

It will also be instructive for SA Tourism to conduct an impact assessment of all its marketing campaigns to assess whether the money they are spending on these campaigns are actually translating into bookings. The IFP further welcomes efforts to strengthen tourism infrastructure and expanding opportunities across villages, townships and small and rural towns.

As chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, I would like to plead once more that these programmes and opportunities must first and foremost benefit our women, youth and persons with disabilities. Finally, and most importantly, we support the call for the National Tourism Safety Strategy to be tabled to Parliament without further delay. A safe, well-governed tourism sector is central to protecting livelihoods, restoring investor and visitor confidence, and securing our collective future. The IFP supports this Budget Vote. Thank you, Chair.

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Ms J S PETERSEN: House Chair, greetings to the hon Minister, members, and members of the public. I rise on behalf of the PA to support Budget Vote 38. Tourism remains one of the most important contributors to South Africa's economy, particularly here in the Western Cape. We welcome visitors and we recognise the immense value that tourism brings to our economy and international reputation.

However, the PA also believes that economic growth must benefit the people of South Africa first. We must confront the growing consequences of unchecked foreign property investments, especially in residential housing markets across the Western Cape. Increasingly wealthy foreign buyers earning in euros, pounds, and dollars are purchasing properties at prices that ordinary South Africans simply cannot compete with. This drives up housing prices, inflates rental markets, and pushes local families further away from the communities they have lived in for generations. We cannot allow the Western Cape to become the next Hawaii.

In many areas, homes are no longer being built primarily for residents, but for short-term profit, luxury speculation, and foreign investment portfolios. Meanwhile, young South

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Africans, teachers, nurses, students, police officers, and working families are being priced out of their own neighbourhoods and hometowns. The PA believes that this is not only a housing crisis, but a question of fairness, dignity and national responsibility.

A healthy economy cannot exist where the very people who keep society functioning can no longer afford to live where they work. If left unchecked, we risk creating a province where locals serve the tourism economy while being excluded from the prosperity it generates. We have seen similar patterns emerge in places like Hawaii, where rising property ownerships by outsiders has contributed to soaring living costs, housing shortages, and the displacement of local communities. South Africa must learn from these examples before the damage becomes irreversible.

This is why the PA supports stronger regulation for foreign ownership in the residential property market. This does not mean opposing tourism or rejecting investment, it means finding a responsible balance between welcoming international capital and protecting the rights and future of our South African citizens. The PA supports. Thank you.

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Mr P A VAN STADEN: House Chairperson, to the Minister, on many of my flights between Johannesburg and Cape Town, I find myself traveling alongside a large number of international tourists, as all of us do on South African Airways, and time and time again, I end up seated next to an individual who, upon realising that I am a South African, raised concerns about the level of crime in our country as reported abroad. Inevitably, the same question follows, why are we not doing more to address it and where is the rule of law?

Minister and colleagues, this is a matter of great concern as reports in the media over the weekend indicate that locals South Africans have been attacked, robbed and murdered in the Kruger National Park. We want to convey our sincere condolences to the families of Ernest and Dina Marais. May their souls rest in peace.

We welcome the Minister's announcement made a few weeks ago at Africa's Travel Indaba in Durban, that the industry aims to attract 15 million international visitors by 2030 – an important target that will support economic growth and drive job creation.

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To achieve this, we must ensure that South Africa is a safe destination for both local citizens and international tourists who visit our country. It is unacceptable that we continue to read reports in the media of tourists being attacked upon arrival on our highways or being mugged, assaulted or robbed on our streets, and in some cases even killed while traveling from airports to their accommodation. Such incidents severely damage South Africa's reputation on the international stage and ultimately lead to job losses and economic decline.

A few weeks ago, I spent a week visiting the Lowveld region of Mpumalanga, an area I have known and loved since my childhood, and my previous visit was two years ago, which made this experience particularly shocking. I was deeply saddened to see the noticeable decline in some of our most beautiful tourist attractions and destinations, including Long Tom Pass Cannon at Lydenburg, Sabi, Pilgrim's Rest, Gord's Window, Graskop, and Hazyview.

The deterioration of tourism infrastructure in these areas is alarming. Many local businesses that once operated at these attractions now stand empty and abandoned. The extent of looting is indescribable, and the facilities themselves are

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poorly maintained, with litter scattered throughout. In addition, there is a growing sense that these sites are no longer safe to visit, especially for those who are traveling alone.

This reflects only parts of the Lowveld, raising a far more concerning question, how widespread is this issue across the rest of South Africa. If similar conditions exist elsewhere, it will inevitably discourage both local and international tourists, causing them to think twice before choosing our country as a destination. We must confront our country's challenges decisively, and we must do so with urgency. I thank you, House Chairperson.

Mr A D BEESLEY: Chairperson, tourism remains one of South Africa's most important economic sectors. In 2025, South Africa welcomed a record 10,5 million international visitors, surpassing pre-pandemic levels for the first time. This sector now supports approximately 1,8 million direct and indirect jobs and contributes close to 9% of the gross domestic product, GDP. These figures demonstrate the immense economic value of tourism and its potential to drive growth, investment

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and employment. But growth in visitors' numbers alone cannot be a measure of success.

Action SA notes the committee's finding that the Department of Tourism remains underfunded relative to the economic contribution of the sector. There is merit in this concern. If tourism generates jobs, foreign revenue and investment, the government should view it as an economic growth catalyst rather than simply another spending programme.

However, additional funding must be matched by stronger accountability. The report raises serious concerns regarding governance challenges at SA Tourism, including weak accountability, insufficient financial controls, poor reporting mechanisms and failures by the board to adequately account to Parliament. South Africa deserves confidence that every rand allocated to tourism delivers measurable value and tangible economic returns.

Government must move beyond measuring success through expenditure and instead focus on outcomes. How many sustainable jobs have been created? How many tourism enterprises have been expanded? How many private sector

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investments have been unlocked? How many visitors have translated into real economic activity in local communities?

We remain particularly concerned by the government's continued reliance on temporary work opportunities as a measure of success. The department proudly forecasts more than 19 000 work opportunities, yet it cannot tell Parliament how many of these opportunities result in permanent employment. South Africans need careers, not short-term statistics that disappear at the end of a reporting period.

Action SA has consistently argued that economic growth is best achieved through an enabling environment for business. This means reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, supporting entrepreneurs, improving infrastructure and creating conditions that can attract investments.

Tourism growth cannot be driven by government programmes alone. It requires a thriving private sector. We must also ensure that tourism opportunities extend beyond a handful of established destinations. Small towns, rural communities, villages and townships possess enormous tourism potential, yet

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many remain excluded from meaningful investment, infrastructure support and destination marketing.

Economic opportunities must reach communities that have historically been left behind. Perhaps more importantly, South Africa cannot successfully market itself to the world if visitors do not feel safe. Crime continues to undermine our international reputation and threatens one of the most valuable economic sectors. Tourism safety must be treated as an economic priority, supported by effective policing, visible law enforcement and proper co-ordination across all spheres of government.

Action SA supports the committee report and the budget before us, while calling for stronger oversight, greater efficiencies and reforms that unlock tourism's full economic potential.

Thank you.

IsiXhosa:

USEKELA MPHATHISWA WEZOKHENKETHO: Igama lamakhosikazi kubongwa lona.

English:

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Chairperson, I extend greetings to the Minister of Tourism, Ms Patricia De Lille, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism, Ms Ronalda Schivonne Nalumango, hon members, the director-general, Mr Victor Vele, the entire tourism team, the leadership of SA Tourism; captains of industry, the Tourism Transformation Council of South Africa, and all distinguished guests, today we gather not only to debate the budget, but to reflect on how tourism continues to create opportunities, strengthen inclusion and transform lives across our country.

As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of our Constitution this year, we are reminded that the promise of democracy must continue to be experienced not only in principle, but in people's daily lives. Indeed, as the Minister has stated, tourism contributes meaningfully to that constitutional vision. It creates opportunities for participation, supports livelihoods, promotes equality through economic inclusion and ensures that communities across our country can share in the benefit of growth and development.

In many ways, tourism brings to life the spirit of our Constitution, a South Africa that is open, welcoming, diverse,

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inclusive and community participation remain central to the work we do at the Department of Tourism.

Tourism remains one of the most people-centred sectors of our economy. It is a sector that creates jobs where people live, supports families, empowers women, youth and people with disabilities, stimulates local economies and provides pathways for meaningful economic participation, especially the previously marginalised groups and for all South Africans.

Transformation remains central to the sustainability and long-term success of tourism sector. We cannot build a global competitive tourism economy if many communities remain excluded from meaningful participation. That is why the department continues to prioritise transformation-driven programmes aimed at broadening participation across the tourism value chain.

At Africa Travel Indaba and Meetings Africa this year, the department continued to create real opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, township tourism operators, women-owned enterprises and youth entrepreneurs to access buyers, markets and international trade networks. When

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small tourism businesses gain access to global buyers, inclusion becomes income.

Transformation is not only about representation; it is about ownership, sustainability, economic participation and ensuring that tourism opportunities reach those who have historically been excluded from the mainstream economy.

Across the country, the department continues to support tourism projects in villages, townships, rural communities and small towns to expand participation in tourism and encourage geographic spread as we have seen in Travel Indaba two weeks ago.

Every province, district, township, village and rural community has a tourism story to tell and an experience to offer. Tourism growth must therefore not be concentrated only in established tourism hubs. It must also reach communities where tourism has the potential to transform livelihoods, stimulate local economies and restore dignity. We must remind ourselves that even the most established of the hubs started from somewhere.

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The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa continues to play a significant role in advancing quality assurance, destination competitiveness and visitor confidence. South African tourism works through programs such as the basic quality verification, BQV. The programmes continue to support emerging accommodation establishments, particularly within the villages, townships and small dorpiess.

The programmes help smaller establishments become market ready, quality assured and more competitive within the tourism economy. As we have seen recently, we were there with hon members. We went through each and every storm. We had more than 20 of them and they had their story to tell the Members of Parliament.

The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa celebrated 25 years of advancing tourism quality assurance. Reinforcement is a strategic enabler of competitiveness, visitor confidence and tourism sector sustainability. Tourism grading continues to strengthen South Africa's tourism value proposition by providing independent assurance of quality safety and service excellence across the sector.

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Tourism safety remains one of the department's highest priorities. Our condolences to the families of the deceased tourists. We continue to work closely with the provinces, municipalities, law enforcement agencies and private sector stakeholders to strengthen tourism safety co-ordination nationwide. A safe destination is not only a tourism priority, but also an economic imperative.

Indeed, tourism safety is about protecting livelihoods, strengthening destination confidence, supporting local business and preserving South Africa's reputation as a welcoming destination.

The Tourism Monitors Programme remains one of the important interventions supporting both tourism safety and youth employment. We should have seen them during G20. It continues to provide visibility at our tourism sites, support visitor experiences and contribute to safer tourism environment across the country.

Importantly, Tourism Safety Monitors are often the first ambassadors of South Africa's hospitality, warmly welcoming

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visitors while contributing to service excellence and destination confidence.

South Africa continues to strengthen its position as one of Africa's leading business events destinations. The hosting of conferences, meetings and events in villages, townships and smaller towns continues to contribute meaningfully towards local economic participation and inclusive development.

On the conferences and events that the Minister referred to earlier, 16 of those business events were hosted across villages, townships and small dorpiess, attracting more than 5 000 delegates with an estimated economy impact of about R53 million. These events support accommodation providers, transport operators, restaurants, creatives, tourism attractions and small enterprises across local economies.

Women and youth remain central to the future of the tourism sector. The department continues to support programmes aimed at empowering women in tourism, supporting youth enterprises, and creating pathways for participation in the tourism economy. The Women in Tourism Platform serves as an important mechanism to bring women together across the tourism value

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chain, including accommodation, hospitality, transport, tour operations, cultural tourism, events, digital innovation, and community tourism, as I met with them in Durban. In Durban, we held a Women in Tourism event, meeting representatives from all nine provinces, including women, men, and business owners.

Importantly, it also provides a space for networking, mentorship, collaboration and mutual support. Tourism is at its most powerful when it is not only growing visitor numbers but also grows people, businesses and economies as alluded to by one of the portfolio committee members.

We must continue ensuring that tourism growth translates into meaningful opportunities for workers, women, youth, people with disabilities and small enterprises and communities across our country. Because tourism is more than an industry. It is a bridge between people, cultures, opportunities and hope. This is what the President said when he opened the Travel Africa Indaba. When communities participate meaningfully in tourism, the entire country benefits.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, Minister de Lille, for your leadership in the tourism sector over the past year.

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Although I was new to the department, working closely with you was of great assistance to me. I also want to thank director-general Victor Vele and the department officials for your support. My thanks also go to the chairperson of the portfolio committee, hon Nomalunga, and the portfolio committee members for your robust engagement and guidance. Thank you very much.

Tshivenda:

Muf L E LIGARABA: Ndo livhuwa Mudzulatshidulo, Minisiṭa vha ṭhonifheaho na Tshanda tsha Minisiṭa ...

English:

...hon members and fellow South Africans, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela once said, safety and security don't just happen. They are the result of collective consensus and public investment. The high prevalence of crime in South Africa continue to cast a long and troubling shadow over our tourism sector. It undermines travellers' confidence, damage our global reputation and threatens our very livelihoods that depends on the critical industry. Tourism thrives on safety, trust and positive experience yet the visitors feel unsafe. The consequences are immediate and are evidenced by fewer

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arrival, reduced investment and lost opportunity for economic growth.

This is not a mere perception issue. It is a structural challenge that demands urgent and co-ordinated action. If we are serious about positioning South Africa as a competitive and premium destination for both leisure and business tourism, safety and security must be placed at the centre of our tourism strategy.

Tshivenda:

Mirado i ṭhonifhehao ...

English:

...while we welcome the deployment of 1 500 tourism safety monitors, the ANC continues to emphasise that this intervention remains insufficient and it is largely confined to mainstream destinations and attractions thereby excluding villages, townships and small dorpiés. We support the committee's call for a more comprehensive approach that strengthen both the actual safety of tourists and the perception thereof including efforts to counter misleading narratives on public media platforms.

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Furthermore, there is a need for enhanced co-ordination among key stakeholders, particularly the law enforcement agencies, the local authorities and the private sector to ensure a more inclusive, coherent and effective tourism safety framework.

Equally, while we welcome the 5,6% nominal increase in Programme 4 aimed at enhancing transformation, improving skills development and supporting sector growth from R331,6 million in 2025-26 to R350,1 million in 2026-27, the ANC emphasised the importance of ensuring that the relevant policy and implementation frameworks are fully aligned with these allocations. We call on the Minister to ensure that the execution of this initiative is properly co-ordinated, consistent and responsive to the needs of the beneficiaries, particularly the most vulnerable, the youth, unemployed youth, women and the disabled.

The ANC raised sharply its dismay on the poor implementation of the Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP, in the previous financial year. Given the high level of unemployment in this country, it is unacceptable for the EPWP mandate to be stalled. We are pleased that Programme 3's allocation now increased by 27,1 nominal terms from R331,1 million in 2025-26

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to R420,8 million in 2026-27, which contributes to the Working for Tourism Expanded Public Works Programme, targeting to create 19 083 work opportunities over the medium-term. This is progress given that the programme's allocation was decreased by 10% in the previous financial year.

Nevertheless, we must explore on the department to develop a tracking mechanism to check whether the temporary jobs created through Working for Tourism Expanded Public Works Programme create meaningful employment later, and whether people trained through the programme are absorbed in the sector.

As it relates to Tourism Marketing South Africa, Tomsa, levy, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the Minister and the South Africa Tourism, SAT, forward plan. It is concerning that Toms levy were not disbursed to South African Tourism in the previous financial year, with the matter carrying over into the current financial year. We therefore called the Minister to provide a clear directive on the future of this funding mechanism, including comprehensive detail on the related implication and the mitigation strategy in place to ensure that the sector is not adversely affected.

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As I conclude, Chair, allow me to echo the sentiments of the portfolio committee. If we are effectively leveraging tourism as a tool for transformation and the inclusion of the marginalised and the unprivileged communities, the approach of departmental allocation must be reconsidered. It is important to recognise that the tourism sector contributes to 10% of the country's GDP and remains one of the fastest growing and most dynamic centre, playing a critical role in driving economic growth and jobs in South Africa. Therefore, we support the call for an increased budget allocation to the department and its entity. The ANC supports this budget.

Before I sit down, let me join all Africans in celebrating Africa Month - the month in which our giant Mamelodi Sundowns has won the African Cup of Nations from Cape to Cairo, from Morocco to Madagascar. Let's make sure that we support our team. I thank you.

Tshivenda:

Ndo livhuwa.

Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa.

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Setswana:

Ke a leboga.

Ms H ISMAIL: Chairperson, hon members and fellow South Africans, the headline figures suggest recovery, but the structure remains weak. In 2025, we recorded 10,5 million international arrivals, up 17,7% from 2024 and 2,6% above 2019. Yet, arrivals are still concentrated in the same markets and same provinces. The sector supports nearly a million jobs, but too many are short-term, low wage and unevenly spread.

Recovery is happening, but most South Africans are being left behind. The committee's review of the department's SA Tourism's 2026-27 annual performance plans, APPs, show why. Glossy plans, no accountability, no oversight and no proof of delivery.

Firstly, spending does not match the mandate. 438 allocates R2,54 billion. For the budget to have a meaningful impact it needs a strong mandate and careful oversight. At the moment we are failing to fulfil our mandate to market South Africa as we are overspending on administration and underspending on attracting tourists.

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Minister, we are specifically failing to secure new air routes. The route development plan has no clear targets or accountability. The department must submit a funded plan for five new direct routes from nontraditional markets in 2026-27, with quarterly progress reports. The private sector has lost confidence in SA Tourism and the Minister's ability to lead. The Tomsa funds were zero in 2025-26 and remain zero for 2026-2027. When the industry withholds funds, it is a vote of no confidence in SA Tourism's governance.

Secondly, governance at the SA Tourism is in crisis. An amount of R1,3 billion, over half the budget goes to the SA Tourism. Yet, it fails to appear before the committee to deliver its budget report, sending an apology only on the morning of the meeting. The SA Tourism is paralysed by investigations into its suspended CEO, Nombulelo Guliwe, the Ngubane report, the Abacus Forensic reports and now the Special Investigating Unit, SIU, investigation. The entity has a 16% vacancy rate and no stable executive leadership. This happened under a Minister who dissolved boards that implement recommendations.

The CEO remains suspended on full pay. The interim board includes members such as Mr Brian Mosehla, infamous for his

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alleged links to a company that received an invalid the SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, contract and had to appear before the Constitutional Court, and for his alleged role in the 2020 Housing Development Agency failure to deliver scandal.

Minister, appoint a permanent and credible board immediately. Conclude the disciplinary process and fill all critical vacancies. Billions in public funds cannot be left to waste.

Thirdly, there is no proof of outcomes or return on investment. The department targets 15 million tourists by 2030, but there is no detailed plan or oversight mechanism. We spend on marketing, but they have no data on bookings generated. There is no measurement on return on investment, ROI, and key performance indicators, KPIs. Every campaign must report on cost, breach, conversions and jobs created. Tourism can drive youth, women and rural employment faster than most sectors, but only if we measure impact and stop working in silos.

Fourthly, the tourism equity and transformation funds are failing. Red tape and the broad-based black economic

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empowerment, B-BBEE, compliance block most small, medium and micro enterprises, SMMEs, from accessing funds. Busi Mavuso said, every month more boardroom decisions are choosing Egypt, Vietnam and Mexico over South Africa. The DA stands against B-BBEE and the Tourism Equity Fund, TEF. The Tourism Equity Fund in particular has consistently failed to uplift marginalised communities or grow inclusive businesses. The committee recommends that all relevant tourism programmes incorporate transformation targets that align with the government of national unity, GNU, priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, 8, 10 and 12, focusing on SMME development, youth and women ownership, rural VTSC geographic spread and skills transfer with specific measurables to be tabled within 90 days for oversight.

Fifthly, safety, seasonality, infrastructure and technology are weak. Safety is the main barrier to growth. Many countries avoid South Africa due to negative publicity and crime. Tourism monitors are placed at key sites, but rural areas remain exposed. We need trained, accredited monitors in rural notes.

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We are also over reliant on peak seasons, leaving infrastructure idle off-peak. Other countries are using digital incentives for year-round travel. We must do the same. Infrastructure delivery continues to fail due to delays, cost overruns and inadequate posthandover maintenance. We cannot have a repeat of the Vredefort Dome incident. And by all accounts, we cannot afford more white elephants. Far too much money has been wasted on forgotten and neglected infrastructure projects. The Development Bank of Southern Africa, DBSA, has a record of underperformance. Audit all incomplete and nonoperational projects since 2020. No new project should be approved without the funded maintenance plan.

Sixthly, the Tourism Act is from 2014. The heritage, cultural, domestic and rural tourism strategies, date to 2012 and 2013. The UN Tourism requires reviews every three to five years. We cannot regulate the fast moving sector with a 12-year-old policy. Table and pass the Tourism Amendment Bill this financial year. This time it ends here. Minister, polite debate is over. To avoid another failed Africa Travel indaba, listen to the private sector advisory panel on the quality of buyers and delegates we need. Tourism must create far more

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jobs for South Africans. Every day we delay fixing this department, the SA Tourism, we delay arrivals and job creation and growth. Tourism should generate far more investment, jobs and economic growth than it currently does. Minister, you must deliver accountability, jobs and growth or step aside for those who can. I thank you.

Mr I ISMAIL-MOOSA: Hon Chairperson. In the name of Almighty the most gracious and the most merciful, tourism remains one of South Africa' greatest economic assets and has the potential to create sustainable jobs, stimulate local economies and showcase the beauty and diversity of our nation to the world. Al Jama-ah supports efforts to grow the tourism sector and attract both local and international visitors. However, this growth cannot be achieved without addressing the challenges of crime, deteriorating infrastructure, poor service delivery and the negative perceptions that discourage visitors from choosing South Africa as their destination. We must ensure that our roads, public facilities, tourist attractions and transport systems are safe, accessible and well maintained.

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Tourism cannot flourish where visitors and local communities feel unsafe. Furthermore, greater support must be provided to small tourism enterprises, township tourism initiatives, cultural tourism projects and faith-based tourism opportunities, which can create meaningful economic participation for historically disadvantaged communities. South Africa is blessed with breathtaking natural beauty, rich cultural heritage and remarkably diversity.

Let us work together to unlock the full potential of this sector so that tourism becomes a catalyst for economic growth, job creation and poverty alleviation. Tourism, growth, economic growth, national growth, safe tourism, strong economy, shared prosperity. Let us unlock South Africa's beauty, create jobs, build communities. Malibongwe!

Ms A S HLONGO: Hon House Chairperson, Minister and Deputy Minister of the Department, Director-General Vele, chairperson of the portfolio committee, hon Nalumango, hon members, fellow South Africans, good morning. Today I speak for the tourism small, medium, and micro enterprises, SMMEs, in villages, the crafters ekasi [in the townships], guesthouse owners in the small towns and tour operators in the rural villages of our

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country, because the true heartbeat of South African tourism does not reside in luxury beach resorts or five-star private game lodges, but in vibrant streets of townships, the rich heritage of our sacred villages, our diverse culture and the untapped charms of our small towns.

For far too long, our national Tourism department has focused heavily on well-established, wealthy hubs, accidentally leaving the incredible wealth of our rural and informal economics in the shadows. We must acknowledge that our local guesthouses, tour guides, crafters and township operators are the true backbone of this sector, keeping our communities alive against all odds. Delivering his state of the nation address, President Cyril Ramaphosa reminded us that, "We must promote unique cultural, historical and natural attractions that reflect the country's identity."

It is for this reason that the ANC remains committed to building a people-driven and inclusive tourism sector. The dominance of large industry players must not come at the expense of emerging enterprises in villages, townships and small towns. We therefore call for a greater support towards

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heritage and cultural tourism, with deliberate efforts to empower women, youth and persons with disabilities.

This brings us to the core financial and governance reality of Vote 38. It is mentioned that the majority of the large part of the budget goes to the SA Tourism, SAT, but as the ANC, we are concerned about the ongoing crisis in the SAT board. Since the Minister dissolved the board last year, no permanent formally appointed board has been put in place to steer the entity.

The ANC cannot and will not remain silent while over R1,3 billion public funds are administered without a permanent, legally constituted board to ensure absolute accountability, transformation and oversight. We demand that this vacancy be treated with the urgency it deserves. Hon members and hon House Chairperson, South Africa's future cannot be built exclusively around major cities, while communities rich in culture remain overlooked. Changing global trends prove this point. Young people across Africa and South Africa are discovering travel destinations through digital platforms. Digital creators are doing heavy lifting to market our diverse culture and our beautiful country.

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A powerful example to this is the ground-breaking digital creator, Poppy Sibiya, whom millions follow on TikTok and Instagram. Just recently, Poppy visited the Cape Flats, defying narratives that townships are unsafe, to spend time with the families right in Mitchells Plain and Manenberg. Her viral content showed the world the warmth, the authentic culture, the daily lived experiences and the true spirit of ubuntu in Mitchells Plain.

Hon House Chairperson, to ensure immediate financial integration, the Department of Tourism enforces internal supply chain rules and dictates 40% procurement spend must be allocated to goods and services for SMMEs. Forty percent procurement must be spent to dedicated strictly and dedicated strictly to women-owned businesses, combined with a strict policy to pay all complaint SMME invoices within 30 days. We welcome this as the ANC.

We also welcome the department's support for community-based tourism infrastructure alongside youth empowerment initiatives, like the Working for Tourism Programme, which commits to creating 6 174 job opportunities for young people. Some parties in this House oppose transformation while

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pretending to stand for equality and development. The DA continues to oppose the broad-based black economic empowerment, BBBEE, and other transformation policies because they are fundamentally uncomfortable with the economic empowerment of the black majority. They want South Africa to forget our painful history of exclusion, especially in this election year. Let us make it clear, the ANC will never apologise for pursuing economic transformation and opening opportunities for black-owned enterprises.

As I conclude this debate, let us remember that tourism is not merely about destinations. Tourism is about people. It is about umama [a mother] who is running a small guest house in a rural village in Nkomazi, the young creative person from Soweto showcasing township life to the world through digital platforms, the craft trader at the roadside market in Hazyview, and the tour guide that is keeping the stories of our countries alive. This Budget Vote must therefore become more than a financial allocation.

It must become an instrument of justice, inclusion, and economic transformation. The true success of South African tourism will not be measured only by the number of

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international arrivals. Indeed, hon Deputy Minister, we cannot continue to market only the polished corners of our country while neglecting the vibrant heartbeats of our communities, from the streets of Sebokeng to the sacred village landscapes of Barberton.

Our people carry the authentic story of this nation. They deserve investment, safety, infrastructure, and meaningful opportunities to participate in the tourism economy. As the ANC, we remain committed to transformation, empowerment, and inclusive growth. We support a tourism sector that does not only create profits for a few, but opportunities, platforms, and hopes for the many in the tourism sector in our country. We support the Budget Vote. I thank you.

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Hon Chairperson, let me thank all the parties that supported the Budget Vote and let me also thank those parties and their proposal that the budget for tourism must be increased. We welcome your positive input. However, hon Chairperson, you know, context in a debate is very important.

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I think that the Portfolio Committee on Tourism is doing a very important oversight duty, and they have been doing well in that. On most of the points or some of the points raised this morning, as being reported in media statements to the portfolio committee, we have been sent backwards and forwards. Hon Ismail, I think if we rely on official channels, like the portfolio committee, rather than relying on peddlers that are giving you wrong information, you will know and understand better.

I want to deal with the issue of safety that has been raised by many of the members today. Again, we all know that the constitutional mandate to keep all South Africans safe, including our visitors, is with the police. That is why we have got the National Safety Forum, which is inclusive of the police, the National Prosecuting Authority, all nine provinces with all provincial tourist authorities.

A second constitutional provision is that tourism is a concurrent power. Local government, provincial and national, we are working together on safety, and we regret the attack on any visitor, including visitors from our own country. We are

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working closely with the private sector. The private sector has invested in an application.

The private sector just recently spent R23 million in Durban to buy new safety bakkies for the beachfront there. The private sector put money into the Numbi Gate for private security. So, there is good co-operation, but I will be the first to admit that yes, we can do more, and we regret the attack on any tourist in our country.

So, when we also come and claim here that some of the statistics are not real, we should know that the statistics that I use here come from a formal source, the satellite account of Statistics SA. Can we read and then at least acknowledge where there is growth despite all the myth here?

If people repeat a myth over and over again, they then later on believe that it is the truth. You are entitled to your own opinions, but you are not entitled to your own facts. Facts have been produced by Statistics SA. So, I want members to please read more.

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In terms of domestic tourism, we earn income from domestic tourism. I also quoted here from Statistics SA. It is R111 billion per annum, compared to R102 billion from international tourists. So, we are not really putting all our emphasis on international tourism. So, I have confidence in the sector.

Concerning South African Tourism, the SAT, we have also reported several times to the committee that the positions of the CEO, the CFO and the CMO have been filled. We have seen that the SAT has produced successful meetings at the Africa Travel Indaba. So, there is no crisis. Stop dreaming up a crisis. The South African Tourism Board that is in control now have got everything under control and we report regularly to the portfolio committee.

Let me end with gratitude. Let me thank the South African Tourism Board and the executive management, the National Department of Tourism, the DG and all the DDGs, and also the staff in the Ministry and my Deputy Minister. We work very closely together, despite all the lies that tourism is not growing.

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Tourism is not even recovering anymore. Tourism is growing, my sister. I don't know where you live. It is growing! It is growing, my sister.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon members! Hon members, you are drowning out the speaker.

The MINISTER OF TOURISM: Thank you, hon Chairperson.

Debate concluded.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms C Labuschagne): Hon members! Hon members, order please. You can have your debate and your dance outside after the plenary. Members are reminded that two debates are scheduled simultaneously for 14:00 today. The International Relations and Co-operation Budget Vote 6 debate will be held in the Good Hope Chamber, while the Trade, Industry and Competition Budget Vote 39 will take place in Committee Room M46.

Business mini-plenary session concluded.

The mini plenary rose at 11:34.