

# **MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND TOURISM**

## **UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES AGAINST THE COVID – 19 ON THE TOURISM SECTOR**

**Director of Ceremonies**

**Honourable Ministers Present Here**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen**

**The Media Fraternity**

1. Worldwide, the tourism sector is currently one of the hardest hit by the outbreak of COVID-19 with impacts of both supply and demand. Considering the evolving nature of the situation, it is too early to estimate the full impact of the COVID-19 tourism within Botswana and internationally.
2. The World Tourism Organisation estimates that in 2020 global international tourist arrival could decline between 1% and 3% down from an estimated growth of 3% to 4% forecast in early January 2020. This could translate into a loss of US\$30 to 50 billion in spending by international visitors (International Tourism receipt).
3. The hospitality and tourism industry in Botswana has already suffered substantial losses of business and value with hotels operating at 10% capacity. Most of the citizens guest houses and campsites have closed because of limited business.
4. The decrease in tourist arrivals will result in reduction of revenue for the Botswana especially from main source markets e.g. Europe and the emerging markets of Asia which have been growing in

recent years. The outbreak of the Corona Virus will also affect the country's development priorities as there is need to reprioritize funding towards containment of the virus.

5. Following the Statement by His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi E.K. Masisi President of the Republic of Botswana on the Declaration of the State of emergency in Botswana regarding the outbreak of COVID – 19, I wish to provide an update on the implementation of key issues within my Ministry.
6. Ladies and gentlemen, the tourism sector, like no other economic activity with social impact is based on interaction amongst people. Personal responsibility is therefore the most important step that people can take to protect themselves and others. Botswana should familiarize themselves with the basic prevention practices that apply including;
  - Regular hand-washing
  - Normal cough etiquette
  - Postponing travel plans
  - Avoiding contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infectious.
  - Adherence to the mandated standards of social distancing at work, in public spaces and at home

Everyone is responsible not only for their own well-being but for the well-being of those around them. They should be aware of the symptoms and take the recommended steps for personal hygiene.

## **CONSULTATION**

The COVID 19 mitigation measures for the tourism sector followed extensive engagement with the tourism industry in

particular the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO), Botswana Guides Association (BOGA), Guest House Association of Botswana, Travel Agents Association of Botswana (TAABOT) and Hospitality and Tourism Association of Botswana (HATAB). We have also received proposals from the Botswana Wildlife Producers Association (BWPA). I am happy to announce that almost all of their concerns and proposals have been considered favourably by the Government of Botswana, and duly contributed to the modalities for establishment and implementation of the COVID 19 relief fund.

### **SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND REMEDIAL ACTIONS**

<b>Emerging issue</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Remedial Action</b>
<b>Health management</b>	Access to health services for government staff stationed in the Game Reserves and National Parks.	There will be provision of relief for air support to allow timely deployment of resources including goods, health care services, food and deployment of staff.  There shall be standby aircrafts to provide transport on emergencies to and from the national parks.
	Access to health services for staff employed in the tourism industry operating in the Delta, Game Reserves and National Parks	There shall be frequent inspection of tourism facilities for compliance with health requirements.

	Limited awareness of COVID 19 case management protocols	<p>In partnership with Ministry of Health, there shall be intensive awareness building on the staff stationed in Parks on COVID 19.</p> <p>We are also considering the deployment of medical health staff in Parks to serve both government and private sector employees to avoid them having to travel to medical centres for minor medical check-up. This will also aid in early detection of symptoms of COVID 19.</p>
<b>Communication</b>	Delayed reporting of COVID 19 symptoms may perpetuate the spread of the disease. There are currently weak communication systems in the National Parks and Game Reserves to facilitate timely reporting.	MENT is procuring satellite phones (at least 1 phone per Park) and WIFI connection for all stations in the Parks to allow for effective communication especially in reporting any suspected COVID 19 symptoms.
<b>People counselling</b>	Psychosocial impacts of failing to attend funerals of family members due to Lockdown	There shall be a provision of counselling services as when need arises

<b>Poaching</b>	<p>Increase in Poaching during lockdown due to restricted movement of patrols teams.</p> <p>Withdrawal of troops of law enforcement institutions in support of COVID 19 restrictions inland</p>	<p>MENT is currently deploying additional personnel to National Parks to strengthen anti-poaching efforts during the COVID 19 pandemic.</p> <p>Procurement of additional body bags for poachers is also at advanced stages. The poachers are therefore warned that their time is over in Botswana.</p>
<b>Legal issues</b>	<p>The applicability of Trade Moratorium to Tourism licences issued under Tourism Act.</p>	<p>All the Hotels are bound by the trade and MoH regulations on restrictions. They are therefore expected to comply with the said regulations in running their operations.</p>
<b>Hunting</b>	<p>Unmarketability of hunting quota following international movement restrictions</p>	<p>The hunting season will be extended until December 2020. The decision will be reviewed in light of developments on COVID 19 and if necessary, extended until February 2020.</p>
<b>Revenue collection</b>	<p>Increase in user fees may result in over-burden of already financially stressed tourism sector.</p>	<p>The planned Park fee increase has been deferred until further notice. In order to reduce the movement of citizens to our offices, the operators whose licenses shall be expiring during the lockdown will be allowed to continue</p>

		<p>operating. Their licenses will be treated as valid.</p> <p>Penalties will be waived for non-payment of live fees and tourism bed levy at due times.</p>
<b>Monitory / Fiscal Policy</b>	<p>The effect of COVID 19 on the tourism businesses has been enormous. This has prompted the government to engage with financial institutions to define the necessary mitigation measures.</p>	<p>The Tourism sector is enjoined to familiarise themselves with the COVID 19 monitory policies as announced by the Minister of Finance. The established relief fund is expected to support to support the tourism sector especially on wage subsidies that will enable the businesses to retain their employees during the pandemic.</p> <p>The industry is encouraged to liaise with the Ministry of finance on the guidelines for accessing the Fund.</p>

Lastly, I wish underscore the importance of cooperation in the true sense of the word as key to our success against the COVID – 19 outbreak.

I thank you