

Media Statement by South African Government

SA tourism under no threat from Ebola

Government reiterates that South Africa remains the destination of choice for tourism, despite a report in the media which stated that the industry had become the first victim of Ebola.

No cases of the Ebola virus have been reported in the country, and government is confident of the systems and protocols that are in place to address any incidence of the virus.

Minister of Communications Ms. Faith Muthambi said, "It is unfortunate that some newspapers would choose to report that a handful of tourists cancelled their trip due to fears, which according to the report are based on erroneous facts about the virus. This is despite the government's assurance that it has efficient systems in place at the country's ports of entry and medical facilities. The risk of Ebola being introduced into South Africa remains low and our tourism industry remains vibrant and lucrative."

Since the advent of democracy the arrivals in the country have grown by more than 300% to reach nearly 15 million last year, of which 9.6 million were tourists.

Tourist arrivals to South Africa in 2013 showed positive growth from all regions. South Africa is one of the most-sought after global destinations offering a diverse variety of unforgettable experiences, which include leisure, business and events. "South Africa is on record having hosted some of the biggest tourism mega-events in the world and the 2014 Tourism Act actually caters for the demands of the 21st century," said Muthambi.

As a sought-after destination, government reiterates that it has ensured that stringent measures have been put in place. The surveillance for viral hemorrhagic fevers has been strengthened at ports of entry. The National Health Laboratory Service and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases have also intensified laboratory surveillance and the port health services, including public and private health care practitioners, who are on alert for any ill persons that have travelled to very high risk

areas. There are 11 designated health facilities in the country to manage any reported Ebola cases. South Africa has even dispatched a specialist team in response to the virus in Sierra Leone.

“So there is no need to incite panic and speculation on the tourism industry. South Africa is safe and is still an attractive destination for tourists,” said Muthambi.

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