



**Press Statement by**

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**Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, MP**

**AT THE OCCASION OF THE**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AMMENDMENDS TO THE**

**IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOLS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL**

**TOURISM REVIVAL INITIATIVE**

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM**

**BOARDROOM**

**WINDHOEK**

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Good afternoon and welcome to this press conference, which we have called to announce the amendments to the International Tourism Revival Initiative protocols that were announced on 25 August 2020.

The International Tourism Revival Initiative was initially announced in June 2020 by His Excellency President Dr. Hage G. Geingob as an effort to kick start the recovery of the tourism sector in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Subsequent to the Cabinet Decision on this Initiative, a Tourism Task Force comprising of representatives from key stakeholders including co-opted institutions and private expertise as and when needed was established.

The task force commenced its work on 6 August 2020 and developed the International Tourism Revival Initiative implementation protocols that were announced to the general public on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The implementation of the TRI commenced from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

Prior to commencement, all the relevant authorities informed and disseminated the necessary directives and documentation to all institutions of service to tourists such as airlines, border points, foreign missions and tour operators. This has included a health declaration form, tourist facility health and safety check list, and application forms for the certification of accommodation establishments. So far, more than 100 applications have been received from interested tourists and these are being processed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

The Hosea Kutako International Airport, as the designated port of entry for the trial period of this initiative, has reported to be ready in terms of having the necessary health and safety compliance measures in place to receive arrivals.

All airlines with Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreements with Namibia were engaged and positive responses have been received with the major airlines

keen to restart their services to Namibia. Ethiopian Airlines has made a public notification that it will resume flights to Namibia on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Lufthansa Group has also announced to introduce flights to Namibia from 19<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Air Namibia has also indicated its intention to resume international flights. These historical flights will be to promote the re-opening of Namibia as a tourism destination to the world. It is our intention as the Ministry responsible for Tourism to receive and welcome our very first tourists to Namibia after a long period of lockdown.

The implementation protocols of the TRI represented a carefully negotiated balance between the Ministries responsible for health, finance and environment and tourism. The implementation protocols sought to balance the necessary health and safety measures while still appealing to international travelers that the sector so heavily depends on.

However, since the announcement of the implementation protocols of the Tourism Revival Initiative and opening of the Hosea Kutako International Airport, the industry has not seen any new bookings and in fact has had net cancellations which have resulted in N\$115.7 million being withdrawn from the country. This had a direct negative cash flow impact on businesses, which resulted in further salary cuts and or retrenchments. This has necessitated a rethink in our approach. The tourism sector is highly competitive and Namibia is competing to attract tourists with countries from all over the world. The fact that other countries in the region have opened up their borders with fewer restrictions has put Namibia at a disadvantage. However, there are still bookings in the system, as tourists hope for more appealing protocols and arrangements to be put in place.

In order to find a balance between saving lives and saving livelihoods, the protocols are amended as follows.

- i. Upon arrival at the Hosea Kutako International Airport, the tourists proceed to the pre-booked destination and engage in the planned daily tourist activities at the facility for the number of days the tourist is staying there.

- ii. If the tourist intends to spend less than five days at the pre-booked facility, the tourist can proceed to the next destination. However, on day five (5), the tourist must be available for swabbing wherever they find themselves.
- iii. The tourist must be reachable on day seven (7) to receive the results of the swabbing.
- iv. If the result is negative, the tourist is released from any surveillance. If the result is positive, the tourist will be taken to the isolation facilities identified by the Ministry of Health and Social Services and treated at their own cost and according to national case management guidelines.

With these remarks, I thank you and open the floor for questions