



CONCEPT NOTE

VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Monday, 12th April 2021

Theme: *Harnessing Domestic Tourism in Times of Pandemics: A Case of the COVID 19 Pandemic: The Role of Parliaments*

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is facing an unprecedented global health, social and economic crisis because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Since its outbreak in December 2019, the Pandemic has continued to take a massive toll on global economies including many African countries. The outbreak and attendant lockdowns have exerted a tremendous impact on the tourism industry worldwide and African countries have been adversely affected, especially those that are dependent on foreign tourists. Travel restrictions, quarantines, and closures of transportations led to about 22 per cent decline of international tourist arrivals in 2020 compared to 2019 and possibly 60 to 80 per cent over the entire year¹. At present, the global travel and tourism industry is in a fight for survival with an estimated 50 million global jobs at risk due to the pandemic.

The World Economic Outlook projections indicate that the global economy contracted by 4.4 per cent in 2020 and the shock in tourism-dependent economies would be far worse. Real Gross Domestic Product among African countries dependent on tourism decreased by 12 per cent. It is further projected that tourism-dependent countries will likely feel the negative impacts of the crisis for much longer than other economies, because contact-intensive services key to the tourism and travel sectors are disproportionately affected by

¹ <https://www.unwto.org/news/covid-19-international-tourist-numbers-could-fall-60-80-in-2020>.

the pandemic and will continue to struggle until people feel safe to travel again.²

Although domestic tourism is driving the recovery of several destinations, this recovery is in most cases only partial, as it is not compensating for the drop in international demand. This supports the proposition that tourism receipts worldwide are not expected to recover to 2019 levels until 2023.

Taking cognisance of the negative impact that the COVID-19 Pandemic is having on the economies of most SADC countries, particularly on the tourism industry which is a major contributor to the GDP of most Southern African countries, it is imperative that measures are put in place or to enhance existing policies and laws in order to sustain the tourism in SADC countries. Against this background, the Committee will consider the theme “Harnessing Domestic Tourism in Times of Pandemics: A Case of the COVID 19 pandemic: The Role of Parliaments.”

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The aim of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources is to explore ways that can be employed to boost domestic tourism during the COVID-19 Pandemic and beyond.

The specific objectives are to:

- (i) appreciate challenges that Member states are facing to sustain the tourism industry a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- (ii) learn how innovation and digitisation can help to optimize tourism in Member states;
- (iii) establish sustainable measures and strategies to boost domestic tourism; and
- (iv) make recommendations on how tourism can be sustained in times of pandemics.

3. METHODOLOGY

This activity will be undertaken virtually on Zoom platform. The Committee will benefit from expert presentations from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), SADC Secretariat and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Arica (COMESA), who possess great insight on the subject matter based on studies that they have undertaken on the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the global economy, which includes tourism.

² <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/12/impact-of-the-pandemic-on-tourism-behsudi.htm>

4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

It is expected that the meeting will bring to the fore measures and strategies that can promote domestic tourism in SADC countries. Arising from these measures, it is envisaged that Hon Members will gain valuable knowledge on how to manage tourism even in the midst of pandemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This will in turn capacitate Hon Members to make legislative recommendations through the various parliamentary processes in their respective countries.