



REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES (FANR) OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM TO THE 49TH PLENARY SESSION HELD UNDER THE THEME ‘*HARNESSING DOMESTIC TOURISM IN TIMES OF PANDEMICS: A CASE OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS*’

Mr President, I beg to move that this Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) Standing Committees to the 49th Plenary Assembly Virtual Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, laid on the table on 25th June 2021.

1. PREAMBLE

Mr President, the FANR Standing Committee as guided by its mandate in terms of Rule 42(c) of the SADC PF Rules of Procedure, met virtually on Monday, 12th April 2021.

2. CREDENTIALS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT

Eleven (11) of the 15 representatives of the SADC PF Member Parliaments were present as follows:

Hon Andre Leon Tumba, Chairperson	DRC
Hon. Lekhetho Mosito, proxy for Hon. Marapeleng Malefane	Lesotho
Hon. Helena Bonguela Abel	Angola
Hon. Lova Herizo Rajaobelina	Madagascar
Hon. Tshitereke Baldwin Matibe	South Africa
Hon. Polson Majaga	Botswana
Hon. Princess Phumelele Dlamini	Eswatini
Hon. Tambudzani Mohadi	Zimbabwe
Hon. Samuel Kawala	Malawi
Hon. Carlos Manuel	Mozambique
Hon. Marie Genevieve Stephanie Anquetil	Mauritius

APOLOGIES

Apologies from the Parliaments of Namibia, Tanzania, Seychelles and Zambia were duly noted.

3. WELCOME REMARKS

The Standing Committee on Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources met under the theme **‘Harnessing Domestic Tourism in Times of Pandemics: A Case of the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Role of Parliaments’**.

The Chairperson designate, Hon. Mosito welcomed all Hon Members to the meeting. He also welcomed Ms Boemo Sekgoma, Secretary General of the SADC PF. He informed Members that the Committee was meeting to deliberate on the theme.

Hon. Mosito noted that it had been over one year since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the world had continued to grapple with many socioeconomic challenges as a result the pandemic. He stated that the restrictions that had been necessitated by the pandemic had negatively affected the global economy. Notably, the global tourism sector had been severely affected by the pandemic. He informed Members that according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), travel restrictions, quarantines, and closures of transportations had led to about 22 per cent decline of international

tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 compared with 2019 and possibly to 60 to 80 per cent for the remainder of 2020. Further, based on the World Travel and Tourism Council statistics, the COVID 19 pandemic could result in loss of about 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry. Hon Mosito informed Members that the contribution of the tourism sector was critical to the global economy. Tourism accounted for close to 10 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Further, tourism contributed immensely to the economies of most SADC countries.

Hon. Mosito noted that the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on tourism in the region had been exacerbated by the fact that Africa's tourism source markets such as China, the United States of America and Europe were hit the most during the first wave of the pandemic. He informed Members that according to experts in the tourism sector, international tourism was only likely to fully recover after a vaccine was deployed to all. As a result, Member States were faced with a challenge to sustain tourism operations and preserve jobs until the crisis was over. Hon Mosito emphasised that until the vaccine was fully rolled out the region's hope rested with domestic tourism.

Hon Members were reminded that with commitment and dedication of Member States, tourism in the region could be redeemed to even better pre-pandemic levels. However, this was dependent on Member States' willingness to adopt sustainable tourism models and investing in new technologies to accelerate recovery. Hon Mosito called upon Members to support measures that were aimed at mitigating the impact of the crisis. Lastly, Hon Mosito urged Hon Members to fully participate in the deliberations.

4. PRESENTATIONS AND DELIBERATIONS ON 'HARNESSING DOMESTIC TOURISM IN TIMES OF PANDEMICS: A CASE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS'

The FANR Standing Committee received detailed presentations on theme from the two experts from the SADC Secretariat, namely Mr Domingos Z Gove, Director Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Mr Moreri Mabote, Senior Programme Officer Tourism.

The presentations highlighted critical regional policy developments within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which had paralysed the tourism sector. It was noted for instance, that the SADC Protocol on Tourism was being reviewed to align it to new developments in sector, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism and would also include some aspects regarding the winding up of the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA). It was also indicated that the the SADC Tourism Programme for the period 2020 to 2030 had been approved by the Council of Ministers responsible for Environment, Natural Resources and Tourism in October 2019 in Arusha, Tanzania.

Furthermore, a strategic framework has been formulated to guide the SADC Tourism Programme. This includes the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) (2020-2030). The SADC Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA) Programme will be included in the strategy upon the completion of its review.

The Committee was also informed that following adoption of the SADC Tourism Programme, the SADC Secretariat was tasked to prepare a Costed Action Plan (CAP) with reflections on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in the region, including recommended recovery measures for both global and regional scenarios. The CAP would be accompanied by a resource mobilisation strategy to support implementation of the SADC Tourism Programme.

The Committee took note of the two-pronged approach to the development of the Covid-19 focused Tourism CAP, namely the conducting of an assessment of the current tourism context and development scenarios in view of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the adjusting of priorities and focus on the proposals contained in the SADC Tourism Programme.

The presentation also reiterated the need to implement consistent Standard Operating Protocols across the region and establish regional travel corridors with a focus on TFCAs in order to fast-track recovery of the tourism sector in the region. Equal emphasis was placed on the fact recovery of the region's tourism sector was also dependent on simplifying visa and immigration procedures.

Seriously concern was also expressed on the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism sector was. According to the UNWTO for instance, the world lost about 850 million to 1.1 billion from international tourists and US\$910 billion to US\$1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism. Furthermore, about 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs were at risk as a result of the pandemic.

Turning to the SADC Region, it was highlighted that the region had lost an estimated 2 to 4.5 million from tourism-related jobs and US\$17.5 to US\$40 billion in Gross Domestic Product.

Regarding international approaches to recovery by the tourism sector, the UNWTO recommends a strategy that involves technical assistance packages premised on economic recovery, marketing and promotion and strengthening institutions and business reliance. Similarly, the World Bank advocates for practical policy and programme recommendations in three phases, namely, immediate response (during crisis and early recovery), short term recovery (when crisis subsides) and medium-term recovery (building resilience).

In conclusion it was emphasised that possible implications for SADC opening approach would include the following:

- i. Stage 1: Trial phase – opening up and adopting protocols and safety measures;
- ii. Stage 2: early and advanced opening stages: starting with domestic and regional markets and expanding to key source markets and then onto emerging markets; and
- iii. Stage 3: Final opening and commence implementation of the SADC Tourism Programme fully.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Based on the above deliberations, the Committee resolved to recommend to the Plenary Assembly as follows:

- i. **ENCOURAGES** SADC Members States to support the implementation of the SADC Unified Visa to facilitate movement of tourists across the region;
- ii. **CALLS** on SADC Parliaments and parliamentarians to advocate for COVID relief funds and increased budgetary allocation to the tourism sector in order to accelerate recovery of the sector;
- iii. **URGES** SADC Member States to streamline visa and immigration procedures to ensure smooth movement of tourists;
- iv. **IMPLORES** SADC Members States to develop and implement domestic and regional tourism marketing strategies;
- v. **URGES** SADC Member States to adopt consistent standard operating protocols and safety measures in light of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- vi. **ENCOURAGES** Member States to fast-track COVID-19 vaccinations in order to gain back travel confidence of tourists;
- vii. **URGES** Members States to support and harness domestic tourism; and
- viii. **ENCOURAGES** Member States to support full implementation of the SADC Tourism Programme.

Hon. Andre Leon Tumba
CHAIRPERSON

Ms Sharon Nyirongo
COMMITTEE SECRETARY