



Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations

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MEDIA RELEASE

Tourism needs reliable indications of a way forward, or risks total collapse

“Tourism is everyone’s business”: for years, the Namibian tourism sector has lived by and promoted this notion, convinced that this sector is a key contributor to the Namibian economy and the country’s employment capacity. Its influence reaches far beyond hotels and accommodation, restaurants, tour and activity operations, car rental, conservation hunting, aviation and entertainment, as it creates valuable livelihoods for communities in the most remote corners of our beautiful country.

The Corona lockdown measures that hit the world in early 2020 has caused devastation within the global tourism sector, and here in Namibia, the impact has been catastrophic. Since the travel ban, income has been wiped out, not only for large companies, but also for the individual free lance operator, tour guide and street vending souvenir artist.

While FENATA eagerly engaged with government from the start to seek ways to curb the severe impact of the implemented measures on tourism and welcomed specific efforts in the stimulus package that targeted tourism, we soon had to realize that the financial situation in Namibia and the duration of the global lockdowns would make it impossible to expect financial bailout from government. As early as March, FENATA therefore actively engaged with its line Ministry and relevant authorities to look at possibilities of a tourism recovery, while actively drafting special operating procedures to help prepare the tourism sector for the new demands for safe working environments, resulting in the NTB Tourism toolkit.

The tourism sector understood government’s prompt reaction in March to close borders and call for a national lock-down, to contain the spread of the virus and allow Namibia as a whole to prepare for the onset of the virus-spread through our country. FENATA efforts were aimed at demonstrating the tourism sector’s commitment and responsibility to the nation’s health and safety, and thus aimed towards extensive risk mitigation in terms of preventing the spread of the virus.

From the initial status of shell-shock in March and April, the tourism sector however soon realized that something would need to be done to prevent total paralysis and following active engagement and sharing of facts and status quo, FENATA was delighted to see government’s willingness to open up tourism for a trial period from mid-July, in the hope that careful deliberation and collaboration in risk mitigation would prove that Namibia would be ready to provide a safe enough environment in which to operate.

We are still convinced that Namibia has what it takes to be the “Destination of Choice” post covid, - as the type of tourism our country offers is focussed on wide open spaces, freedom, isolation into the wild and all of this away from congested, over-populated environments. The tourism industry in Namibia has committed itself to new protocols of hygiene and safety and has invested the little available funds remaining to set up for the new norms in tourism and travel. In the global reality of threats and doom, we are convinced that risk optimization is key to ensure that Namibia makes use of carefully considered opportunities to recover some of

the losses in tourism and enable Namibia to attract some of the foreign income earnings so desperately needed for our frail economy.

The delay in committing to a date and pronouncing an “all-of-government” support for a gradual and carefully considered tourism recovery, is currently suffocating the last bit of hope in our industry.

The last few days have seen another massive wave of cancellations of tours for August and September, (traditionally the tourism high season) and partners in transport and aviation that had indicated eagerness to resume connections to Namibia have now also retracted offers and delayed their return until October.

The Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations, through the active and intense support and submission from its members and key stakeholders in tourism, all of whom have invested heavily into the tourism infrastructure in Namibia, - has done all it could to impress upon the leadership the necessity of allowing a careful resumption of operations to ensure the survival of the sector.

The current silence and inertia are suffocating the sector! Without a clear pronouncement and commitment to a date for resumption of travel, that would allow for the industry to regain hope and start planning, tourism in Namibia is doomed to collapse!

FENATA and its Executive urges government to demonstrate political will and understanding of the important economic impact tourism has on Namibia. Just as tourism is committed to risk mitigation and safety, we need government’s commitment and support to allow us to resume operations to rescue not only our sector, but the Namibian economy as a whole.

FENATA Executive
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