

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

NOTICE 696 OF 2021

TOURISM ACT, 2014 (ACT NO: 3 OF 2014)

**NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR THE SAFE OPERATIONS OF TOURISM SECTOR
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 AND BEYOND**

I, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Tourism, hereby under section 7(1) of the Tourism Act, 2014 (Act No. 3 of 2014), hereby publish the norms and standards for the safe operations of the tourism sector in the context of COVID-19 and other related pandemics, in the Schedule hereto.



**LN Sisulu, MP
MINISTER OF TOURISM**

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**TOURISM ACT, 2014 (ACT NO: 3 OF 2014)****NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR THE SAFE OPERATIONS OF TOURISM SECTOR IN THE
CONTEXT OF COVID-19 AND OTHER RELATED PANDEMICS****SCHEDULE****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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1. DEFINITIONS

In these norms and standards, a word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Tourism Act, 2014 (Act No. 3 of 2014) has the meaning so assigned, and unless the context indicates otherwise— "Act" means the Tourism Act, 2014 (Act No. 3 of 2014);

"Minister" means Minister of Tourism.

"Places of attraction" include, but are not limited to theme parks, amusement parks, water parks, family entertainment centres, nature and game reserves, national parks, botanical gardens, zoos, aquaria, sanctuaries and other entertainment and cultural attractions.

2. ACRONYMS

NDP — National Development Plan

NTSS — National Tourism Sector Strategy

OECD South Africa Economic Survey 2020 — Organization for Economic Cooperation Development

PPE — protective personal equipment

UNWTO — United Nations World Tourism Organisation

WEF - World Economic Forum

WHO — World Health Organisation

POPI - Protection of Personal Information

SMS — Short Message Service

3. PURPOSE

- (1) The purpose of these norms and standards is to provide minimum universal practices which the tourism sector must abide by to prevent the spread of COVID-19 other related pandemics.
- (2) The norms and standards will also provide uniformity across the destination in view of tools that have been compiled by industry associations and some sub-national entities.

4. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 The White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism, 1996, currently under review, outlines the vision and policy standpoint from which tourism is to be pursued in South Africa. Among others, it identifies safeguarding the safety and security of tourists as a key policy to be pursued

to ignite tourism growth. Globally, the WEF highlights safety as one of the bases for destination competitiveness and assesses countries in the Travel and Tourism Index against safety and security, health and hygiene under its *Enabling Environment criteria*. The safety imperative is also critical as an input into The Visitor Experience, a key pillar of the country's NTSS (2016-2026).

- 4.2 Looking at the current global pandemic COVID-19 and its implications for human interaction, the inclusion of disease in a broad view of visitor safety becomes essential. Concerns related to safety and health have increased in significance as a result of the COVID-19 and other related pandemics, owing to its contagious nature, and approaches to tourism in the future are to be informed by this reality. The experience of the relatively less widespread Ebola Epidemic in 2014/2015, which resulted in a decline in Africa arrivals averaging 6% with double digit declines in some regions, further demonstrated the significance of traveller confidence in tourist decision making about destinations to visit. Personal safety and security, relating to both the tangible and intangible elements influence not only the visitor experience but the propensity for people to finalise their travel plans. Re-igniting demand therefore, as identified in the Tourism Recovery Plan approved by Cabinet on 21 April 2021, is a major component in influencing the revival of the tourism economy.

Norms and Standards

- 4.3 The Act provides for the development of norms and standards for the tourism sector. Section 7(1) (a) of the Act empowers the Minister to determine norms and standards for the practice of responsible tourism and in order to promote the objects of the Act, among other criteria.
- 4.4 In developing norms and standards for the safe operation of the tourism sector, the objective is to facilitate consensus on minimum universal practices which the sector overall will abide by to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The policy response assumes that it will be some time before the pandemic subsides or until a widely accessible vaccine or other appropriate scientific solution is available.
- 4.5 The determined health measures will also provide assurance to potential visitors and all stakeholders that South Africa's tourism products and services are equipped to operate safely whilst the COVID-19 and other related pandemics persists guided by globally accepted principles. They will therefore promote traveller confidence in support of resurgent demand.

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- 4.6 The norms and standards will also provide uniformity across the destination in view of tools that have been compiled by industry associations and some subnational entities. In general, the various tools incorporate the three key measures of enhanced hygiene, social distancing and the use of PPE as interventions to limit the potential for transmission of the virus. The same broad areas of intervention will form the basis of the norms and standards in keeping with epidemiological direction and as sanctioned by the WHO and local health authorities.

Towards Reinstating Tourism Operations

- 4.7 COVID-19 resulted in unprecedented travel restrictions on business operations across the globe and consequently a shutdown of the tourism economy. As countries are learning to coexist with the virus, numerous safety protocols have been developed to guide the safe opening of the global economy. The Travel and Tourism Sector at a global level has also published safety protocols for the safe reopening of the sector. Similarly, the Tourism Private Sector in South Africa also released its own standard protocols for the sector's operation during the pandemic.
- 4.8 The development of the various safety standard protocols demonstrates the seriousness with which stakeholders' approach COVID-19 and other related pandemics and the readiness to adjust operations to enable continued economic activity without jeopardising the interests of preventing the further spread of the virus. The proposed norms and standards further draw from international guidelines within the travel and tourism sector including global and local health authorities as well as actions taken by governments to ensure safe reopening.

Policy Context

- 4.9 Tourism development has been pursued in South Africa as a policy tool to respond to the main economic challenge of inclusive growth and the need to reduce unemployment. The sector sustains and has the potential to create more jobs owing to its labour-intensive character. In addition, tourism attracts foreign exchange earnings for the country.
- 4.10 The policy aims of the norms and standards are to—
- (a) reinstate tourism's continued significance in the government's economic development plans. Building from the inclusion of tourism in successive iterations of the New Growth Path economic plans and the NDP (2030), the recovery of tourism is a critical component of the country's economic recovery from the COVID-

19 Pandemic. The OECD South Africa Economic Survey 2020 reinforces the position of tourism as a lever for sustainable and inclusive growth;

- (b) Include COVID-19 and other related pandemics as an emerging barrier to tourism. The removal of barriers to travel is an established principle in the National Tourism Sector Strategy. Barriers have a negative influence on travel decisions and addressing them is an integral part of the tourism growth strategy. Once in operation, the standards will serve as a basis, subject to adaptation, for responding to other related barriers that may emerge in the future; and
- (c) provide policy certainty that the basics are in place to manage the health risk. Tourism is a highly competitive sector globally with hundreds of destinations at the disposal of the potential traveller. Managing the COVID-19 and other related pandemics health risk is currently a key factor in visitor expectations and the existence of specified universal measures for the destination will position South Africa as equipped for a safe travel experience.

- 4.11 Consistency in the application of the measures throughout the value chain will be essential to ensure that the objectives of the norms and standards are achieved. This will be realised through stakeholder commitment.

United Nations World Tourism Organisation's Guidelines

- 4.12 Various international organisations have developed technical work in relation to the safe opening of the global economy. The UNWTO, the global authority in travel and tourism, also generated technical work incorporating air travel, arrival at the border, hospitality establishments and attractions. The UNWTO proposed the following cross-cutting measures for the private sector.

- (a) The implementation of global and harmonised health, safety and hygiene protocols;
- (b) training of personnel in safety and security protocols as well as safe service delivery;
- (c) cleaning of all surfaces frequently, using products and disinfectants that meet requirements and with special attention to high touch surfaces;
- (d) setting up plans in the event a guest or employee falls sick on site;

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- (e) creating internal COVID-19 and other related pandemics coordination committees to follow-up on implementation and execution of protocols and service delivery;
- (f) redesigning processes towards more digital touchless operations in all possible touchpoints;
- (g) maintaining records of statistical information for tourism planning and management in full coordination with local and national tourism statistical authorities; and
- (h) promoting social dialogue and work to ensure the health and wellbeing of workers and the work environment.

Factors Guiding the Reopening of the Sector

- 4.13 In light of the cases and the mortality rate in South Africa, the reopening of the tourism sector is guided principally by epidemiological evidence taking into consideration the stabilisation of the rate of infection. Amongst other things, the following factors will inform decision making on the timing and manner of operation of tourism and its subsectors:
- (a) Decline in the number of COVID-19 and other related pandemics infections;
 - (b) health and safety of workers;
 - (c) plan of action in case of infection amongst guests or staff;
 - (d) collaboration between local authorities and the tourism sector to ensure information sharing;
 - (e) training of staff in the establishments on COVID-19 and other related pandemics;
 - (f) management of staff in relation to numbers in the work places;
 - (g) provision of clear information to guests regarding health measures;
 - (h) infection prevention and control measures; and
 - (i) physical distancing and hygiene.

Principles Guiding Safe and Seamless Travel and Reopening of the Sector

- 4.14 The process of reopening the tourism sector in a safe and seamless manner places the traveller at the centre of every measure. The following principles are outlined by the UNWTO:
- (a) Non-discrimination of travellers;
 - (b) clear communication on health protocols and regulations;
 - (c) SMS to visitors upon arrival informing them of rules and regulations in place;
 - (d) data sharing on the basis of consent;
 - (e) physical distancing rules;
 - (f) advance contactless check-in;
 - (g) downloading tracking app;
 - (h) contactless payment and check-in; and
 - (i) e-tickets and e-bookings for visiting attractions and entertainment.

5. APPLICATION OF THE NORMS AND STANDARDS

These norms and standards are to apply in the tourism sector .

6. NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR TOURISM ESTABLISHMENTS

Operational Readiness

A person in charge of the tourism establishment must—

- (a) develop a prevention plan inclusive of a cleaning and disinfection plan;
- (b) have the required staff levels for operations;
- (c) have integrating technologies to enable automation such as contactless payment;
- (d) ensure compliance with physical distancing protocols and use markings to clearly communicate to guests and staff;
- (e) implement safety checks for staff and guests entering the establishment and ensure that staff to stay at home when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms;

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- (f) designate a health and safety officer and clarify their roles and responsibilities;
- (g) develop staff and guest medical declaration and travel status form which is POPI compliant; and
- (h) develop standard procedures for staff and guests with COVID-19 and other related pandemics symptoms.

Self Preparedness

A person in charge of the tourism establishment must—

- (a) train staff on COVID-19 and other related pandemics in line with the latest health advice from the health authorities and WHO;
- (b) implement staff protocols, code of conduct and guidelines for staff operations;
- (c) retrain staff on infection control, wearing of protective gear, hygiene and physical distancing; and
- (d) constantly monitor the wellbeing of staff to ensure the implementation of guidelines by health authorities.

Safe Experience

A person in charge of the tourism establishment must—

- (a) implement enhanced disinfection and cleaning practices;
- (b) implement and communicate safety processes for guests including physical distancing;
- (c) enhance food safety and hygiene in dining areas and restaurants; and
- (d) implement enhanced cleaning, disinfection and physical distancing for events.

Building Trust and Confidence

A person in charge of the tourism establishment must—

- (a) ensure clear and simple communication with customers on safety and hygiene protocols both digitally and physically;
- (b) implement clear signage throughout the establishment to inform guests of cleaning protocols and physical distancing; and

- (c) provide guidelines in line with the advice of health authorities to guests, which include wearing of face masks, hand hygiene and physical distancing.

7. NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR PLACES OF ATTRACTIONS

Operational and Staff Preparedness

A person in charge of the tourism place of attraction must—

- (a) develop a prevention plan for the attraction business;
- (b) implement protocols and guidelines for staff, including health checks;
- (c) integrate technologies to enable automation such as contactless touchpoints and payments, where possible;
- (d) introduce a COVID-19 and other related pandemics contingency plan, should a new case emerge;
- (e) train staff to ensure the execution of operational plans; and
- (f) monitor the wellbeing of the employees and encourage them to follow the latest advice of health authorities.

Safe Attractions Experience

A person in charge of the tourism place of attraction must—

- (a) implement processes focused on sanitation, disinfection and deep cleaning;
- (b) reduce the capacity of venues to a limit appropriate to allow for social distancing;
- (c) implement customer processes to minimise physical contact, such as allowing extra time for guests to enter attractions and increasing the number of performances; and
- (d) provide unique guidance for specific attractions.

Rebuilding Trust and Confidence

A person in charge of the tourism place attraction must—

- (a) communicate clearly to customers regarding new health hygiene protocols;
- (b) communicate health guidelines to guests ahead of a possible trip, and where possible, upon arrival at an attraction; and
- (c) ensure that venues set up medical service points, if possible, and ensure that personnel can deal with COVID-19 and other related pandemics cases.

8. **NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR EVENTS, WEDDINGS, EXHIBITIONS, MEETINGS AND CONVENTION CENTRES**

Operational and staff preparedness

A person in charge of an event, meeting or convention centre must—

- (a) develop a prevention plan especially for infection prevention, cleaning and disinfection;
- (b) implement guidelines for staff safety and health including health checks and introduce a stay-at-home policy in case of any member of staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and other related pandemics;
- (c) communicate physical distancing guidelines for queues and mark surfaces clearly, where possible;
- (d) ensure the provision of PPEs to staff such as face masks and gloves, depending on the risk-based approach;
- (e) train staff to enable the execution of safety plans; and
- (f) consider the utilisation of digital technology such as digital invitations.

Safe experience

A person in charge of an event, meeting or convention centre must—

- (a) implement enhanced sanitation, disinfection, and deep cleaning;
- (b) implement physical distancing measures with regard to seating distribution, booths, aisles and gathering size in line with government guidelines;
- (c) reduce the capacity of venues to a limit appropriate to allow for social distancing and as required by local regulations;
- (d) implement customer processes including participant information, to ensure physical distancing; and
- (e) implement measures to ensure food safety and hygiene.

Building confidence

A person in charge of an event, meeting or convention centre must—

- (a) clearly communicate safety protocols and guidelines to attendees of a conference or meeting both digitally and at the venue;
- (b) implement clear signage to inform participants of safety measures to follow, throughout the venues;
- (c) consider setting up a medical service point and ensure that staff can deal with COVID-19 and other related cases; and
- (d) promote the use of contact tracing apps, if necessary, and permitted by law.

9. NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Staff and hosts preparedness

A person in charge of a short-term rental establishment must—

- (a) train the host and staff on the health and safety protocols, in line with latest local and international health guidelines;
- (b) outline to staff and the host cleaning, infection control and disinfection processes on safety measures, including frequent sanitising and hand washing;

- (c) encourage the use of electronic payment methods on check-in and out, where possible; and
- (d) develop an action plan outlining the process of handling COVID-19 and other related pandemics cases.

Safe Experience

A person in charge of a short-term rental establishment must—

- (a) adopt enhanced frequent cleaning, sanitisation and disinfecting measures;
- (b) communicate health and safety protocols to guests prior to arrival;
- (c) communicate rules on physical distancing, wearing of face masks and sanitising; and
- (d) communicate to guests the completion of the health declaration forms and relevant contact information, in advance.

10. NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS**Staff and hosts preparedness**

A person in charge of an accommodation must—

- (a) train the host and staff on the health and safety protocols, in line with latest local and international health guidelines;
- (b) outline to staff and the host cleaning, infection control and disinfection processes on safety measures, including frequent sanitising and hand washing;
- (c) encourage the use of electronic payment methods on check-in and out, where possible; and
- (d) develop an action plan outlining the process of handling COVID-19 and other related Pandemics cases.

Safe Experience

A person in charge of an accommodation must—

- (a) adopt enhanced frequent cleaning, sanitisation and disinfecting measures;
- (b) communicate health and safety protocols to guests prior to arrival;
- (c) communicate rules on physical distancing, wearing of face masks and sanitising; and
- (d) communicate to guests the completion of the health declaration forms and relevant contact information, in advance.

11. NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR FOOD SERVICES

Operational and Staff Preparedness

A person in charge of food services must—

- (a) develop a prevention plan for the attraction business;
- (b) implement protocols and guidelines for staff, including health checks;
- (c) integrate technologies to enable automation such as contactless touchpoints and payments, where possible;
- (d) introduce a COVID-19 and other related pandemics contingency plan, should a new case emerge;
- (e) train staff to ensure the execution of operational plans; and
- (f) monitor the wellbeing of the employees and encourage them to follow the latest advice of health authorities.

Safe experience

A person in charge of food services must—

- (a) implement enhanced sanitation, disinfection, and deep cleaning;
- (b) implement physical distancing measures with regard to seating distribution, booths, aisles and gathering size in line with government
- (c) guidelines;

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- (d) reduce the capacity of venues to a limit appropriate to allow for social distancing and as required by local regulations;
- (e) implement customer processes including participant information, to ensure physical distancing; and
- (f) implement measures to ensure food safety and hygiene.

12. NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR TOUR OPERATORS

Operational Readiness

A person in charge of tour operation must—

- (a) develop a prevention plan inclusive of a cleaning and disinfection plan;
- (b) have the required staff levels to restart operations;
- (c) have integrating technologies to enable automation such as contactless payment, where possible;
- (d) ensure compliance with physical distancing protocols, and where possible, use markings clearly to communicate to guests and staff; and
- (e) implement safety checks for staff and guests entering the establishment and ensure that staff to stay at home when experiencing COVID-19 and other related pandemics symptoms.
- (f) designate a health and safety officer and clarify their roles and responsibilities.
- (g) develop staff and guest medical declaration and travel status form which is POPI compliant.
- (h) develop standard procedures for staff and guests with COVID-19 and other pandemics symptoms.

distancing.

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Self Preparedness

A person in charge of tour operation must—

- (a) train staff on COVID-19 and other related pandemics in line with the latest health advice from the health authorities and WHO;
- (b) implement staff protocols, code of conduct and guidelines for staff operations;
- (c) retrain staff on infection control, wearing of protective gear, hygiene and physical distancing; and
- (d) constantly monitor the wellbeing of staff to ensure the implementation of guidelines by health authorities.

Safe Experience

A person in charge of tour operation must—

- (a) implement enhanced disinfection and cleaning practices;
- (b) implement and communicate safety processes for guests including physical distancing; and
- (c) implement enhanced cleaning, disinfection and physical distancing for events.

Building Trust and Confidence

A person in charge of tour operation must—

- (a) ensure clear and simple communication with customers on safety and hygiene protocols both digitally and physically;
- (b) implement clear signage throughout the establishment to inform guests of cleaning protocols and physical distancing; and
- (c) provide guidelines in line with the advice of health authorities to guests, which include wearing of face masks, hand hygiene and physical

13. NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR CASINOS**Operational and staff preparedness**

A person in charge of a casino must—

- (a) develop a prevention plan especially for infection prevention, cleaning and disinfection;
- (b) implement guidelines for staff safety and health including health checks and introduce a stay-at-home policy in case of any member of staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and other related pandemics;
- (c) communicate physical distancing guidelines for queues and mark surfaces clearly, where possible;
- (d) ensure the provision of PPEs to staff such as face masks and gloves, depending on the risk-based approach;
- (e) train staff to enable the execution of safety plans; and
- (f) consider the utilisation of digital technology such as digital invitations.

Safe experience

A person in charge of a casino must—

- (a) implement enhanced sanitation, disinfection, and deep cleaning;
- (b) implement physical distancing measures with regard to seating distribution, booths, aisles and gathering size in line with government guidelines;
- (c) reduce the capacity of venues to a limit appropriate to allow for social distancing and as required by local regulations;
- (d) implement customer processes including participant information, to ensure physical distancing.

Building confidence

A person in charge of a casino must—

- (a) clearly communicate safety protocols and guidelines to attendees of a conference or meeting both digitally and at the venue;
- (b) implement clear signage to inform participants of safety measures to follow, throughout the venues;
- (c) consider setting up a medical service point and ensure that staff can deal with COVID-19 and other related pandemics cases; and
- (d) promote the use of contact tracing apps, if necessary, and permitted by law.

14. CURIO SHOPS

Operational and Staff Preparedness

A person in charge of a curio shop must—

- (a) implement protocols and guidelines for staff, including health checks;
- (b) integrate technologies to enable automation such as contactless touchpoints and payments, where possible;
- (c) introduce a COVID-19 and other related pandemics contingency plan, should a new case emerge;
- (d) train staff to ensure the execution of operational plans; and
- (e) monitor the wellbeing of the employees and encourage them to follow the latest advice of health authorities.

Safe Attractions Experience

A person in charge of a curio shop must—

- (a) implement processes focused on sanitation, disinfection and deep cleaning;
- (b) reduce the capacity of the curios shop to a limit appropriate to allow for social and
- (c) implement customer processes to minimise physical contact, such as allowing extra time for customers to enter the curio shop.

Rebuilding Trust and Confidence

A person in charge of a curio shop must—

- (a) communicate clearly to customers regarding new health hygiene protocols; and
- (b) communicate health guidelines to customers ahead of a possible trip, and where possible, upon arrival at a curio shop.