

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM



STATEMENT
by Hon. Pohamba Shifeta, MP
Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
LAUNCH OF THE 2019 TOURISM STATISTICS REPORT**

31 July 2020

Windhoek, Namibia

Director of ceremonies

Representatives from the tourism sector

Members of NGOs, and agencies represented

Representatives from line Ministries and support agencies

Invited guests

Esteemed members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to you all!

It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to be with you all today to launch the annual tourist statistical report of 2019.

As you may know one of the primary functions of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is the annual production of tourism statistics which includes information on foreign arrivals to Namibia. Tourism statistics help us to understand the contribution of the sector to the economy. The arrival statistics are an important indicator of tourism growth and development.

Tourism statistics are furthermore an essential aid for informed decision-making and future planning to ensure tourism sustainability and the competitive growth of the Namibian tourism sector. Without accurate and reliable statistics, it is nearly impossible to navigate our journey towards the achievement of our long-term development goals as set out in Vision 2030 and NDPs.

Tourism is a pillar of the Namibian economy. The 2019 tourist statistical report shows that the tourism sector was still healthy and showing slight growth. It shows that the foreign arrivals increased by 1.3% from 2018 to 2019 and tourist figures

increased by 2.5% for the same period. It is notable that a record of One million six hundred eighty-one thousand, three hundred and thirty-six (1,681,336) foreign tourists visited Namibia in 2019.

The tourist figures indicate that visitors from Angola, South Africa, Zambia, Germany, France and United Kingdom dominated the tourist arrivals to Namibia in 2019. The period September – December accounted for the most arrivals with 34.4% of all tourists traveling to Namibia in this period.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Until this year, the tourism sector has shown remarkable resilience to economic recession and crises by continuing to grow its contribution to the economy year after year. The increase in tourist arrivals has helped the tourism sector to contribute massively to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). We have seen increasing numbers of tourism-based enterprises being established in recent years and Namibia has truly emerged as a tourism destination of choice for people from around the world.

The increase in tourist arrivals has further triggered much needed growth in the sector including investment in infrastructure and human resource development and jobs opportunities across its wide value chain. As we know, tourism touches every aspect of our society and its impact is felt even in the remotest areas of our country.

Indeed, the continued success of the tourism sector has been a heartening story of success, both for Government and the private sector. Yet this success we have carefully nurtured over the years since independence is now at risk of being reversed. The unprecedented challenges brought by COVID-19 have ravaged the

global tourism sector and Namibia has not been spared. Much of what we have gained over the past 30 years has become lost in just over 4 months.

I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the industry and inform the general public at large that the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is doing its utmost to revive the sector and to ensure that it recovers and emerges stronger after the shocks that have been caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is becoming clearer every day that Covid-19 is here to stay for the foreseeable future and we need to see how best we can re-establish the tourism sector without jeopardizing public health in the context of the “new normal”. This is a difficult balancing act that is currently confronting many countries globally and we are no exception. As the Ministry responsible for tourism, we are however committed to doing everything in our powers to get the sector back on track.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current situation does allow us to introspect on the sector and to engage on how to make it more fit for the future. Now is the time for difficult questions - is the product we are offering the right one, should we focus on targeted markets, what about domestic and regional tourism, do we need to move away from targeting meetings, workshops and conferences?

There is a need for us to re-think our approach and to think ahead if we are to be resilient and ride the wave of challenges that are now with us. There is a need for both government and the private sector to realign our efforts to ensure that Namibia regains its position as a tourism destination of choice.

From the government perspective, we fully recognize the importance of tourism as one of the pillars of our economy. The tourism contribution to the gross domestic product has to be nurtured and expanded. As the Ministry, we will continue to listen

to the views of the public and private sector as we move to overcome the unprecedented challenges we are facing. Let us keep in mind that “tourism is everybody’s business”, therefore let us work together in a whole of government and whole of society approach. Sharing Namibia with the world is a process that requires careful and meaningful public and private partnership, in terms of developing quality products, creating awareness and providing excellent customer care.

Program Director, Ladies and gentleman

We should not lose sight of the fact that there are still underdeveloped opportunities in the tourism sector. Around the world people are increasingly searching for authentic experiences, whereby Namibia is well positioned to benefit from its diversity of products such as wide open spaces, natural beauty, unique cultures and heritage. I am sure that international tourists will again be attracted to the unique experiences we have to offer.

By now, you have learnt from H. E. President Hage Geingob’s announcement on the tourism revival initiative which commenced on the 3rd August 2020, subject to the agreed and approved protocols. This initiative is a way of balancing two important aspects in our life, the health and the economy. Most importantly to save jobs of more than 120 000 jobs in the industry.

My sincere thanks to our partner Ministry in the process of developing the tourism statistics report, that is the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security as custodian of the arrival/ departure forms for allowing the MEFT to make use of the forms to generate this report. The current situation highlights the need for real-time data and tourist arrival statistics and we continue to work with all stakeholders to achieve this.

I would like to thank the our staff members who were involved in the production of these statistics at least before August this. Keep it up!!

With these few remarks, ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to launch the 2019 Tourist Statistics Report.

I thank you.