



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

Thursday, 13 JUNE 2024

**RESPONSE BY HON. POHAMBAMBA SHIFETA,
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM
TO QUESTIONS NO. 47(05/06/24) RAISED
BY HON. DIEDERIK VRIES (PDM)**

Honorable Speaker,

I hereby wish to respond to the questions raised by Honorable Diederik VRIES, a member of the PDM Party directed to the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism questions on issues relating to a Cabinet Decision (8th/21.05.24/002) for Namibia to implement visa entry requirements for countries that have not reciprocated to Namibia's gesture on visa exemption. and directed the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security to work on necessary modalities to ensure the modalities are in place for the implementation of this cabinet decision.

Honorable Speaker,

I now reply to the specific questions raised by Hon. Diederik VRIES as follows:

Question 1: How the visa requirements will negatively impact the tourism sector in our country?

Answer:

Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) compiles on an annual basis, tourist arrival statistics. I am confident to report that the international visitors and tourist arrival numbers have been on a recovery pattern and growth trajectory as from 2020 to date (post COVID-19). The numbers for 2023 are even better when it will be announced soon. The Country notes that this significance recovery in numbers and growing of new source markets is a positive trend towards increasing income and revenue generated, employment creation, etc in the tourism industry.

The Tourist Satellite Account Report of 2022, informs that the tourism industry directly contributes N\$14.3 billion to the national economy (GDP) and have create over Fifty-Eight Thousand jobs in 2022.

Visa entry requirements in principle are not new to Namibia and many other countries, as we all know it. I would like to clarify that the entry visa requirements to be implemented as per Cabinet decision is only directed to 31 Countries and

only for the reason that these specific countries did not reciprocate to Namibia's good gesture to visa exemptions.

Honourable Speaker,

We do not expect significant or an overall decrease of tourists' arrival numbers into the country as a result of the introduction of entry visa requirements. In fact, all these 31 countries are eligible for visa upon arrival regime at our international Airports and entry points. In this sense, we are engaging with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security to ensure increased capacity in terms of human resources and point of sale systems at the International Airport to fast track the issuance of visas upon arrival and mitigate the potential delays in the process.

Furthermore, the effective date for the implementation is yet to be announced (by Cabinet). However, the proposal is that it be implemented only from October 2024 onwards, which is almost to the end of the current tourism season, especially for Europe Summer holidays but equally not to disturb the current arrival patterns (travel) of tourists who have already booked for their vacations for 2024 tourism season.

I am informed that stakeholders in the private sector and responsible Ministries are engaged to look at the fees that will be applicable. Further details will be made known when this consultative process has been concluded.

Question 2: How the visa requirements will impact the Namibian economy?

Answer

I can state that we do not foresee major reduction in economic activities in the tourism sector as a result of the introduction of entry visa requirements for the 31 Countries. However, it is crucial to weigh these potential impacts in decline in arrival numbers if it happens, particularly from key markets such as Germany, and the United States, against the intended policy benefits to ensure sustainable tourism growth and economic stability.

The main issue is for Namibia to improve the speed at which we process and approve the visas and visas upon arrival applications and improvements in the customer services value chain starting from the airports, transfers, hotels, restaurants, and through the entire journey of the visitor in Namibia.

Question 3: How the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism together with Government mitigate the negative impacts on the tourism sector and on the Namibian Economy?

Answer

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Namibia Tourism Board and private sector will continue to explore better strategies to reduce the impact by continuously engaging the trade, source markets agents and embassies to bring to the understanding of the introduction of the visa entry requirements and the good intention of the country to limit the broad economic impact to Namibia. Additionally, MEFT will continue to monitor the situation after the implementation (beyond October 2024 or when the decision is enforced) and adopt appropriate mitigating and responsible strategies as the situation unravels itself.

Question 4: How the news of new visa requirement was received by the stakeholders in the tourism sector?

Answer

The organized industry has raised concerns and had an audience with the Ministries, Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security on these matters. The response from the industry could be described as mixed reactions. The concerns are with regard to the possible delays in the processing of visa upon arrival and cost or fees to be charged to tourists, amongst others. To this end, the Stakeholders are engaged to determine the fees to be charged and the final fees will be announced accordingly after approval by Cabinet. This will emanate through the relevant structures and a due consultative process.

**Honorable Speaker
Honorable members**

I thank you for your kind attention.