

For Immediate Release

TBCSA Media Update on Travel Facilitation Concerns

FESTIVE SEASON INTERVENTION PLAN MOOTED TO EASE AIRPORT CONGESTION

Dated Tuesday, 29 November, 2016

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The aim of this statement is to update journalists and their audiences on the latest developments regarding the Tourism Business Council of South Africa's (TBCSA) efforts to resolve the challenges facing the travel and tourism industry as a result of the implementation of the Amended Immigration Regulations. The specific challenges relate to the unintended consequences of biometric data capturing for international visitors into the country, which has led to congestion and delays at our international airports; as well as the continued requirement of the Unabridged Birth Certificates (UBCs) for minors under the age of 18 travelling into our country.

The Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) is pleased to hear that the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has considered its recommendations to ease traffic flow and the level of congestion at the country's international airports in the upcoming festive season.

Furthermore, the Council is encouraged by Government's willingness to engage further, through the Immigrations Advisory Board (IAB), on the redrafting of regulations relating to travel facilitation for minors under the age of 18.

The latest update on TBCSA's efforts to resolve the persisting challenges facing the travel and tourism industry as a result of the implementation of the Amended Immigration Regulations is that DHA has engaged the National Department of Tourism (NDT) and Airports Company of South Africa (ACSA) on the current situation at the airports. TBCSA has learned of Government's intention to implement a *Festive Season Intervention Plan* that will be geared towards easing the level of congestion and delays at immigration counters – especially at OR Tambo International Airport and Cape Town International Airport.

TBCSA CEO, Mmatšatši Ramawela says although the full details of this plan are yet to be announced, the Council welcomes Government's efforts and stands ready to provide additional logistical support where required. "We don't have the full details of how this plan will unfold, however we are ready to support Government as best as we can. We are keen to hear the details of the plan, particularly the extent to which it will be implemented to coincide with the tourism peak season (which by the way goes beyond the December holiday season) and the specifics around how the plan will be managed".

Earlier this month, TBCSA proposed a number of short to medium-term interventions that could be adopted to address the challenges of airport congestion and delays; and the uncertainty around the requirement for UBCs.

Congestion and delays at airports

On addressing the level of congestion at our airports, TBCSA proposed the introduction of ushers to “assist” tourists at the immigration zones and to help in directing them to the correct immigration queues. In addition, the Council suggested that refreshments such as water and other snacks, as well as information leaflets or brochures pertaining to their visit to South Africa, be made available at the immigration zones.

TBCSA has further proposed that some South African Police Services (SAPS) officers be temporarily deployed to assist departing visitors at the emigration zones and to move the DHA officials to the immigration zones to assist the arriving visitors (as was done during the 2010 Soccer World Cup). This will temporarily increase the staffing capacity in the arrivals section and alleviate the current congestion.

“With regards to the activation of what we in tourism call the ‘soft’ short-term solutions that we have proposed, these are still under consideration. However, at the heart of the matter is the human resource challenge that DHA is facing. In this regard, NDT have informed us that they are in the process of setting up a meeting with DHA and other relevant departments to resolve the issue of resourcing of officials at airports”, Ramawela said.

Travel facilitation for minors

On the second immigrations issue of regulating the movement of minors coming from visa-exempt countries, TBCSA maintains that the establishment of the IAB was a positive development. The Council is particularly encouraged by the IAB’s willingness to engage further on the redrafting of the regulations. Currently, the regulation states that parents ‘*may be required*’ to present UBCs on arrival into South Africa.

TBCSA’s main concern with the current wording of the regulation (which was raised at a recent meeting with the IAB) is that it is vague, open to interpretation and leads to even more confusion on the ground. In response, the IAB asked the TBCSA to suggest alternate wording for the UBC regulations.

Ramawela says the Council is currently canvassing its members for inputs in crafting the alternate wording for regulations on the movement of minors and when ready, they will be duly submitted to the IAB. “We will table the industry’s suggestions in redrafting the regulations to the IAB in the coming weeks – well ahead of the holidays”.

“TBCSA remains committed to working with its members and all other stakeholders to address and resolve the immigration issues that have unintentionally made South Africa less accessible to an even larger number of international tourists. Tourism is a critical sector of our national economy and it is vital that we join hands to address and solve any issues that stand in its way of delivering the possible benefits. This is a sector that if nurtured, can continue its robust contribution to job creation for all our people and inclusive growth of the national economy”, concludes Ramawela.

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Media Contact:

Ms. Kagiso Mosue

Tel: +27(0)12 664 0120

Tel: +27(0) 73 015 4530

Email: comms@tbsa.travel

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ABOUT TBCSA

Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) the umbrella organisation representing is the voice of business in South Africa's travel and tourism industry. We are a member-based organisation, made up of associations as well as leading businesses operating in the Travel and Tourism sector. Our member associations are:

1. AHI : Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut
2. AASA : Airlines Association of Southern Africa
3. AAXO : Association of African Exhibition Organisers
4. ASATA : Association of Southern African Travel Agents
5. BARSAs : Board of Airline Representatives of South Africa
6. EXSA : Exhibition & Event Association of Southern Africa
7. FEDHASA : Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa
8. NAA –SA : National Accommodation Association of South Africa
9. PHASA : Professional Hunters Association of South Africa
10. SAACI : Southern African Association for the Conference Industry
11. SABOA : Southern African Bus Operators' Association
12. SATSA : Southern Africa Tourism Services Association
13. SAVRALA : Southern African Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association
14. SAYTC : South African Youth Travel Confederation