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ENQUIRIES : Dr DJ Kotzé

Dear Responsible Tourism Stakeholder,

PROVISIONAL GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The provisional responsible tourism guidelines were designed during 2001 to provide national guidance and indicators to enable the tourism sector to demonstrate progress towards the principles of responsible tourism embodied in the 1996 White Paper on the “Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa.” The initiative of this department to draft responsible tourism development guidelines with technical assistance from the British Department for International Development has capitalised on the wealth of South African expertise in tourism development through consultation with a wide range of tourism stakeholders, to draft economic, social and environmental guidelines. The provisional guidelines are currently being reviewed locally and by the World Tourism Organisation. We are now very pleased to send you these guidelines.

Responsible tourism is about enabling local communities to enjoy a better quality of life, through increased socio-economic benefits and an improved environment. It is also about providing better holiday experiences for guests and good business opportunities for tourism enterprises.

Around the world, tourism destinations are facing increasing pressures on their natural, cultural and socio-economic environments. Uncontrolled tourism growth, often based on short-term priorities, invariably results in unacceptable impacts that harm society and the environment. This is not acceptable in South Africa. In 1996 the White Paper on

Development & Promotion of Tourism in South Africa was produced with the following **vision:**

“...to develop the tourism sector as a national priority in a sustainable and acceptable manner, so that it will contribute significantly to the improvement of the quality of life of every South Africa. As a lead sector within the national economic strategy, a globally competitive tourism sector will be a major force in the reconstruction and development efforts of the government.”

Responsible Tourism is the key guiding principle for tourism development in South Africa. As was agreed in the 1996 White Paper, *“Responsible tourism is not a luxury for South Africa. It is an absolute necessity if South Africa is to emerge as a successful international competitor”*. The White Paper committed us to pursuing a policy of **Responsible Tourism**. Government, the private sector and communities are working together to practice tourism responsibly. The Responsible Tourism Guidelines identify specific ways in which these commitments can be realised. Each enterprise and association is expected to develop its own agenda for action – prioritising those issues where the particular business or group of businesses can make a significant impact by improving its product, the destination, or the livelihoods and quality of life of local people.

We recognise that a profitable tourism industry is essential to the sustainability of the sector and to the private sector’s ability to spread benefits. Everyone in the industry can do something more to make their product more responsible, and we want to maintain our position as leaders in this area. International trends in the market have moved further towards our responsible tourism agenda since 1996 when the policy was adopted. Our decision to adopt a responsible tourism approach was farsighted five years ago, and today it offers competitive advantage and a fresh approach.

Government and the private sector are committed to work in partnership with the people of South Africa to develop and market tourism experiences that demonstrate our social, economic, environmental, technical, institutional and financial responsibility. We are working together to develop domestic and international tourism, which contributes equitably to the economic and social development of all South Africans, which offers domestic and international visitors a quality experience, and which is environmentally sustainable. These generic national guidelines provide a framework within which

responsible tourism is defined in South Africa and within which benchmark standards can be set for accommodation, transport, cultural and natural heritage and for operators and marketing associations. This approach is necessary to ensure that the tourism sector in South Africa keeps pace with international and national trends towards responsible business practice – a trend that is increasingly evident in our international originating markets and within our domestic market.

Who should use these guidelines?

It is for marketing, trade and professional associations and geographically based groups (e.g. the Wild Coast) to use the guidelines as a basis to develop Codes of Conduct and Codes of Best Practise, and to achieve Responsible Tourism. The Codes will form commitments for association members, which the associations will themselves monitor, and report annually on progress. Provincial Authorities, Metropolitan Councils, banks (like the Development Bank of Southern Africa) and conservation authorities may also choose to develop codes.

Associations and enterprises will establish different strategies for achieving responsibility and develop priorities that enable them to maximise their commercial advantage from responsible business practise. The national generic guidelines offer a very substantial range of choices to entrepreneurs about how to make their businesses more responsible.

- We **do not** expect anyone to use all of the guidelines. We advise that enterprises select those that are most appropriate to their business, destination or sector. Companies may also wish to commit to additional objectives that are appropriate to their sector or enterprise.
- Positively look for commercial advantage in selecting economic, social and environment initiatives that demonstrate commitment within the specific markets operated in.
- Use the monitoring and verification mechanisms outlined in the Responsible Tourism Manual (to be published in May 2002) to report successes and to showcase these to local communities and to clients, both in South Africa and abroad.

How to use the guidelines

1. Enterprises are expected to adopt responsible tourism policies and to demonstrate their development of responsible tourism products and services in the international and domestic marketplaces.
2. Trade associations and groups of enterprises sharing destinations or particular habitats are expected to develop Codes of Conduct or Codes of Practice and to “police” members as they do now for quality. Responsible tourism is an important dimension of quality.
3. Compliance with all relevant national legislation and regulations and the principle that the “polluter pays” is assumed. Responsibility, and the market advantage that goes with it, is about doing more than the minimum.
4. In each of the “triple bottom line” categories of Rio – economic, social and environmental - we have produced national generic guidelines suggesting initiatives that the tourism should take.

Further information

It is envisaged to publish a Responsible Tourism Manual in May, which will contain guidance on Responsible Tourism and the process of achieving it. To register to receive an email version when it is published please contact Aphista Matagboge (amataboge@ozone.pwv.gov.za).

To see examples of how UK tour operators are marketing responsible tourism products go to www.responsibletravel.com

For information on market trends and tour operator initiatives go to www.theinternationalcentreforresponsibletourism.org

The Guidelines

The three inter-related sets of guiding principles, objectives and indicators that constitute the guidelines, are organised around the “triple bottom line” of social, economic and environmental responsibility. The selection of specific objectives, indicators and targets from this “menu of opportunities” will be determined by tourism associations and enterprises themselves, within the context of sub-sector guidelines which will fit within this national framework.

Sub-sector and enterprise guidelines need not be more than two sides of A4, and they should contain roughly equal proportions of economic, social and environmental objectives and targets. Targets should be realistic (requiring achievable significant change) and fit within the national framework to enable this department to report annually on progress towards achieving the national targets.

Market Credibility

However, the credibility of this national strategy will require transparency, the clear communication of particular responsible tourism objectives, and verifiable evidence of success in achieving targets. Responsible marketing is fundamental to the approach. One of the purposes of the guidelines is to avoid unsubstantiated claims of responsibility, of the sort that undermined the concept of ecotourism in the originating markets. They also aim to ensure a transparent framework within which trade buyers and tourists can judge the competing claims of enterprises and associations in the market place. As the operators in the originating markets adopt strong responsible tourism strategies they will need to be able to rely on the credibility of claims made in the destinations by enterprises, communities and government. Enterprises and associations must avoid raising expectations that cannot be realised.

Individual enterprises will need to develop their own policies and make commitments within this national and sub-sectoral framework and report on progress. This is a market led initiative, and enterprises will want to seek to maximise their advantage through non-price competition, creating enterprise level policies which fulfil the requirements of any association of which the enterprise is a member and to develop Unique Selling Propositions (USP) to attract tourists and tour operators.

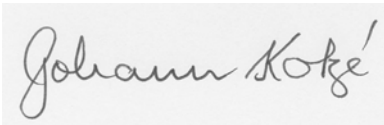
The guidelines contain an enabling framework within which people engaged in the travel and tourism industry can make a difference. Entrepreneurs in the industry can grow their businesses, while providing social and economic benefits to local communities and respecting the environment, creating better places for locals and tourists alike.

- Choose your criteria from the menu
- Identify standards and targets appropriate to your business (e.g. “local” can only be defined by those involved)

- Report progress in a transparent way which can be verified by the trade association
- Use responsible tourism as part of your marketing strategy

A great deal of enthusiasm has been generated by the consultation process that has led to the production of the guidelines – we hope that you will join with us in making South Africa the world's No 1 Responsible Tourism Destination.

Responsible tourism greetings

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey rectangular background. The signature reads "Johann Kotzé" in a cursive script.

Dr D J Kotzé

PROJECT LEADER

DATE: 20 March 2002