



SUBMISSION BY THE

**SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS
CONFERENCE PARLIAMENTARY LIAISON OFFICE**

TO THE

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

ON

THE TOURISM BILL [B44 -2012]

18 February 2013

Introduction

“Tourism is considered as the world's largest industry and generator of jobs. This sector takes many forms with demand met by facilities of differing scales and degree of sophistication. It also provides wide-ranging opportunities for foreign investors and local entrepreneurs. It is seen to bring inward investment, foreign exchange earnings and creation of small, medium and micro businesses”.¹

The Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office welcomes this new Bill which seeks to promote responsible tourism for the enjoyment of all, that is, all the residents of South Africa as well as foreign visitors. While tourism is not really within our scope of competence it is a major industry as well as an important source of foreign currency. Furthermore, it is a considerable employer of labour and as such should be encouraged and developed. The Church has several tourist attractions of its own - the iconic Regina Mundi Catholic Church in Soweto is the one which immediately leaps to mind. We would be pleased if you would take into account the fairly general comments below.

2. Possibilities

The Bill seeks to avail the cooperation of *all* spheres of Government in the development and management of tourism. Importantly, the Bill acknowledges that Tourism may have a negative environmental and socio-economic impact. We urge that as far as possible appropriate environmental and socio-economic studies be conducted before plans are put into practice and this needs to include a greater understanding of local cultural and social practices as well as environmental impact studies. Tourism should benefit the local community economically by providing employment.

The City of Cape Town's website defines responsible tourism “as an approach to the management of tourism, aimed at maximising economic, social and environmental benefits and minimising costs to destinations. Simply put, responsible tourism is tourism ‘that creates better places for people to live in, and better places to visit’. A responsible tourism approach aims to achieve the triple-bottom line outcomes of sustainable development, i.e. economic growth, environmental integrity and social justice. The distinguishing characteristic of the

¹ Opportunities For Micro And Small Scale Businesses In The Tourism Sector: The Case Of The Kenya Coast, Patience M. Mshenga, George Owuor

approach is the focus on the responsibility of role-players in the tourism sector, and destinations in general, to take action to achieve sustainable tourism development." ² We think these guidelines are apposite.

While the regulation, norms and standards, penalties for non-compliance and codes of good practice for tourism are to be welcomed we feel that the primary focus of the Bill is on the upper end of the market. The Bill does not really consider the variety of possibilities for development. Every part of our country has people with stories to tell and we do still have a rich oral tradition. We would like to see small start-up investment and training by the Department of Tourism in local Guides who can tell the stories of their towns and villages.

3. Tourists in our own land

The early reference in the Bill to internal tourism by the citizens of South Africa is obviously desirable but travelling anywhere in South Africa is expensive. Realistically, how many people living in Cape Town can afford to go up the Mountain or go to Robben Island? How many children have seen an animal in the wild or seen the sea? All South Africans do not have equal access to the rich environmental, historical and cultural heritage of our country. We urge you to consider this issue of unequal access. Perhaps different prices could be charged for foreign visitors and for citizens.

The Departments of Education and Tourism need to collaborate further with one another in expanding the opportunities for tourism, as well as exploring 'tourist sites' that may be very close to home. These sites could develop into better known tourist attractions and provide opportunities for employment and income generating crafts and projects.

4. Conclusion

The new Bill is to be welcomed and, if successfully implemented, will do much for the Tourism Industry.

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² City of Cape Town's Website