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Call for Adoption of Digital Nomad Visas as Part of the Visa Regime Review

To the Office of the Presidency,

President Cyril Ramaphosa in his state of the nation address, delivered in February of this year, stated that he had appointed former Department of Home Affairs Director-General, Mr Mavuso Msimang to review South Africa's visa regime.

At present there are 49 countries globally that have adopted digital nomad visas and many other countries are poised to roll out the visa in order to attract and boost tourism post-CoViD. Namibia is the first country on the continent to roll out a digital nomad visa which permits international visitors to stay for extended periods in the country on a temporary residency visa to work remotely for an international employer.

It is imperative that South Africa position itself competitively as a preferred destination on the continent by implementing visa regime reforms that attract tourists. At present competitor destinations such as Namibia have the edge when attracting "techpats" on digital nomad visas. We cannot fall behind in attracting emerging tourism markets that will boost direly needed tourism to our shores.

Research indicates that visitors travelling on digital nomad visas stay on for longer periods in the country than other leisure travellers, spending more money. In order to recoup the 470 000 jobs lost over CoViD-19, every avenue to boost tourism needs to be undertaken post haste.

As President Ramaphosa has tasked Mr Msimang with reviewing the visa regime, we request that the review include the implementation of the digital nomad visa. This is a perfect opportunity to get it right when it comes to positioning South Africa as a forward-thinking and tourist-friendly destination. The world has changed post-CoViD, and we need to be at the forefront when marketing ourselves as a preferred tourism destination. Our economy and thousands of jobs depend on it.

I hope this reaches your department favourably.

