



**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ZIMBABWE COUNCIL FOR TOURISM, TICH  
HWINGWIRI, AT THE ZCT MEDIA BRIEFING,**

**TUESDAY 25 JULY 2017**

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Statement by the President of the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism, Tich Hwingwiri, at the ZCT media briefing, Tuesday July 25

The Zimbabwe Council for Tourism welcomes the decision by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, the Honourable Patrick Chinamasa, to set aside efforts by Zimra to retrospectively collect VAT on food and beverages sold as part of packaged accommodation between 2009 and 2015.

As a result of existing and long-standing zero-rating of these packages for foreign visitors, the travel and tourism sector had not charged VAT on these items, but when VAT was introduced on such packages at the beginning of 2016, Zimra decided to require a payment of VAT and backdated this to 2009.

Since this was announced, ZCT has been working behind the scenes with relevant authorities to have this decision set aside, principally because it was prejudicial to the financial viability of operators across the country, who could not, of course, claim back VAT from the guests who had purchased these services. The amounts involved were substantial and were a significant threat to the viability of all operators.

We were delighted to receive the support of the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, the Honourable Walter Mzembi, in this effort and we now thank him and his colleague, the Minister of Finance, for their support for the travel and tourism sector in reaching this decision. It will go a long way to reassuring operators of their viability.

This is one of a great many initiatives and issues being handled by the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism, and we would like to assure all operators across the country that we shall continue to work on these initiatives and issues in their interests. As is well-known, travel and tourism is a major contributor to the economic well-being and growth of Zimbabwe, as in many other countries, and it

is our hope that this sector will continue to increase its contribution in line with international trends. All obstacles to such progress will be identified and efforts made to remove them, while all factors that assist in the growth of the sector will be supported and promoted.

Looking at other issues of the moment, we are fully supportive of the adoption by the Government of the United World Tourism Organisation theme for 2017, Sustainable Tourism For Economic Growth. It is vital that all tourism growth is based on principles of sustainability, so that our tourism growth and our increasing economic contribution is not simply a short-term phenomenon, but one that holds good for all generations to come. Travel and tourism can and must be harnessed for national well-being, but it must be based on the accepted understanding that our resources should be available not just for the current generations for those to follow.

We are also pleased with the continued provision of rebates being applied to expenditure on capital items for use by the travel and tourism sector in the areas of re-equipping, modernisation and refurbishment. It is essential that our travel and tourism sector is competitive with sectors in all other countries, so that our standards of infrastructure and service are equal to those found elsewhere, a factor that international travellers regard as non-negotiable. If we fail to maintain and increased standards we shall fall by the wayside and this sector will not succeed in maintaining tourist arrivals figures, let alone increase these.

A final point I wish to make is that I should like to call on all travel and tourism operators to give full support to the 2017 Sanganayi/Hlanganani Tourism Expo, to be held in Bulawayo in late September. It is a platform that is provided to us for the purposes of driving growth and we look forward to a good turnout of exhibitors, as well as to the achievement by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority of bringing in a good number of suitable international buyers, whose presence will stimulate not just interest among, but also active promotion of, international arrivals.

We are pleased with the numbers of visitors arriving at Victoria Falls this year, and it is important to note that this year's high season, running from June to November, looks set to be the best for several years. If this can be maintained and even improved on, the future for Victoria Falls as our premier tourist destination is bright. We would also like to see increased efforts to attract visitors to other parts of the country, many of which are not yet benefitting from increased tourism levels. If Zimbabwe's travel and tourism sector is to succeed, it will be on the back of steadily increased domestic, regional and international tourism at Victoria Falls and all other destinations within the country, especially our national parks, Lake Kariba and Mana Pools, the Eastern Highlands, Masvingo and the Lowveld and Bulawayo and the Matobo Hills.

We have in the past drawn attention to obstacles to such growth and in this regard I would like to remind operators that ZCT continues to push for reduction of road blocks, improvement of all roads, introduction of reliable and affordable air transport around the country and the creation of an acceptable, smooth and efficient system of arrival and departure procedures at Beitbridge Border Post.

Thank you.