



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

THURSDAY DECEMBER 14 2017

1. The Zimbabwe Council for Tourism welcomes the appointment of the new Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, Mrs Prisca Mupfumira, and we express the hope that our relationship with her will develop and become strong and we wish her well in the post and offer her the full support and co-operation of the whole travel and tourism sector. We also express our thanks that the Permanent Secretary, Dr Thokozile Chitepo, has been re-appointed and hope she continues to work closely with the travel and tourism sector, too. ZCT is excited that the future prospects are much improved by recent political changes, including the appointment of President Emmerson Munangagwa, and we hope that the country can trade on the back of huge international visibility of late to create awareness of its offerings as a leading African tourist destination.
2. We express disappointment that not more recognition of the true value of tourism was given in the 2018 Budget, while at the same time welcoming the stated intention to provide more funding for marketing Zimbabwe on the international stage. We reaffirm that the ZCT will continue to promote greater awareness of the role and value of the travel and tourism sector and its huge potential to transform economies, especially those in developing countries. It is the ZCT's undertaking that in 2018 it will work towards an acceptance that travel and tourism can and will become the country's leading economic sector by mid-century and that support needs to come from all stakeholders to create an operating environment in which this becomes possible. We must also push for greater recognition of the role and position of the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism.

3. We welcome the significantly increased level of arrivals of tourists in Victoria Falls during 2017 and express the hope that this growth continues unabated and perhaps increases exponentially during 2018. We must add the rider that what must happen is that much more needs to be done to get these tourists to also visit other destinations within Zimbabwe, so that the whole country benefits from this increased interest. Key to this will be increased air services and supporting infrastructure.
4. It is to be hoped greater prosperity within Zimbabwe as a result of current changes and incoming initiatives on the part of the new government will result in a revival of domestic tourism, which impacts positively on all destinations across the country. Our sector is highly active in promoting domestic tourism and will continue to do so.
5. It is to be hoped reduced roadblocks, proposed improvements in the Beitbridge border post operation and other initiatives spoken of in recent weeks will stimulate an increase in self-drive tourism from South Africa and other countries in the region, which was a significant factor in the boom years of 1988 to 1999.
6. We call on operators throughout the travel and tourism sector to get ready for increased business levels during 2018 and to ensure that their operations are not only geared to increased business levels, but are also products and services of the standard required by the international travelling public in the highly competitive environment of 2018. Tourism has never been as competitive as it is now and most countries are working towards making travel and tourism as easy, welcoming and suitable to the travellers of the 21st century, all of whom have exceptionally high expectations of the destinations to which they travel. Destinations must offer value for money, high standards, ease of access and entry, warmth of welcome and genuine top-notch experiences, as well as environmentally-sustainable tourism platforms.

7. We welcome the announcement in the Budget of the extension of the rebate facility to the tourism sector for a further two years, which will encourage investment in product and upgrading of all relevant infrastructure and standards. Another statement within the Budget that is welcomed by the sector is the announcement of a revolving fund for the tourism sector, which we understand will be in the amount of \$15 million, available immediately. This is a suitable starting point, and we do of course hope for a growth in the amount available to the sector in coming months and years, to accommodate extension and creation of new products. The Revolving Fund envisaged by Industry should allow for importation of goods and equipment.

8. It was also stated in the Budget that a National Ports Authority is to be established and that this will result in points of entry for tourists that are efficient and provide ease of access and entry for all visitors to the country. This is to be warmly welcome.