



NAMIBIA

TRAVEL & TOURISM FORUM

www.namibiantourism.com

Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community

Attn.: Minister Horst Seehofer

Federal Ministry of Health

Attn.: Minister Jens Spahn

Federal Foreign Office

Attn.: Minister Heiko Maas

Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Windhoek

Attn.: Ms. Ellen Götz, Permanent Representative

Windhoek, 31 January 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re. : Designation of international risk areas as of 31 January 2021 : Namibia

Let me briefly introduce the Namibia Travel & Tourism Forum to you. We are an open platform for all tourism businesses in Namibia and try to represent the sector in large without being biased or focusing on one group of businesses in the sector. For the last months, we have been closely working with the Namibian authorities and tourism entities in order to achieve the best in these difficult global times.

With greatest concern, we learned about the classification of Namibia by German authorities as a High-Risk country as of 31 January 2021. As you might understand, this move came as a big surprise to Namibia and will hamper the just restarted tourism industry to a major extent. Especially, as Namibia had been during the 2nd half of 2020 one of only three African countries recognized by your ministries as a low-risk country.

Especially sad is the way the Robert Koch Institute, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, the Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Foreign Office, communicated this surprising move. Namibia has been declared a high-risk country of group 2, namely because of “a particularly high risk of infection due to a particularly high number of cases”. It is unknown on what figures this decision has been based. From the official figures of the World Health Organisation and the Namibian Ministry of Health and Social Services one can clearly see, that Namibia is, for the last approx. 4 weeks, enjoying ever decreasing case numbers and a 7-days incidence that went down from 130 to now in the low 70s. As of 31 January 2021 our 7-days incidence stands at 61, from 126 exactly 3 weeks ago. Actually, the Namibian 7-days incidence is lower than any member country of the European Union (except Finland). It is therefore unclear and incomprehensible how your authorities came to the conclusion that Namibia should be a high-risk country. These sudden move, that seem to be motivated mainly by internal politics and are more of a symbolic character, hamper not only the Tourism industry in Namibia, one of the most important economic sectors in the country, but also the German aviation industry massively. Lufthansa had just announced two more weekly flights between Frankfurt and Namibia (then 5 in total) and Condor announced 2 weekly flights on that route as of May.

On the background that basically all neighboring countries to South Africa (except for the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Kingdom of Lesotho, which have been declared a SARS-CoV-2 virus variant country) have been declared “high-risk”, it seems that the current move of your ministries is rather based on assumptions that the virus variant might also be in Namibia, than on the given explanation of rising case numbers.

Namibia is at the moment rather moving closer to the “magical” 7-days incidence rate of 50 than being a high-risk country. Always also taking into account that 2.5 million Namibians live on a surface area 2.5 times larger than Germany. We trust once the threshold of 50 is reached, Namibia will be once again declared a safe country to travel to and no restrictions whatsoever will apply.

For the Namibian tourism sector at large, it is vital for the medium to long-term planning to be able to trust a partner like Germany and to understand their moves and concerns with regards to travelling to or rather from Namibia. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with the latest announcement. About 120,000 tourists from Germany annually have been visiting Namibia in pre-Corona times. By far, Germany is the largest overseas source market for the Namibian tourism sector.

We trust, that the numbers that have been visiting Namibia in the last months, also very low to normal standards but vital to keep the tourism sector in Namibia somehow afloat, were by no means any threat to Germany by spreading the SARS-CoV-2 to your country.

The Namibia Travel & Tourism Forum has been in close contact with the Namibian Ministries of Health and Social Services as well as the of Environment, Forestry in Tourism in order to have clear Corona testing and hygiene standards in and for the sector. We truly hope that his effort will not end by making travels from Germany to Namibia and vice versa even more difficult.

We sincerely hope that the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, the Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Foreign Office will reconsider their decision with regards to declaring Namibia a “high incidence area” and thus give hope to the tourism sector in Namibia. We on our side will further campaign for sticking to the tight health and hygiene regulations that have been implemented by the Ministry of Health and Social Services to safekeep Namibians and tourists alike.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nrupesh Soni', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Nrupesh Soni

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