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Concern as tourism grows too slowly

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The tourism sector should raise the bar by significantly growing its contribution to the economy to meet the National Development Plan target of 2020.

A report tabled in Parliament on Monday said the Financial and Fiscal Commission had noted that if the sector continued to grow at only 1.52% per annum, it would fall short by R150bn of the NDP target of R499bn.

Parliament's portfolio committee on tourism said in a report that tourism was an important sector in the country's economy.

The fiscal commission described tourism as the critical sector in the country. Last year tourism made a 10.3% contribution to employment.

The sector contributed R309bn to the economy in 2012.

It wants tourism to grow at a faster pace.

"The Commission further observed the disjuncture in time-frames for targets set for the National Development Plan and the National Growth Path.

"The envisaged NDP 2020 target is to create 225000 tourism jobs while the NGP propounded to create 225000 jobs in tourism by 2015," the portfolio committee's report said.

Last month President Jacob Zuma announced in Cape Town that the number of tourists in the country grew by 10.2%.

He said tourists who set foot on these shores increased from 8.3 million in 2011 to 9.1m last year.

Europe remained South Africa's strongest market. There was growth from emerging economies of Asia and South America.

The announcement of the tourism statistics by Zuma was a break from the past when Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk would usually do that.

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