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## PRESS RELEASE

### **FGASA Welcomes the Appointment of the 2025–2030 CATHSSETA Board and Celebrates Continued Sector Collaboration**

The Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) warmly welcomes the appointment of the new **2025–2030 CATHSSETA Board** by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Training. This new Board brings renewed strength to the governance and strategic leadership of the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority, ensuring it remains well positioned to fulfil its mandate of driving high-quality skills development and supporting transformation across its sectors.

According to the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Manamela, “The newly appointed Accounting Authorities reflect a balanced demographic and professional profile. Across all SETAs there’s gender balance, strong representation of youth and historically disadvantaged groups. Members also bring expertise spanning organised labour, business, community development, professional bodies, government, and higher education institutions. This ensures that the SETAs’ governance structures are not only inclusive but also grounded in the technical and sectoral knowledge required to advance South Africa’s skills revolution.”

The CATHSSETA Board serves as the organisation’s Accounting Authority and carries responsibility for setting strategic direction, safeguarding public resources, overseeing organisational performance and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation. Through its governance structures and committees, the Board guides the implementation of CATHSSETA’s Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan, ensuring the organisation’s work responds effectively to national priorities and sector needs. Its role is central to maintaining quality assurance, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that training initiatives advance meaningful employment and long-term sector sustainability.

FGASA also welcomes the re-appointment of **Mr Marks Thibela** as Chief Executive Officer of CATHSSETA. His continued leadership brings stability and continuity to the organisation’s operations and provides ongoing alignment between CATHSSETA’s strategic vision and its implementation. Over his tenure, Mr Thibela has played a significant role in expanding workplace-based learning opportunities, strengthening quality assurance processes, and supporting the development of skilled, employable graduates across CATHSSETA’s sub-sectors.

**Directors:** Juan Pinto (Chairman), Andrew Kearney (Vice Chair), Michelle du Plessis (Managing Director),  
Nic Knott-Craig, Solomon Ndlovu, Bernice Kelly (FGASA Management)

**Executive Committee:** Isaiah Banda (Waterberg), Neil Whyte (Sabi Sand Western Sector),  
Richard Pearce (Eastern Cape), Andrew Khosa (Northern Mpumalanga,  
Jonathan Wightman, John Ditsele (Madikwe), Bennet de Klerk (North West), Themba Nxele & Alan Taylor (Kwa-Zulu Natal),  
Joslin Abrahams (Western Cape), Armin Junkuhn (Namibia)

His re-appointment signals confidence in his ability to continue advancing high-impact, transformation-focused skills development nationally, backed by a competent executive team.

Over the years, FGASA has been proud to contribute to CATHSSETA's mission through its commitment to developing skilled, professional nature guides. Through accredited programmes, mentorship opportunities, and robust practical and theoretical training, FGASA has prepared thousands of guides who are fit, competent, and employment-ready for opportunities in the guiding, conservation, and tourism sectors. This longstanding contribution has helped build a strong pipeline of professional guides who support South Africa's tourism economy and natural heritage.

Looking to the future, FGASA's role as a voluntary **Professional Body** for nature guides, tourist guides and trackers, continues to strengthen the sector. FGASA remains committed to working collaboratively with CATHSSETA, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), the guiding employment sector, the National Department of Tourism, guides themselves, training providers, CPD delivery partners, assessors, and all key stakeholders. Together, these partnerships will continue to support professional standards, ethical practice, accredited learning pathways, and expanded opportunities for workplace-based training, mentorship, and sustainable employment.

FGASA is also pleased to announce that **Michelle du Plessis**, Managing Director of FGASA, has been appointed to the new CATHSSETA Board, representing a Community Organisation constituency – voluntary Professional Body. Her appointment acknowledges FGASA's important role in the professionalisation of guiding and reinforces the value of its contribution to national skills development. FGASA congratulates all newly appointed Board members and looks forward to continued cooperative efforts that support skills, qualifications development, continued professional development, professional standards, and advance sustainable growth within South Africa's guiding and tourism industries.

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