

**SPEECH BY MINISTER VAN SCHALKWYK AT THE OPENING OF THE
UNWTO INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Your Excellency President Jacob Zuma

Your Excellency Mr Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)

Honourable President of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)

Honourable Ministers of Tourism

Ladies and gentlemen

All protocols observed

On behalf of the people of South Africa, it is my great pleasure to welcome you today to one of the most exciting destinations in the world - at any time, but especially in 2010.

Yes, finally 2010 has arrived. I say this not only as South Africa counts down the last days to our hosting of the 2010 World Cup, but also against the backdrop of 2009, which must have been one of the most trying years in recent times for the global economy and the global tourism sector.

All of us gathered here today are painfully aware of the heavy toll this crisis took on our respective tourism industries and their underlying tourism economies.

Now, as tourism leaders, role players and stakeholders from across the world who have managed to ride out the storm, we must ask ourselves the following: What does it take to be a tourism leader in our brave new world? Because, ladies and gentlemen, the rules of the game have changed. Scoring requires more than just nifty footwork. It requires careful consideration of the 'what next'; being one step ahead; insightful planning and, above all, vision.

One of the tourism areas in which new opportunities have emerged is sports tourism and mega-events. In the past decade, we have seen these powerful vehicles for growth emerge as key areas of travel and tourism sector development.

Within the global tourism community, our collective efforts have played an important role in the growth and success of sports and mega-events tourism. These efforts have also ensured that we are all winners, as we reap the benefits of:

- increased foreign arrivals and yield;
- stimulated investment and trade;
- accelerated employment and skills development;
- flattening of the seasonality curve;
- increased destination competitiveness; and
- building of the destination brand.

However, as we will also hear from many experts in the next couple of days, successfully securing and executing sports tourism and mega-events does not guarantee a successful impact.

As we all know, the cost can far outweigh the benefits. These costs can range from empty stadia and displaced tourists to angry locals questioning the rationale behind investing in broadcasting centres instead of education or health care facilities and massive debt left behind after the crowds of spectators have returned home. Despite all of the excitement attached to sports tourism and mega-events, they most certainly are not risk-free.

In South Africa we understood that, as a developing country, we must avoid these risks in preparing for the 2010 World Cup. We were not willing to be stuck with white elephants after the spectators have left. We understood that the World Cup should be a springboard taking our country, Africa and our peoples into a more sustainable future. With this in mind, we envisioned a mega-event with a lasting legacy.

Here in South Africa, we are all too familiar with the unfortunate human condition of doubt, with profits of doom who always see the glass as half empty, who thrive on speculation about the 'what ifs' and who derive some kind of joy from talking the country down.

Despite all the tangible progress in the run-up to the 2010 World Cup the notion of a 'Plan B' hit the global headlines as recently as a year ago. This kind of unwarranted scepticism fans the flames of doubt and makes it more difficult to keep sight of the very valid reasons why South Africa is more than capable of hosting a very successful event.

Even in the face of such scepticism, however, our nation delivered a flawless, festive and fantastic Final Draw in December last year, driving the last nail into Plan B's coffin.

As a nation, South Africa will host the best World Cup ever seen and felt in the history of the tournament, sending home over 450 000 ambassadors for Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, South Africans always rise to the occasion when times are tough, or challenges seem insurmountable. As a people we embody the spirit of the well-known resurrection bush from the northern parts of our country. To outsiders, it appears dry and curled up after months without rain. But when the rain starts to fall, within hours the plant regenerates and reverberates with life.

I firmly believe the 2010 World Cup will fall like rain on the African continent, bringing new growth, new hope and new opportunities. Long after the event, our continent will still rejoice in this well-deserved chance of a lifetime that we had the fortune of experiencing.

Ladies and gentlemen, a challenging task awaits each of us as leaders of the global travel and tourism community over the next two days. It will be our task to start creating a framework for sports tourism and mega-events that will empower and encourage every nation, regardless of size, to rigorously yet responsibly harness the opportunities that these events present. Hopefully, we will leave here with a clear vision of how to attract and utilise such events to build our tourism and travel sectors and nurse our fragile global economy back to full strength.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of a nation which is preparing for one of the most exciting challenges it has ever faced, and a nation which has tilled its lands diligently in preparation of the rain, I welcome you to South Africa and to this summit.

May the South African nation inspire you as it has the nearly ten million people around the globe who visit us annually, and who without exception leave much richer for the experience.

It is now my great honour to introduce to you a man who has for many years been working to bring the FIFA World Cup to Africa and to South Africa. He is the first African president ever to have the responsibility of presiding over an event of this magnitude and incredible significance to our continent.

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you His Excellency the President of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma.

I thank you.

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