



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY:

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3974. Ms H Ismail (DA) to ask the Minister of Tourism:

- (1) With reference to the recent visit she undertook to Mexico accompanied by a delegation, (a) on what date was the visit planned, (b) what was the total cost of the trip per person, broken down by (i) flights, (ii) accommodation and (iii) living expenses, (c) who did she meet, (d) on what merit were the specified persons, organisations and/or entities selected, (e) what agreements were concluded and signed and (f) what is the estimated return on investment for the visit;
- (2) whether any representatives from our tourism industry and/or other relevant South African private sector industries were part of the delegation; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY

(1) Visit Details

(a) On what date was the visit planned?

I sent a request to the President on 7 May 2026 to ask for permission to travel to Mexico. The President approved the request on 12 May 2026.

(b) What was the total cost of the trip per person, broken down by (i) flights, (ii) accommodation, and (iii) living expenses?

The costs per traveller are detailed below based on the authorised travel documentation:

Expense Category	Minister P. De Lille (ZAR)	Mr Sampear Aldrin (ZAR)
(i) Flights	283,495.80	283,495.80

Expense Category	Minister P. De Lille (ZAR)	Mr Sampear Aldrin (ZAR)
(ii) Accommodation	111,236.43	44, 423.49
(iii) Living Expenses (Daily Allowance)	4,917.94	3,707.42
Additional (Insurance)	720.00	720.00
Other (Ground Transport)	202,489.24	No cost
Total	602,859.41	332 316,71

(c) Who did she meet?

During the official visit to Mexico City, the Minister convened meetings and engagements with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr Nathalie Deplas Puel, Vice-Secretary of the Tourism Secretariat of the United Mexican States.
- Alejandra Frausto Guerrero, Secretary for Tourism in Mexico City, and her departmental delegation.
- Approximately 40 Mexican tour operators and tourism trade business representatives during an industry workshop.
- Ambassador Baryl Sisulu, South African Ambassador to the United Mexican States.
- On request from the Tourism Minister, the Home Affairs Minister, Schreiber, sent Mr Phindiwe Mbhele (Director at the Department of Home Affairs) to assist with promoting awareness about the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), and he was assisted by Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) visa-processing officials at the South African Mission.
- South African citizens, Bafana Bafana Legends, and South African cultural artists present at the promotional hub.

(d) On what merit were the specified persons, organisations and/or entities selected?

Strategic Market Leverage: Mexico is a key G20 partner market with a population exceeding 130 million. The qualification of Bafana Bafana for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with the opening match against Mexico on 11 June 2026 at Estadio Azteca, provided a high-visibility platform to position South Africa's global tourism brand.

Bilateral Tourism Governance: Meetings with federal and city tourism secretariats were selected to resolve long-haul travel bottlenecks, review bilateral agreements, and pitch South Africa's cabinet-endorsed Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

Regulatory & Visa Optimisation: Alignment with Home Affairs and DIRCO officials was prioritised to optimise the pilot rollout of the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system in Mexico, addressing historical service delivery complaints and ensuring smoother visa pathways for Mexican travellers.

Airlift Connectivity: Tourism secretariats were selected to analyse specific long-haul routing solutions (such as Air Europa's Madrid–Johannesburg route and LATAM's São Paulo–Cape Town expansions) and to initiate direct-flight feasibility talks between SAA and AeroMexico.

(e) What agreements were concluded and signed?

While the formal *Memorandum of Understanding Between The Republic Of South Africa And The United Mexican States On Cooperation In The Field Of Tourism* is still undergoing a structured review for renewal, the following transitional and operational agreements were successfully concluded:

- **3-Year Tourism Action Plan (2026–2029):** Both countries bypassed long administrative delays by agreeing to establish this interim plan to guide joint travel stimulation programs directly.
- **5-aside Travel Agent Joint Committee:** An agreement was reached to form a targeted working group consisting of top travel agents from both nations to design direct destination-marketing strategies.
- **Trade Workshop Framework:** Agreed to host a virtual follow-up collaboration session with the Mexican tourism trade ecosystem in August 2026.
- **Airlift Feasibility Studies:** Agreed to jointly engage national carriers SAA and AeroMexico to investigate direct transit viability formally.

(f) What is the estimated return on investment for the visit?

According to the preliminary data captured from the Ekhaya Global Village activation at the ALDEA park, the direct, immediate and long-term returns include:

- **Visitor Target Surpassed:** The South African promotional stand drew approximately 3,500 visitors within its first week of operation, significantly exceeding initial target projections.
- **Lead Generation:** The deployment successfully captured 300 high-quality business leads with an immediate intent to purchase or market travel to South Africa.
- **Market Expansion & Narrative Correction:** The activation established a long-term framework to use soft-power tools (tourism, sports, film) to aggressively counter negative media narratives regarding crime, driving direct arrivals from a key 130-million-strong source market.

(2) Delegation Representatives

Whether any representatives from our tourism industry and/or other relevant South African private sector industries were part of the delegation?

The formal administrative delegation, funded through departmental travel budgets, was strictly limited to public officials: Minister P. De Lille and Mr Sampear Hardley Aldrin. This was done to maintain strict fiscal oversight in compliance with national travel policies.

The Department of Tourism integrated its strategy directly with the Department of Sports, Arts & Culture, South African Tourism, BRAND SA, and the Department of Home Affairs.

END