MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X 424, PRETORIA, 0001, Tourism House, 17 Trevenna Street, Sunnyside, PRETORIA, 0002, Switchboard: +27 (0)12 444 6000, Fax: +27 (0)12 444 7000, Website: www.tourism.gov.za

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY:

Question Number: **5161**

Date of Publication: **2 October 2026**

NA IQP Number: **33**

Date of reply: **6 November 2026**

5161. Ms R S Nalumango (ANC) to ask the Minister of Tourism:

Following recent attacks on South African tourists in neighbouring countries linked to tensions around illegal immigration, what (a) proactive communication and destination-marketing measures has SA Tourism implemented to (i) counter negative perceptions, (ii) protect the image of the Republic abroad and (iii) strengthen tourism relations with neighbouring countries and (b) engagements have been put in place to ensure that illegal immigration does not adversely affect tourism transformation, particularly the (i) growth of local tourism economies and (ii) opportunities for local enterprises?

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REPLY

(a)(i) South African Tourism has continued to promote the brand as a welcoming destination with messages focused on affirming the “South Africa Awaits, Come Find Your Joy” tagline by leading with “South Africa Awaits” and subdued “Come Find Your Joy”. This ensures we stay true to the campaign without offending.

The current seasonal campaign began in July 2026, with increased engagement with trade partners to receive updated destination information, content, and tools to help them respond to customer enquiries and promote South Africa more effectively. Marketing activities across the continent use a mix of channels and partnerships, including digital and social media, Out-of-Home advertising, radio, trade and airline collaborations, consumer

brand activations, and Business-to-Business trade shows and exhibitions. On radio platforms, on-air personalities share their experiences in SA, what they still want to do on their next visits, and engage with audiences on radio and social media.

(a)(ii) To counter negative perceptions, South African Tourism continues to monitor traveller sentiment to better understand positioning and the visitor experience. Using specialised analysis tools with Natural Language Processing, we continuously track consumer feedback and identify changes in traveller perceptions across key aspects of the destination experience.

Recent analysis shows that sentiment among travellers from African markets remains strong and stable. Overall sentiment towards South Africa was indicated by a score of 80.2 for January to July 2026, a minimal 0.1-point decline from the same period in 2025. This suggests positive perceptions have largely been maintained year over year. The highest sentiment scores were in Hospitality (85.4), Location (81.6), Emotional Engagement (81.6), and Staff (77.3). Safety improved by 2.99 points and Cleanliness by 2.26 points. These results highlight strengths and opportunities to further enhance the visitor experience. Furthermore, there have been no negative comments on the media partners' social media engagements.

(a)(iii) As part of efforts to strengthen tourism relations, the Africa region has implemented the 'South Africa Awaits, Come Find Your Joy' and always-on digital campaigns featuring booking prompts, aligned to brand pillars driving consideration and travel conversion across priority and neighbouring markets such as the DRC, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia and Tanzania.

(b)(i) Engagements have been put in place to ensure that illegal immigration does not adversely affect tourism transformation, particularly with South African Tourism's participation in various trade shows, giving SMMEs access to international buyers. African markets are central to South Africa's tourism strategy, with travellers from Africa consistently representing over 70% of international arrivals, making the continent the largest source of visitors. These markets also contribute more than 40% of total tourist spend, highlighting their significance in both visitor numbers and economic impact.

(b)(ii) South African Tourism is increasingly using its African market footprint not only to grow arrivals, but also to create tangible market-access opportunities for South African tourism enterprises, particularly SMMEs. A practical example is the 2026

Magical Kenya Travel Expo (MKTE), held in Nairobi from 06-08 October 2026, where SA Tourism supported a delegation of 20 South African tourism businesses, which included 14 SMMEs. This represented 70% of the delegation and a 40% increase in SMME participation from 2025. This comes against strong market growth. Between January and August 2026, 36,497 Kenyan visitors were recorded, up 7.7%, while arrivals from Africa reached 6 million, growing by 13.4% over the same period.

The opportunity for these enterprises goes beyond exhibiting, allowing businesses to connect with tour operators, travel agents, Meetings, Conferences, Incentives and Exhibitions (MICE) buyers, and distribution partners to secure itinerary inclusion, expand distribution, and generate bookings. SA Tourism also measures buyer engagements, qualified opportunities, follow-up actions, and confirmed business to assess the commercial value generated. Participation at platforms such as MKTE enables South African Tourism to work closer to market, broaden industry participation, and strengthen the trade relationships needed to convert demand into travel. To supplement MKTE's official appointment and matchmaking programme with additional networking opportunities, South African Tourism hosted a networking dinner for 100 travel-trade, MICE, and corporate travel stakeholders on 07 October 2026. This provided a platform for relationship-building, deeper engagement, and additional business discussions beyond the exhibition floor. The programme will continue after the trade show. On 09 October, the participating South African Product Owners will undertake focused trade engagements with leading travel agents in Nairobi, extending product discussions beyond the three exhibition days. The overall approach is twofold: sustain South Africa's strong position among African travellers and address opportunities to improve the visitor experience and increase conversions through the travel trade. Given Africa's significant contribution to arrivals, tourism spend, and sector sustainability, maintaining competitiveness in these markets remains a key priority for South African Tourism. In November, we will be at BITUR, a tourism exhibition in Angola, and in January 2027, we have a trade workshop in Zimbabwe.

As the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Tourism Ministers, we continue to engage and plan joint marketing under bilateral agreements.

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