

## **MEDIA STATEMENT :2010 LEGACY CRUCIAL FOR BUSINESS TOURISM SECTOR - TOURISM MINISTER**

**23 FEBRUARY 2010**

**EMBARGOED 19H00**

The legacy of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup is crucial to the future growth of South Africa's Business Tourism industry.

This is according to Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk, Minister of Tourism, who officially opened Meetings Africa 2010, the annual Business Tourism exhibition, in Johannesburg this evening.

Meetings Africa is being held at the Sandton Convention Centre from tomorrow, 24 February. It is Africa's top Business Tourism trade show and showcases products and services from across the region's meeting, incentives and events industries.

Some 280 exhibitors - including conference management companies, convention bureaux, destination marketing organisations, venues, hotels and lodges - will market their products and services to an expected 3 000 local and international delegates.

Minister Van Schalkwyk said events such as the World Cup demonstrate capacity, infrastructure, hospitality and the general competitiveness of the host country's travel and tourism industry. "The Business Tourism sector is especially excited about what happens in South Africa this year and hopes to reap the benefits for years to come."

Business Tourism currently represents approximately six percent of all foreign arrivals in South Africa. This represents more than half a million visitors per year who come to South Africa for meetings, incentives, conferences and events. These business tourists spend on average R5 600 (2008) when in SA, an increase of almost 40% when compared to 2007. This makes Business Tourists important contributors to the South African economy, as they added more than R3 billion to Tourism's Total Foreign Direct spend. So, although the Business Tourism sector is not as big as the Leisure Tourism sector, it is the fastest growing tourism sector in South Africa and average spend per tourist is higher.

According to Minister Van Schalkwyk the tourism industry has invested considerably in South Africa recently, with investments such as the upgrade and extension of major airports, the construction of a new international airport in Durban and the opening of various top hotels, some owned and managed by international groups, in most cities.

"South Africa's tourism sector finds itself in the international spotlight this year," he said, "and it is particularly apt that Meetings Africa coincides with a meeting of the tourism ministers of the G20 countries and a UN World Tourism Organisation/South Africa Summit on Tourism, Sport and Mega-events."

Meetings Africa is presented annually by the country's official international tourism marketing agency, South African Tourism, together with its partners the Gauteng Tourism Authority, the Johannesburg Tourism Company and the Sandton Convention Centre.

Nomasonto Ndlovu, Global Manager: Business Tourism at South African Tourism says the organisation is determined to grow Meetings Africa as an international trade show as it is the key driver of its business tourism growth strategy. "Meetings Africa 2010 will see a record number of 120 overseas buyers who will be hosted by South African Tourism and the Department of Trade and Industry and we are also aiming to attract more local corporate visitors to Meetings Africa."

She says Meetings Africa will have a special focus on the association market this year, as South African Tourism is determined to attract a record number of buyers from this sector that has huge potential for growth. "Today we launched the first ever Association Day in order to build relationships with national professional bodies so we can continue to attract large international meetings to South Africa in a more effective and coordinated manner."

Meetings Africa closes at 13:00 on Friday, 26 February 2010.

Issued by FD Media and Investor Relations on behalf of South African Tourism  
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