



MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

2025/2026 policy debate on Budget Vote 38
Tourism speech by Deputy Minister of
Tourism, Hon. Ms. Makhotso Maggie Sotyu
(MP) at the NCOP Chamber

22nd July 2025

House Chairperson,
Minister of Tourism, Ms. Patricia de Lille,
MECs present,
Chairperson of the Select Committee on
Economic Development and Trade, Ms.
Boshoff,
Honourable Members of the NCOP,
DG, SAT CEO, and all Officials Present,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Policy Debate is happening in the midst of many commemorative activities that continue to celebrate our great icon, our former President Rolihlahla Mandela in this July month, under the theme: “it’s still in our hands to combat poverty and inequity”, which is the 2025 theme for the Nelson Mandela International Day on 18th July 2025.

We therefore heed the clarion call of our President during his State of the Nation Address this year, that aims to embody a nation that works for all, and where no one is left behind.

The President mentioned the recovery of the tourism sector and its potential for further growth.

This included the tourism-impact areas such as the Master Plan for job creation, and expanding support for small and medium enterprises (SMMEs) within the Tourism Sector.

A thriving SMME sector not only strengthens the economy, but it also upholds the values of resilience, self-reliance, shared prosperity and sustainability that define the spirit of freedom.

House Chairperson,

As a Department together with our entity, we thrive to champion the conditions for a possible sustainability.

In this instance, to lower many barriers that inhibit SMMEs' entry into hotel industry for example, the Department's programme, the Tourism Grading Support Programme (TGSP), which is continuing to subsidize grading costs.

In FY24/25, the TGSP supported 2,970 establishments, encouraging active participation in the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA's) grading system.

These efforts contribute to the standardisation of service excellence, helping South Africa to remain competitive in global tourism markets.

House Chairperson,

The pursuit of excellence in tourism service is not merely a standard—it is a recognition of hard work, passion, and commitment to going the extra mile.

Hence the Department was in the Eastern Cape this last weekend to award the selfless tourism business sector operating in these dorpiess and rural communities.

These Tourism Service Excellence Awards are far more than mere commendations.

These awards help raise the bar for quality and professionalism. Excellence in tourism service creates value for all. Thank you MEC Nonkqubelo Pieter for all the support you provided to ensure the event was a success.

We recognise the importance of business to the growth of tourism, in supporting growth in the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) sub-sector.

House Chairperson,
The South African National Conventions Bureau (SANCB) has invested R19 million in bid submissions through its bid support programme.

This is to attract business events linked with the National Government's development priorities, when bidding for international meetings.

The secured conferences will also contribute to the regional spread of business events.

Given that tourism is a highly labour-intensive industry, people will rightfully expect to see significant local employment within these successfully bided International Conferences.

Let us think about all the possible jobs that are connected to this tourism sub-sector, whether it is drivers, messengers, cleaners, waitresses or chefs, tour guides, tour operators, event planners and owners of establishments like hotels and resorts, there is no doubt that this sector has big potential to create many jobs.

Honourable Members,

Our responsibility as Government and as Department is thus to continue to ensure that most of total direct and indirect employment in each host Province are for the locals.

For the tourism sector to promote pro-poor growth, the employment level of local South African citizens in each of the 9 Provinces must rise as much as their representation in managerial positions.

House Chairperson,

The bidding programme promotes inclusivity by extending the benefits of business events to villages, townships, and small dorpiés (VTSDs), in line with the District Development Model.

This regional focus supports equitable development and contributes meaningfully to the transformation agenda by fostering

economic growth and job creation in historically marginalised communities.

House Chairperson,

The South African National Conventions Bureau (SANCB) facilitated the hosting of nine business events in the villages, townships, and small dorpiés (VTSDs) during the reporting period, contributing to inclusive tourism growth and local economic development.

We also hope that the G20 delegates will experience the rich heritage and cultures through its vibrant cities, “dorpiés” and townships (VTSDs) as well as its arts and crafts, in the process, allowing G20 delegates to leave with a lasting memory while contributing to the South African economy.

Honourable Members,

Without community involvement, tourism projects may fail to gain the necessary support and could lead to adverse outcomes.

This notion of the inclusive tourism need was also emphasized upon by the community of Bo-Kaap which we visited on 7th July 2025.

They said, fostering a strong community and stakeholder engagement is essential for the long-term success of tourism core purposes, initiatives, and ultimate outcomes.

Tourism is about the people of South Africa. It is about a guest house owner in Bizana sharing the great cultures and heritage of the Eastern Cape. It is about a tour guide in Mbombela sharing a hidden gem in Mpumalanga.

Therefore, we must translate and implement our progressive legislation into more inclusive tourism.

Honourable Members,

In today's world, we must also supplement our approach to inclusive tourism, with stronger bilateral relationships.

In this instance, the Department, working together with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) successfully secured R120 million of funding from the European Union through National Treasury for the implementation of the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre, at the Golden Gate National Park in the Free State.

The total investment in the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre was approximately R131 million for several linked initiatives from financial contributors.

When we collaborate between government and business, between communities and travellers, we build more than economic growth.

Honourable Chairperson,

Our success as a Department of Tourism, is closely tied to the improvement of infrastructure and safety at these structures.

Safety is not the responsibility of one department or one city. It is a shared responsibility.

For South Africa to remain competitive in the global tourism market, all stakeholders — from government and law enforcement to tour operators and local communities — must collaborate to prioritise safety.

It is with this reason that the Department initiated a Tourism Monitors Programme to supplement the safety and security measures of the South African Police Service, enhancing tourism safety.

A safer South Africa means more tourists, stronger local economies, and a better future for all.

House Chairperson,
We have also looked in the mirror and seen some challenges in the Tourism Industry. But, there are also real strength, deep resilience and huge potential in our country's Tourism sector.

In conclusion, Honourable Members,
We must expand the benefits from tourism activity to ensure that the growth we are seeking is inclusive.

We must continue to ensure that transformation is a thread that runs through all our interventions, so we can see an improvement in ownership patterns and spread benefits that result from the inclusive economic activity in the tourism sector.

Lastly, House Chairperson,

To Minister De Lille, I appreciate the leadership you have provided throughout this past year, and looking forward to continue working together to see through our given mandate to transform and thrive the Tourism sector, for job creation and inclusive economic growth for all South Africans

We also appreciate the positive diligence and support role of the Select Committee, chaired by the Honourable Ms. Boshoff.

To DG Victor Vele and all Team Tourism, I extend my gratitude for the good work done over the past year, and our partners in the tourism industry for their dedicated work in support of tourism. I thank you all.