



**Address by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Des Van Rooyen, at the Local Government Tourism Conference, on  
“Local Government Support to Tourism Growth and Development,”**

**03 April 2017**

**Ekurhuleni Municipality**

Minister of Tourism, Ms Tokozile Xasa,  
Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Elizabeth Thabethe  
Members of Parliament;  
MECs present here today;  
President of SALGA, Councillor Parks Tau  
Executive Mayor of the City of Ekurhuleni, Mzwandile Masina,  
Executive Mayors and Mayors present,  
Members of Mayoral Committees,  
Councillors present,  
CEOs and leadership from the private sector and NGOs,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

**Introduction**

It is an honour to address you today. The local government sector is that sphere of government most closest to the people and one which most people are likely to encounter on a daily basis. And while citizens expectations of local government often centre around the delivery of basic services, there are other areas that are taking an increasingly important role. One of these is Local Economic Development (LED), with tourism being one of the most accessible sectors to stimulate LED.

**Tourism-based LED in South Africa**

Within South Africa, in addition to longstanding popular tourist destinations such as Kruger National Park; the Garden Route; Safe and Clean Beaches; Table Mountain and Robben Island to name but a few, a wide range of other localities are now seeking to drive development through tourism promotion, often as an explicit part of their LED Programmes. Planning of initiatives for Local Economic Development (LED) represents one of the core functions of developmental local government in South Africa as confirmed in the White Paper on Local Government.

Previously LED in South Africa focused on the promotion of local government as viable centres for industry, agriculture or mining. Recently there has been a focus on the promotion of tourism as an alternative driver of LED.

LED is about creating a platform and conducive environment to engage stakeholders in implementing strategies and programmes that stimulate local economies. Municipal structures have an important role to play in connecting national and regional resources to promote their local areas, and in bringing about strategic local partnerships to enhance and sustain economic growth.

The point we are making here is that “municipalities should play a connector role in respect of LED, drawing upon resources locked in a range of different government support instruments into their localities”.

LED is based on the principle that wealth in local communities is created not by government but by private enterprise which depends on favourable local business conditions to create prosperity. Local government has a key role in creating favourable environments for business success.

Our efforts for tourism development should enable pro-poor tourism. Simply put this should enable local poor people to secure economic benefits from tourism in a fair and sustainable manner.

### **Importance of Tourism Sector from a Local Government Perspective**

The convening of the Local Government Tourism Conference under the theme, “Tourism Planning is Everybody’s Business,” is indeed significant to us in the local government sector – because the benefits from this growth resonate and impact directly on our communities.

Much has been written and demonstrated about the ability and potential of this sector to be a powerful development path through job creation, boosting economies, providing foreign exchange, improving infrastructure, and promoting environmental conservation.

Academic scholars, development organisations, multilateral organisations, non-government and community based organisations, as well as government institutions are all consistent in their analysis. It is for this reason that the sector has been prioritised in the New Growth Path and the Industrial Policy Action Plan.

Within the context of the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, it is perhaps the National Tourism Sector Strategy (2010) that succinctly captures the essence of the tourism sector as a catalyst for local growth and development. It indicates that tourism is not only a multifaceted and multi-sectoral; is also labour-intensive with low barriers to entry for entrepreneurs, providing for a large-mass labour force, including critical sectors such as women and the youth. Additionally, as tourism is ‘consumed’ at the point of production, it provides opportunities for the development of small local businesses and informal economic activities in such areas as tour guides, arts and craft, and small taxi operators, to name but a few.

### **Accelerating the implementation of Back to Basics to benefit the Tourism Sector**

For the purpose of this conference it is important to focus our attention on the distinct role of local government in the provision of basic infrastructure, separating it from the provision of other ‘catalytic’ infrastructure, which is broadly the competence of provincial and national government.

The consensus has emerged from our own ongoing research and stakeholder engagements that:

- Many challenges in development have their roots at the local level and unless local Government begins to play a more significant role resolving these, South Africa will continue to struggle in its challenge to combat poverty, unemployment and inequality.
- Local government has the potential to make a sustainable impact on development and has begun to demonstrate it. But far more needs to be done before the country’s municipalities are equal to the considerable task that is demanded of them.

Over the past two years the local government sector, has looked at the question: what are the most basic, non-negotiable amenities we should be delivering to our communities; and, at the most elementary level, what is it going to take to ensure that we fulfill this role? This is the core focus of our work in local government – and we call it the Back to Basics Programme.

The objective of the approach is to ensure a well-functioning and efficient local government system in support of the national developmental agenda and has direct benefits for the tourism sector. As part of Government’s efforts to strengthen the system of local government in the second phase of the Back to Basics, His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma will be convening the 3<sup>rd</sup> Presidential Local Government Summit on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2017, under the theme, “Managing Municipal Spaces

for Radical Social and Economic Transformation”. I wish to invite you to make your contribution on the role of tourism sector in achieving radical social and economic transformation.

### **Basics of Tourism in Local Government**

From the perspective of tourism development, the question then is, what are the non-transferable basics we want to see in place in South African municipalities, as preferred tourist destinations? At this level of thinking, we are simply saying, a foreign tourist stepping out of an airplane or bus, visiting our attractions; or a local resident, leaving the comfort of his/her home to experience one of our marvellous tourism products – what service should they expect without compromise from our municipalities?

In pondering this question, I have a few suggestions to propose and I hope you will agree with me:

- Tourists expect that when they open a tap in a B&B, there will be drinkable water in that tap.
- When they switch on the lights on their visit, there will be electricity.
- They expect that roads with clear and visible signage will get them to their destinations without any troubles.
- They expect upfront communication and information on planned service interruptions and duration.
- They expect that, as they experience municipal public spaces and amenities owned by municipalities they will be clean, well maintained, safe and visually pleasing.
- They expect working street lights as they explore our historic townships by night.
- They expect clean ablution facilities, and reliable visitor information centres.

These are basics but the list is endless ladies and gentlemen...

It is easy to take these expectations for granted, more especially from a local resident's point of view. But meeting them may mean the difference between a tourist coming back to that tourism product or not. It may also mean the difference between tourists recommending our tourist offerings to other potential tourists.

But what is it going to take to get the basics right? Clearly, a whole-of-government and other players approach is necessary to support municipalities to fulfil their basic functions, including basic tourism infrastructure as well captured by this conference theme.

### **IUDF and Urban Tourism**

Last year Cabinet adopted the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), with a vision of creating “liveable, safe, resource-efficient cities and towns that are socially integrated, economically inclusive and globally competitive, where residents actively participate in urban life”.

The IUDF acknowledges that like most African countries and other developing countries, South Africa is experiencing increased urbanisation. There are eight main cities in South Africa. Cities play an important role in tourism development. Cities provide efficient infrastructure and services through density and concentration in transportation, communications, power, human interactions, and water and sanitation services. They attract talents and skilled labour that allow specialisation in knowledge, skills, and management capabilities.

To overcome the spatial fragmentation of South Africa's built environment and to improve the utilization of cities as economic hubs, an integrated city development grant has been introduced to strengthen long-term city planning and encourage private investment in urban development.

In addition, an employment tax incentive has been introduced as a cost sharing measure to incentivise firms to provide work opportunities for young people. The tourism sector is more likely to benefit from Cities' infrastructure development initiatives. Recent reports stated that metropolitan areas were responsible for almost half of all national business trips. Planning for business tourism must therefore be a critical dimension of tourism planning in these large urban tourism destinations.

However, it should be noted that we are mindful that tourism has emerged as a significant driver of local economies, especially in small towns and rural areas.

## **Conclusion**

Minister Xasa, we are delighted to partner with you in this Third Local Government Tourism Conference. It is our hope that this tourism conference will offer us in the local government sector a concrete programmes to focus on, in order to support and contribute to the growth of the tourism sector.

On this basis, we also expect proactive calls for collaborative partnerships to make resolutions happen, because surely it cannot be a government alone task.

It is our viewpoint that the time for policies and strategies has passed.

Our energies, efforts and resources should be channelled to impactful implementation to make our municipalities sustainable tourism attractions, as we implement the Back to Basics Approach.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is important to note that in South Africa widespread acknowledgement exists that tourism is a strong driver for local economic development. In maximising the impacts of tourism expansion for local communities, a critical role must be played by municipalities through the design of credible tourism sector plans, marketing, the provision of support infrastructure, and the management of tourism growth. As we approach the Easter holiday weekend and several long weekends I wish to invite you to be tourism Ambassadors in our spaces and contribute to tourism growth.

I thank you.