



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Launch of the Ritz Carlton International Exchange Program

Tuesday, 9 November 2010

at Emoyeni Conference Centre, Johannesburg

Address by the Deputy Minister of Tourism: Ms Tokozile Xasa

Programme Director

CEO of Ubuntu: Prince Cedza Dlamini

Chairman of Ubuntu: Prince Thumbumuzi Dlamini

CEO of PRASA: Mr. Lucky Montana

CEO of Services Seta: Mr. Ivor Blumenthal

Allow me this opportunity to thank you all for taking time to be with us to officially launch the Ritz Carlton International Exchange Program. In the same breath, The National Department of Tourism (NDT) we'd like to also thank the Members of the Media, Industry Stakeholders, Passenger Rail Association of South Africa (PRASA), UBUNTU, distinguished guests and members of the public for joining us on this occasion.

Following the introduction of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (ASGISA) in 2006 and the establishment of Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), the tourism sector was identified as one of priority sectors that should contribute to the objectives of ASGISA. To this effect, skills shortages were identified as a constraint, not only in tourism but in the SA economy in general.

The Minister of Environmental Affairs & Tourism then, Mr. Marthinus van Schalkwyk, posed a challenge to the tourism sector that all key stakeholders, led by DEAT and THETA, should “***Build skills partnership in tourism***” and comprehensively address the skills shortages experienced by the sector.

The economic contribution of the tourism sector in growing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and addressing joblessness and poverty has also been acknowledged in the New Growth Path strategy as announced by President Zuma. The new growth path is intended to address unemployment, inequality and poverty in a strategy that is principally reliant on creating a significant increase in the number of new jobs in the economy, mainly in the private sector.

The new growth path sets a target of creating five million jobs in the next ten years. This target is projected to reduce unemployment from 25% to

15%.The target set for the tourism sector in the national Growth Path strategy is to create 225 000 new jobs by end of 2015.

Critically, this employment target can only be achieved if the social partners and government work together to address key structural challenges in the economy. The role that this project can play in ensuring that this government priority is achieved becomes important now than ever before.

The National Department of Tourism is currently partnering with Ubuntu on this initiative; the parties involved have identified a need for undertaking a focus in youth skills development, through a hospitality events exchange program by assisting unemployed graduates and other youth, to gain workplace experience in the United States. The goal of this programme is to promote international placements for unemployed graduates and under skilled youth workers through an international internship programme. Furthermore, it seeks to continually assist in supporting an increasingly skilled tourism workforce in preparation for future international events to be held in South Africa.

The resounding success for hosting 2010 Soccer World Cup as destination South Africa, the good rating received from FIFA and the positive feedback received from the visitors during this period is a clear

indication that more people will be attracted to our country and we need to have relevant skills to meet the demand.

The following are the objectives of the placement programme:

- To provide tourism graduates with world class exposure to hotel environment in all departments
- To provide international work experience, so that students are more marketable in the open labour market.

This placement involves a number of key stakeholders in tourism as a result it encourages coordination of efforts by all. It is a partnership by government, business, civil society, labour and international partners to build a skills base for building a sustainable economy.

The department openly acknowledges the role and contribution played by UBUNTU, PRASA, and the Services SETA in ensuring that this opportunity is kept alive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tourism has now been confirmed as one of the six key priority areas for economic growth and it recognized as one of the most important economic activities in South Africa. This industry is especially important

for the creation of employment, presenting opportunities for self employment, contributing to rural and urban development and foreign exchange earnings. A diversified and developed tourist industry is a solid and sustainable foundation of socio-economic advancement.

The two foremost challenges that have been prioritised in this sector are how skills development can contribute towards sustainable economic growth and labour absorption. The Global Competitiveness Programme study also identified the shortage of skills as an issue facing the industry. The study also felt that existing training facilities do not adequately address these skills shortages. There is also an outcry from business within the sector that most graduates do not meet the expectations of the job, once qualified.

The National Department of Tourism in partnership with South African Youth Exchange Programme and Ubuntu Institute has been able to secure a placement opportunity with the Ritz Group of Hotels in the USA. An approximate number of 110 graduates were placed at the Ritz Carlton for the period of six months in 2009/2010 and returned in May 2010. Today, we are proud to welcome ten of our graduates who have successfully completed the program. I am sure that some of those learners who had returned to South Africa in May must have had an opportunity to share their experience.

2010 Soccer World Cup presented an opportunity for the tourism sector as one of its legacy projects; the existing unemployed tourism qualified youth should be trained and skilled to improve their chances of permanent absorption into the open labour market.

I would like to encourage the partners herein, to consider participating in another initiative called the National Tourism Careers Expo (NTCE).

Your participation in the NTCE would significantly contribute to the objective of creating an interactive platform for the public, learners at high school level, students at tertiary institutions, unemployed graduates, parents *on the one hand* and education and training providers and/or organisations, employer organisation and government in the tourism sector *on the other hand* . This platform facilitates this crucial interaction between the groups of people such that information and knowledge can be shared on available education and training opportunities as well as to show case available tourism professional opportunities and their worth in the South African and global economy.

The value that might be added, by some of the youth engaged in this project, sharing their experiences with the rest of the youth at the NTCE,

is great. Let me take this opportunity to invite all the partners to the next NTCE that will be staged on the 27-29 January 2011 at the Durban ICC.

In conclusion, we look forward to your continued support as we use the International Placement Programme as a vehicle for nurturing and developing our country's young talent for the long term benefit of a brighter South Africa.

I Thank You