

**ADDRESS BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM
TOKOZILE XASA
RETOSA ANNUAL DESTINATION MARKETING CONFERENCE, INDABA 2011
SATURDAY, 07 MAY 2011**

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Tourism

RETOSA Executive Management members

UNWTO representatives present

Senior Government officials from SADC countries

Company executives

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pride and pleasure that I welcome you to South Africa and to the Indaba 2011. I believe that this year, the business and government leaders will apply their mind and focus on the practical initiatives and partnerships capable of increasing the tourism's economic significance.

There can be no doubt that last year we hosted the best World Cup in the history of the beautiful game. Having said this, we need to realize that the new possibilities which the successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup opened up for us in the field of tourism will *not* automatically translate into increased numbers. We need to move quickly to convert the sweet, fresh memories of 2010 into sustained travel to our beautiful continent, into sustained economic growth and real jobs.

It is becoming increasingly important that South Africa continue with its visible contribution to regional development, and the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) is aimed at growing the value of regional tourism by establishing 5 SAT offices within the continent by 2020. Statistics indicates that within Africa there are markets that South Africa has not taken full advantage of in terms of the numbers of outbound tourists. Angola and Nigeria, for example, respectively recorded total outbound tourists of 264 000 and 741 000 in 2010.

We envisage maximising the value of our participation in *fora* like the United Nations World Tourism Organisation and the Tourism Committee of the OECD. Subsequent to our successful hosting of the first T20 meeting of Tourism Ministers in February last year, we will again participate in the next meeting, to be held in Korea later this year, in order to take forward our exchange of best practices for the growth and development of sustainable tourism.

Promoting closer mutually beneficial ties as well as developmental regional integration in Africa and Southern Africa remains our top priority. In line with our foreign policy objective of a better Africa, South Africa will seek cooperation with especially our African partners in order to contribute (within our means and capabilities) to the economic prosperity of our continent through tourism.

As a relatively new department, we are developing a Tourism International Relations Strategy, so that our international engagements are informed by a sound and cogent strategy, in which all relevant stakeholders and role players have had an opportunity to contribute and enrich.

INDABA is one of the largest tourism marketing events on the African calendar and one of the top three 'must visit' events of its kind on the global calendar. It showcases the widest variety of Southern Africa's best tourism products, and attracts international visitors and media from across the world.

As economic development in Africa increases, the SADC region can expect to benefit from an associated increase in tourist arrivals (be it for business, leisure, education or medical reasons). Critical to tourism in the regional platform which is **Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA)**, we need to identify key areas of integration and marketing and share best strategies and practices.

One of the objectives of RETOSA is to facilitate the development and growth of a community based tourism industry throughout the SADC region.

Community based tourism has the potential to alleviate some of the socio-economic challenges and enhance the value of tourism. RETOSA is in the process of collaborating with Member States, including South Africa, to develop a shared vision and strategy that will drive the growth and development of community based tourism in the SADC region. We are committed to working with countries in SADC and RETOSA to position Southern Africa as a regional destination. We will continue to support tourism recovery efforts in the region.

Many countries' tourism marketing is focused on particular markets and market segments. Although much emphasis is placed on foreign or international tourism, travel within one's own country of residence remains the engine room of many tourism economies, and is more resilient than international tourism. Post 9/11, foreign tourist demand was affected by international events and that means a robust domestic tourism economy becomes critical, both as the backbone of the sector and as a driver of competitiveness and innovation.

In conclusion, it is important that every citizen understand the value of tourism. We need to support the creation of a tourism culture amongst all our people. This we need to do by ensuring that those media platforms are diversified in an effort to reach previously marginalized communities. We need to share information by disseminating it through amongst other platforms the local community media (traditional and otherwise).

Considerable investment in tourism is been experienced from both the private and public sector. The Public sector investment should enable tourism growth that includes the continuous upgrading of international and other airports, roads, convention centres, cultural centres lodges, signage, etc. This will go a long way towards making our destinations accessible and easily identifiable by those who seek to reach them.

South Africa welcomes you all!

I thank you!