



MINISTRY
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF
TOURISM, HON. MS. MAKHOTSO MAGGIE
SOTYU (MP) AT THE GALA DINNER
HOSTED BY THE AFRICAN CHINESE
WOMEN ASSOCIATION AT THE INDABA
HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE IN
JOHANNESBURG**

15 MARCH 2025

Programme Director,
Esteemed members of the African Chinese
Women Association,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening,

It is a pleasure and huge privilege to be here tonight as we celebrate the bonds of friendship, collaboration and empowerment that define the relationship African and Chinese women in business, culture and development have.

Programme Director

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for the invitation to attend tonight's event.

The Republic of South Africa and the People's Republic of China have a special bond that ties us together. The Chinese community's history with South Africa dates back to the 1800s and is considered as an integral part of our society, and contributes significantly to the cultural and economic landscape.

This prestige gathering tonight is not only a reflection of the strong ties between Africa and China, but also a recognition of the vital role that women play in shaping industries, particularly in tourism.

The tourism sector remains a powerful driver of economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange. However, for it to reach its full potential, we must ensure that women, who make up the majority of the tourism workforce, are given equal opportunities to lead, innovate, and thrive.

In South Africa, we are committed to fostering gender equity within tourism, and I am proud to highlight several key initiatives that align with the vision of tourism.

The Cultural Immersion Programme for Tourist Guides - Tourism is more than just showcasing landmarks. It is about storytelling, authenticity, and cultural exchange.

Through our Cultural Immersion Programme for South African Tourist Guides, we are equipping our guides with skills and knowledge to create meaningful experiences for Chinese visitors, ensuring they gain deeper understanding of our diverse heritage.

This initiative strengthens our commitment to service excellence and ensures that tourists leave with not only beautiful memories but also a rich appreciation of our history and traditions.

It is important to inform you that the implementation of the cultural Immersion programme for South African tourist guides and departmental officials in China took place in October 2024.

Programme Director, given the growing significance of the Chinese Market to global tourism, the Department identified Mandarin Language proficiency as a strategic opportunity for tourist guides.

The Department has taken steps to enhance the skills of South African tourist guides by implementing the Mandarin Language Programme.

Since its inception, in 2019, to date, a number of guides have successfully passed the Hanyu Shuipin Kaoshi (HSK) exams at level 1 as part of phase 1) and 2 as part of phase 2 respectively, reaching a proficiency that allows them to offer tours in Mandarin.

A total of twenty-two (22) tourist guides were recommended for phase 3 to visit China last October.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that you would agree when I say this was a wonderful initiative that will ensure that South African tour guides can better meet the needs of Chinese tourists and provide them with memorable experiences.

To further encourage Chinese visitors to visit our shores, the South African government announced a ground-breaking Trusted Tour Operator Scheme which significantly ease the process and allow for a seamless visa application process for Chinese travellers and tour operators.

This scheme is truly a massive win for the tourism and business events sector. The Department of Tourism uses the new visa initiatives as enablers to grow tourism arrivals to South Africa which will in turn drive inclusive economic growth and job creation.

It is also crucial to recognise the women in tourism sector who face unique challenges, from access to funding and training to leadership opportunities.

And it is for this reason that the Department of Tourism projects are designed to provide skills development, mentorship, and financial support to women entrepreneurs in the industry.

By investing in women-led businesses, we are unlocking new economic pathways and ensuring that tourism remains an inclusive and transformative sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed members of the African Women association,

In pursuit of inclusive economic growth, the Department has initiated a Women in Tourism programme to drive the inclusion of women entrepreneurs in the industry.

The focus areas include personal development training, supporting women to develop a competitive advantage in their businesses and provision of capacity building initiatives.

The Department of Tourism implemented a Business Management Training and Mentorship Programme to support women-owned enterprises in the tourism sector for a period of one year.

This project covered SMMEs across the country and targeted a total of two hundred-and-twenty-five (225) women-owned tourism SMMEs.

The UNWTO Women in Tourism Empowerment programme sets a precedent for establishing tourism as a tool for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, using gender analysis and gender training to tackle inequality and gender-based discrimination in the tourism industry.

Programme Director, I cannot step away from this podium without highlighting an exciting opportunity granted to South Africa namely the G20 Summit, which will take centre stage in Johannesburg this November.

This experience presents a significant opportunity for women in tourism to expand their businesses, forge new partnerships, and showcase South Africa's rich tourism offerings to a global audience.

As South Africa prepares for this prestigious event, there will be increased demands for accommodation, cultural experiences, tour services, and hospitality, creating business opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

Women-led businesses must position themselves by offering authentic experiences and services.

Proactive marketing of your services as women-led businesses, embracing of innovation and collaborating with stakeholders, women in tourism can maximise the economic benefits that will accompany the G20 and it can result in lasting business growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests,
As we reflect on the achievements of the African Chinese Women Association and the broader South Africa-Chinese partnership, we recognise that tourism and trade remain powerful bridges between our two nations.

Strengthening tourism ties with China means investing in cultural understanding, language training, market research, and infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience.

By working together, government, private sector, and civil society can ensure that South Africa remains a top destination for Chinese travellers while also creating economic opportunities for women, entrepreneurs and communities.

I thank you for your commitment to building these bridges, and I look forward to seeing the continued growth of our partnership in the years ahead.

I Thank you all, and, enjoy the evening further.