



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Address by Minister Tokozile Xasa at Blue Flag Status event in Jeffreys Bay in the Eastern Cape

04 October 2017

Programme Director;
Chief Executive officer of WESSA- Dr. Thommie Burger;
Executive Mayor of Kouga- Ms. Elza van Lingen;
Councillors present;
Municipal Manager of Kouga Mr Charl du Plessis;
Organisers of the event;
Esteemed guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen

What a privilege it is, to be present at this momentous occasion, to witness sixty two of our blue flag beaches, Marinas and tourism boats being awarded a certificate of recognition for the excellent work done in profiling South Africa as an internationally recognized destination whose water quality, environmental management systems and safety are of a world class standard . The Blue Flag is the prestigious , voluntary eco- label for beaches, boats and marinas that is recognized as a trusted symbol of quality and is regarded by the World Tourism Organisation as the most well known global eco- label . am also happy to share this moment with all of you who made it possible.- WESSA in partnership with Coastal Municipalities.

The UN declared 2017 as the "Year for Sustainable Tourism - A Tool for Development " - an initiative to mobilize the tourism industry,its stakeholders,partners,from national ,provincial,and local governments , international organizations and the private sector to work together towards development and promotion of tourism that is economically beneficial ,environmentally friendly ,and socially equitable and culturally responsive. The launch today fits exactly to the theme and provide us with one additional selling point as we market South Africa to the world and to South Africans themselves.

Programme Director, South Africa is no ordinary destination, it has the bluest flag beaches in the Southern Hemisphere. Guests can enjoy adventure tourism, world-class food and wine, a wide range of quality accommodation, wildlife, skiing and our beaches that are environmentally friendly. To these business tourism and Culture and heritage have been added in order to keep visitors longer to enjoy the experiences we offer.

One point two billion (1.2 billion) tourists travelled the world in 2016. South Africa managed to attract about 10 million. This is just the tip of the iceberg. One of our short term goals aimed at growing our market share internationally and locally is to attract 5 million tourist arrivals in 5 years. That means four million foreign arrivals and one million domestic holiday trips. Growth in tourism means jobs and opportunities for entrepreneurs hence it is referred to as "**South Africa's new gold**". Whilst maximizing the economic benefits for our communities, we need to continuously protect our biodiversity and ecosystems where tourist businesses are located. Our domestic tourism campaign "We Do Tourism Sustainability " also seeks to encourage all SAn to participate in tourism.

Coastal tourism is the source of livelihood for most of our people. It is therefore important that those who are involved in managing our beaches, care for this vital asset and ensure that their users have a positive experience. Visitors who go home with good memories and experiences share those with their families, friends and relatives. This generates an ever-increasing publicity that no amount of

money can buy. To our travelers who uses our beaches, they have a duty to ensure that these resources are enjoyed in a civic and sustainable manner.

Tourism is about partnerships, both in the public and private sector including the value chain. The ability to provide quality and environmentally sustainable beach space, remains, a major priority and a key success factor for our tourism industry. The department has entered into a partnership with WESSA to implement the Tourism Blue Flag Beach Programme since 2016. We are utilizing the Expanded Public Works Programme to achieve targeted number of jobs and tourists to our shores.

The Blue Flag is a project linked to the Department's Blue Flag Programme. Programme Director, I am privileged to announce that through this project, we will re-awarding Blue Flag status today, to some of the beaches that lost their blue flag status in the 2016/17 season. This achievement is attributed to the Blue Flag Beach Stewards project which managed to ensure that our beaches continue to maintain Blue Flag standards. Most importantly, many of the Beach Stewards have been involved in critical environmental education activities on the beaches. The Beach Stewards have also been involved in important data collection which includes tourism data, safety and environmental incident data. This data helps with meeting the Blue Flag status criteria. We are proud of you and want to engage further with WESSA on the sustainability of this program.

One of the key government programmes which the coastal provinces will benefit from is the Coastal and Marine Tourism which is led by the Department in partnership with various tourism stakeholders, has close links with the Blue Flag project. The vision is to grow a world class and sustainable coastal and marine tourism destination that leverages South Africa's competitive advantage in nature, culture, and heritage.

The coastal and marine tourism sector will contribute about R21.4 billion to the GDP and create about 116 000 direct jobs by 2026, thus reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment, while contributing to sustainable livelihoods and development. These estimates are conservative as they are growing from a low 2015 base of R 11.9 billion direct contribution to GDP and 64 400 direct jobs.

The Coastal and Marine Tourism Implementation Plan will be implemented in a nodal or cluster approach which will prioritise destinations rather than individual tourism projects or products. The identified nodes/clusters in the First Phase (0 - 5 years) encompass the following geographic areas:

- Node 1: Durban and surrounds (KwaZulu-Natal);
- Node 2: Umkhanyakude District including Umhlabuyalingana and surrounds (KwaZulu-Natal);
- Node 3: Port St Johns to Coffee Bay (Eastern Cape);
- Node 4: East London, Port Elizabeth and surrounds (Eastern Cape);
- Node 5: Cape Town and surrounds (Western Cape); and
- Node 6: West Coast and surrounds (Northern Cape).

Initiatives in all of these nodes cover six thematic areas namely:

- marketing, events and routes
- regulations and permitting
- research and spatial planning
- beach precinct development, tourism infrastructure and tourism safety
- maritime tourism and
- skills development.

Over the last year, three initiatives, namely Blue Flag Beaches Programme, Boat Based Whale Watching and Shark Cage Diving and Off Road Vehicle 4X4 Beach Driving have commenced. These initiatives will continue to be taken forward in the First Phase Implementation Plan.

The department is looking forward to have further engagements with WESSA and other critical stakeholders that are part of the tourism Blue Flag initiative to explore possible initiatives that could assist the young people upon completion of the training to be able to pursue different routes in terms of being independent fully. The training should make them to either start their own businesses or be employable.

Let me conclude by saying that the most important dividend for tourism in South Africa is our contribution to the quality of human life in our cities and provinces. To WESSA, Municipalities and other stakeholders in the tourism value chain, thank you again for the commitment to grow the blue flag Programme in South Africa, and also piloting new beaches and assisting them to reach the standards required to be considered for Blue Flag status.

I thank you