



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Address by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Africa Travel Indaba, Chief Albert Luthuli ICC, Ethekewini

4 May 2019

Minister of Tourism, Mr Derek Hanekom,
Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Elizabeth Thabethe,
Honourable Ministers of Tourism from other countries,
Acting Premier of KwaZulu-Natal and our host, Mr Sihle Zikalala,
Executive Mayor of the Ethekewini Metropolitan Municipality, Ms Zandile Gumede,
Chairperson of the Board of South African Tourism, Ms Pam Yako and other board members,
Exhibitors, buyers and members of the media,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the government and the people of South Africa, I thank you for coming to our beautiful country and to the city of Durban.

As the global citizens that we all are, we are physically separated by borders whichever part of the world we come from. We are however united by our affinity and our love for this great continent Africa, the cradle of humankind.

It is Africa's status as the Mother Continent, as home to some of the oldest hominid fossils and some of the world's most unique biodiversity, that makes this continent a prime tourist destination.

We have majestic mountains and smiling hills; pristine beaches; and abundant fauna and flora, some of which are found here and nowhere else on earth.

We have world-class national parks that are at the forefront of the conservation of rare and endangered species.

Africa has vast expanses of majestic scenery, from Erg Chebbi in the ancient Sahara desert, to the mountain highlands of Virunga, to the savannah grasslands of the Masai-Mara, to the place at the Southern tip of our continent where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet.

A hundred and thirty five World Heritage Sites are in Africa, from Aksum in Ethiopia to the city of Timbuktu in Mali to the Great Zimbabwe.

Visitors to the many countries on our continent are able to engage in a range of sporting, recreational and leisure activities.

We tend to think of tourism as being associated with pleasure motives such as visiting iconic sites and getting involved in recreational activities, but it can also embrace business, education, health or religion as a basis for travelling.

Tourism, as your host, Minister Hanekom aptly put it during his opening address, is the New Gold.

It is a sector that is thriving and that has tremendous potential for further growth and for the creation of jobs.

There is growing global consensus on the need for countries to pursue paths of sustainable development, to grow and transform our respective economies while minimising our impact on nature.

African countries are taking the lead in sustainable tourism and eco-tourism.

We need to expand tourism in our countries, to contribute to economic growth, to increase our foreign earnings, to bring more people into the mainstream of our economies, and to boost related industries.

Tourism is one of the most international of industries for it is an industry that tends to showcase a country's identity and offering to the world.

Tourism has an extensive value chain, stimulating economic activity in manufacturing, in the services sector and in the creative and cultural industries.

Most importantly, tourism holds great promise for the development of small businesses in our countries.

It is when you stay in small bed and breakfast establishments or small hotels, that you get to interact with the locals, listen to their stories about the area, and get advice on the best, least-known places to go on site seeing trips.

The influx of visitors means more people get employment as tour guides, as drivers, as caterers and as producers of memorable artefacts to name but just a few.

Local people are able to show off the attractions with pride for their history, their culture and traditions.

As part of our efforts to revitalise our economy, South Africa is focusing our energies on labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture, the oceans economy and tourism.

We have set ourselves a bold target to raise over \$100 billion in new investment over five years.

Tourism plays a critical role in that strategy.

In South Africa, the annual growth rate of tourism is currently exceeding the goals in our national tourism strategy and it is expected to grow even further.

We are however acutely aware that we face competition from other tourism destinations around the globe. This is so because modern tourist is discerning.

They are spoiled for choice when it comes to where they choose to take themselves and their families, and spend their money.

We live in the age of AirBnB, of CityMapper, of SkyScanner and of TripAdvisor.

It is an age where the end-to-end travel experience has been optimised through technology – where decisions on where to go and where to stay, and where not to go and where not to stay, are made on the basis of peer review.

This means that we have to marshal all the means at our disposal to show that we have what it takes to be that destination and to offer that experience that tourists want.

To do so, we must address and overcome a number of challenges. I just want to mention ten issues we need to give attention to.

Firstly we must reduce the onerous and often unnecessary bureaucratic red tape that tourists who want to visit our countries face.

This requires of us to streamline our tourist visa regimes.

As South Africa, we are committed to working towards the African Union's goal of visa free travel and a single African air transport market.

We are in the process of radically overhauling our visa dispensation for the rest of the world and introducing a world class e-visa system.

Secondly we must deal with crime and counter the perception that Africa is an unsafe tourism destination.

This means we have to devote more resources to tackling acts of criminality, particularly crimes against tourists.

Initiatives like the Kenya Tourism Federation Safety and Communication Centre, the Tourism Police in Uganda and our own tourism safety monitors in South Africa are examples of measures that can be undertaken.

Thirdly we must be vigorous in promoting domestic tourism and get the citizens of our countries to travel and see the beauty of their own countries.

Fourthly as governments we need to actively seek out private sector partners for the establishment of new tourism products and offerings. To do this, we must forge stronger public-private partnerships.

Fifthly tourism must be seen as each country's combined national effort where we must enhance Inter-governmental cooperation between different departments and agencies. This will be key to ensuring that we meet our goals.

Sixthly modern tourism requires organisational systems and the provision of a supporting infrastructure of facilities and personnel able to run the tourism business. This means that we should develop and upgrade our energy generation, clean water reticulation, roads, bridges, hotels, hospitals, telecommunication, our game parks and many other facilities. We must also pay attention to

Seventhly we need to consciously empower the youth and women by giving them pathways to participate effectively in the tourism industry as owners and managers of various offerings and businesses. This industry must be positioned as a key empowering sector of the economy whose power we should unleash and use to change the lives of people in our urban and rural areas.

Eighthly we need to be united in our aspiration to build and brand Africa as a continent of success and a continent that will shine as a tourist destination for the world and for our own people.

The ninth thing we should do is to embrace technology in the era of the fourth industrial revolution. Artificial intelligence, blockchain and the internet of things requires that our tourism offerings must be well aligned with enveloping technologies. In a few years to come a tourist will land at our airports and have a self driven car taking them to pre programmed tourist destinations. We might soon have to design tourism offerings for robots. Let's get ready for the brave new world that is coming

The tenth thing is that we should be open to international benchmarks that we should use to drive-up the standards, competitiveness and the quality of our domestic tourism industry.

Ladies and gentlemen we are here because we want to position our respective countries and our continent at the forefront of progress, technological advance and innovation in the tourism sector.

We are here because we want to double, triple and quadruple the number of visitors we receive in our countries every year.

We also want to boost domestic tourism, for we often lose sight of the imperative of getting our own citizens to explore what their countries have to offer.

We share a common goal, to offer a unique, one-of-a-kind and unforgettable consumer and business travel experience.

South Africa is proud to host this Indaba in the year that we mark 25 years since we attained our freedom.

Our liberation opened our ports of entry – and more importantly, our hearts and homes – to visitors and investors from all over the world.

This Indaba, with all that it offers, is a testimony to the fact that Africa is a continent of innovation with a strong focus on the future.

We are a continent that is open and welcoming.

When it comes to tourism and many other areas of human endeavour we are a continent on the move.

Let's go and build a brave new world that will attract the world to come back home to Africa.

I thank you.