



**MINISTRY  
TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, MS. MAKHOTSO MAGGIE  
SOTYU AT THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CONFERENCE**

**26 FEBRUARY 2025**

Programme Director, The Executive Mayor,  
Chairperson of Afrikan Native Travel Political heads,  
DG, CEO's,  
Departmental Officials,  
Community Members Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning, invited guests, industry leaders, ladies and gentleman and most importantly, our entrepreneurs and business owners who are shaping the future of tourism.

I want to express my profound gratitude for being accorded the privilege to address you all here today at the Sustainable Tourism Conference.

Programme Director, it is an honour to stand before everyone today at this critical conference, where we come together to address a pressing issue in our industry namely sustainable tourism.

This conversation should not only be about preserving the environment, but also building long-term economic opportunities to ensure inclusive growth and to position black-owned businesses at the forefront of a thriving and responsible tourism sector.

As we all know, tourism is a powerful driver of economic growth and job creation. But if not managed responsibly it can have a negative impact on our natural resources, displace communities and leave more harm than good.

Embracing sustainable tourism by black- owned businesses is not just about being part of a world-wide trend, but it is a necessity for resilience, competitiveness and profitability.

Ladies and gentlemen, the word sustainability also refers to the ability to pursue development, create jobs and build the economy.

One reality is that many black-owned tourism businesses face systemic barriers, have limited access to finances and even struggle with market visibility.

Our conference needs to also address issues such as these and look for solutions to promote sustainable tourism for the long run.

Green initiatives should also be seen as an important way to sustain tourism. Many visitors across the world prefer green establishments.

They also prefer businesses that invest in local communities. If we do not adapt, we risk being left behind.

When I say we need to adapt, I refer the fact that sustainability in tourism is about making smart, future-proof decisions.

It is important that black-owned businesses get on board and embrace profitable, eco-friendly operations such as energy-efficient operations, or eco-friendly waste management.

Let us think broadly, from guesthouses using solar energy to restaurants sourcing locally grown organic produce.

I mentioned previously that visitors are drawn toward business that invest in local communities.

With this said, black-owned businesses are uniquely positioned to champion or focus on community driven tourism.

By offering authentic, local experiences, such as cultural tours, township experiences you can create meaningful travel encounters. This also ensures economic benefits within the local communities.

As we move with the times, it is crucial that we keep with AI. Digital platforms, from social media are great tools to market businesses.

Online platforms now allow travellers to search specifically for eco-conscious businesses. Black-businesses and entrepreneurs must remember that if your business is not telling a sustainable story, you are missing a very important opportunity to attract modern travellers from all over the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the year 2025 holds great significance for our country, as South Africa takes centre stage as both the chair and host of the Group 20 (G20).

With the world's attention increasingly focussed on us, this is a remarkable opportunity to showcase our nation's leadership and global influence.

In November 2025, Johannesburg will host the globe's most influential leaders for the Presidential Summit.

A series of ministerial and senior officials meetings will be held across our country as a build up towards the main G20 Summit in November.

Our government has ensured that these meetings are held all across the country as all these events will provide a unique opportunity to showcase our world-class facilities, rich heritage and unmatched tourism offerings.

As these G20 meetings are taking place, it is crucial for our township businesses to be prepared, ensuring our products and services address key market needs.

Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises must lead, seizing opportunities to showcase their innovations and uniqueness.

Today, Ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you - let us make the most of this opportunity!

Programme Director, as government we acknowledge that we have a big role to play. We recognise that black entrepreneurs need support to transition towards sustainability.

That is why I want to highlight programmes that the government currently offer to strengthen initiatives of such: Our Tourism Incentive Programme is being implemented to promote, transform, and encourage the development and growth of the tourism sector.

The Tourism Transformation Fund offers a combination of debt finance and grant funding for smaller, new and expansion tourism development projects with majority black shareholding.

It is important to note that the programme is administered through the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) on behalf of the Department and the applications follows the same process as that of a normal loan application to the NEF.

The Green Tourism Incentive Programme is aimed at star graded tourism establishments which want to move towards greener practices.

This programme offers partial grant funding support on the cost of retrofitting tourism facilities with energy and water efficiency equipment and systems based on the outcome of an audit.

Currently the application window for this programme is still open until the end of the month and information is available on the Department of Tourism website.

Ladies and gentlemen, we remain committed to strengthening the competitiveness of tourism SMMEs through ongoing entrepreneurial development, skills training, advisory support, mentorship, information sharing, and market exposure programmes.

Additionally, the Department will continue implementing destination enhancement and route development initiatives to diversify tourism experiences and enrich visitor engagement in key priority areas.

To every black tourism entrepreneur here today, I want to say: The future of tourism is sustainability.

Your business has the power to redefine African tourism. We must move from seeing sustainability as a challenge, but embrace it as an opportunity.

Let us commit ourselves today as government, private sector, entrepreneurs, small enterprises to invest in a tourism industry that is not only profitable, but also ethical, inclusive and future-proof.

Programme Director, together we can ensure that black-owned businesses are not just mere participants in the tourism sector, but leaders in its sustainable transformation.

I Thank you all.