



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Opening address by Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom for Indaba 2016 at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre in Durban**

**7 May 2016**

My fellow Ministers of Tourism from Africa,  
Members of National, Provincial and Municipal Government present,  
Organisers, exhibitors, buyers and members of the media,

You are all part of our tourism family. Many of you have travelled long distances to get together here today, as families often do.

Welcome to *your* South Africa - a country on a long journey, on "the long walk to freedom", to quote our beloved former President Nelson Mandela. Every day takes us closer to our dream of a truly non-racial, non-sexist society, and to our final destination of freedom, equality and prosperity for all.

Earlier this week, our Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa described the story of South Africa like this: "Ultimately, this is a story of new and re-shaped lives, new hopes, new dreams, new opportunities and new adventures for millions of our people. It is a story of a new South African."

Welcome to Durban, the heart of evergreen KwaZulu-Natal, where you will meet many *new* South Africans. From the time that the sun rises over the warm Indian Ocean, to the time it sinks behind the majestic Drakensberg Mountains, this province has a special buzz.

It's that wonderful mix of people and their culture coming together with exquisite places, making the province come alive with excitement every day.

The city and the province have made this event a magnificent one. As you arrive through King Shaka International Airport, as you drive along the streets of Durban, the placards and posters send one clear message: Indaba is here, stronger than ever!

I extend a special welcome to the Ministers of Tourism from our continent: from Burkino Faso, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and to the MECs for Tourism from all our provinces.

We are all united in our aspiration to build and brand Africa as a continent of unparalleled opportunity.

We have joined hands to make tourism a sector of hope and progress for our people. We must now focus on concrete actions to achieve our aspirations.

Indaba is the premier African travel and tourism show, with exhibits from 18 countries on the continent this year.

It expresses what the soul of Africa is all about. This is what it means to share what we have, and to work together to get what we want. This is how we exist, through the existence of those around us. We are bound together by our common past, and our future is intertwined.

Indaba links every person in this room to each other. We feel a powerful sense of belonging when we come together to move tourism forward.

It starts with the people who partner with SA Tourism to put on this great show. During the next few days, business partnerships will be forged between product owners and buyers. And after the stands have been packed away, it will be about how our governments throughout the continent partner with industry and communities, and how we join forces to receive the next wave of tourists.

Indaba is all about partnerships. Last year we announced our intention to find a partner to make Indaba even more impactful. I am told that we are at an advanced stage of negotiations with a prospective partner.

Today, the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre reflects the vibrant culture of Africa. What a great way to commemorate Africa Month, when the 1.2 billion people of Africa get together to celebrate our cultural heritage, our arts and music, and the creativity of our people.

Africa Month is an appropriate time to pay tribute to Albert Luthuli. His life story may be well known to many of you here. But, for the benefit of our visitors from abroad, let me tell you just a little about this man. He lived his life in pursuit of universal freedom.

Inkosi Luthuli once said:

*"Our interest in freedom is not confined to ourselves only. We are interested in the liberation of the oppressed in the whole of Africa and in the world as a whole."*

He was the first person in Africa to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. As one of the early leaders of the African National Congress, he contributed to making South Africa the nation we are today. And our continent is making steady headway in achieving Albert Luthuli's aspirations.

Africa is a vibrant melting pot for tourism: the diverse cultures, customs and traditions of our people, merged with the endless variety of our landscapes, blended with our unique biodiversity, and fired by the spirit of freedom and equality.

As tourism succeeds, the continent succeeds, and millions of people benefit from this success. Tourism in South Africa, and in Africa, is on the brink of a new success story.

Some of the challenges we experienced in South Africa last year resulted in dwindling tourism numbers. That is now behind us, and we are experiencing spectacular growth in our tourist arrivals. All indications are that 2016 will be a bumper year for tourism in South Africa.

In fact, tourism is poised for growth across Africa.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation estimates that international tourist arrivals will grow by 4% this year. Tourist arrivals in Africa are expected to reach 130 million by 2030. This is more than double the 50 million arrivals we are currently receiving.

Investment in tourism across Africa is making tourism a key economic driver. Emerging economies are shifting away from their reliance on commodities, and moving towards innovation and the services sector.

Tourism on our continent is built on the enduring value of our natural assets and the authentic cultural experiences we offer. It also depends on our capacity to provide excellent infrastructure, facilities and service.

We are a massive continent. The sheer scale of our deserts, forests and plains is a wonder in itself, let alone their beauty. We have the most amazing natural splendor. Our landscapes and biodiversity are unmatched in the world. We have World Heritage Sites that reveal the earth's secrets and relate the story of humanity.

But all our attractions and facilities would stand idle without the people, the genuine people of Africa, welcoming tourists warmly, catering for their needs professionally, and sharing our culture in memorable ways.

The world's tourists want what we have: authentic, meaningful experiences. They still want leisure, wildlife and adventure, and they continue to come to Africa for this. But, more and more, tourists want to meet real people in their homes and communities. They want a taste of local traditions and customs.

This provides opportunities for many more people from indigenous communities to become involved in tourism.

In South Africa we are investing in our key sites, and training our people to enhance the visitor experience at these destinations. We have started fitting selected attractions with solar energy to reduce their reliance on the national grid and to lower their operational costs.

As we build our destination, we are also adjusting our marketing efforts to keep pace with global trends.

We all need to pay more attention to the image and reputation of Africa, not only through effective marketing, but by putting on a really great show when tourists arrive. Their word of mouth will do our marketing for us when they return home.

Across the continent, we face similar challenges. We also share similar potential for sustainable growth. We all stand to benefit from working together, instead of competing with each other.

Indaba provides us with the ideal platform to do this. A successful Indaba contributes to the success of tourism in all our countries.

Our exhibitors are the key to unlocking this potential. They are the product owners, and they represent our continent's diverse offers.

The interaction between exhibitors and buyers is central to the success of any travel trade show.

Buyers are looking for a one-stop show that offers a wide range of tourism products and services.

This year, buyers at Indaba have been sourced from key global markets.

Africa is a continent of unparalleled opportunity, and tourism is where the greatest untapped opportunity lies. It is the fountain of hope that promises progress for our people.

Many of our countries are addressing their visa policies, their infrastructure, health and hygiene standards, and the protection of their natural resources.

Mobile bookings are on the rise in Africa. About 15% of room nights are now booked on a mobile phone. This allows product owners to attract many more customers at a far lower cost.

It is also significant that SADC Tourism Ministers have agreed to transform RETOSA into a dedicated marketing organization, which will make our joint marketing efforts more efficient and effective.

Our Department of Tourism has hosted workshops to share best practice with several sister countries on the continent.

However, despite positive development like these, our continent still faces impediments to growth. Air transport services remain a key constraint. Many major airlines fly to Africa from North America, Europe, and Asia. But, once visitors reach the continent, they encounter difficulties in travelling from country to country.

If one quarter of African countries were to implement the Open Skies for Africa decision and facilitate greater air access between our countries, an additional 155,000 jobs and USD 1.3 billion in GDP could be generated, with obvious benefits for tourism.

We are delighted to welcome 575 national and international media people to Indaba 2016. We value your presence here immensely. We look forward to sharing the success story of tourism in Africa with you, so that you can share it with the world.

Tourism offers an opportunity for our media to cast the narrative of Africa in an entirely new light, one that brightens up the future of the continent and contributes to the African success story.

Allow me to leave you with another quote from Inkosi Albert Luthuli. These words were spoken in a bygone era, well before our country began our journey to democracy, but they are just as relevant today:

*"Friends, let us make no mistake, the road to freedom is always full of difficulties. Before we reach the summit of freedom, many will have fallen by the wayside as a result of enemy action, and others, through personal despondency, may abandon the fight. But I call upon you, as a true son of South Africa, to be true to Africa, and count no sacrifice too great for her redemption."*

As we all embark on our long walk together, tourism will help us to grow our economies and advance our people. And this will take us to the summit of freedom.

Thank you.

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