



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

Deputy Ministers' Welcome speech at WTM Africa Trade Show

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Programme Director
City of Cape Town Mayoral Committee Member, Cllr Garreth Bloor
Managing Director – Thebe Reed Exhibitions, Ms Carol Weaving
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the third annual World Travel Market Africa Exhibition hosted by the beautiful Mother City of Cape Town.

As always, Cape Town is such a gracious host - known not only for its iconic tourist attractions but also for its homegrown hospitality. Home to a rich melting pot of cultures, this city at the tip of Africa, warmly welcomes you.

South Africa is a prime tourism destination with abundant natural beauty, and diverse heritage and culture. Our products and services range from mainstream tourist attractions such as the 120 World Heritage Sites in Africa, to our excellent business tourism and conferencing facilities, and the more niche products such as adventure tourism, culture and heritage tourism and social tourism.

As the Department of Tourism in South Africa, we are delighted to participate in platforms that elevate the African tourism growth story; because we understand that there is no single story about this wonderful continent and World Travel Market Africa is one such platform, as a Business to Business (B2B) exhibition for the inbound and outbound African travel and tourism markets.

There is no doubt that tourism changes lives and communities, whilst adding a deep cultural understanding and appreciation for those enjoying the experience. South Africa and indeed Africa as a whole, has been enjoying the growth of this magnificent sector.

Contrary to the positive global performance, the number of international tourists to South Africa declined by -6.8% (or 645 463) in 2015, with a total tourist arrival figure of 8 903 773 in line with StatsSA Tourism Migration Report.

This performance is below the global average of a +4.4% increase in tourist arrivals due to the aftermath of Ebola and the unintended consequences of changes to immigration regulations in the first two quarters of 2015. A gradual recovery is expected from most international markets in 2016.

The Tourism Sector has however achieved significant milestones, moving from less than one million foreign arrivals in the late 1980s and has undergone such a diversification.

According to the 2015 Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum; South Africa ranks as the lead destination in its region and ranks 48th globally. This is driven by its rich natural and cultural resources and a positive business environment. Our business and trade events strategy focuses on 6 sectors viz; mining and minerals, manufacturing, BPO, creative industries, and ICT. We want to develop Africa as a source market for business and leisure.

Tourism is recognised as one of the main drivers of the country's economy and employment. The sector is also recognised as one of the six core pillars of growth in the New Growth Path.

Consequently, we will continue to work with all spheres of government and the private sector to grow tourism and its contribution to social and economic development. As at the end of 2014, it is estimated that tourism supported about 680 817 direct jobs (4.5% of total employment) from a baseline of 553 990 in 2009 (Source: StatsSA Tourism Satellite Account).

As outlined in the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS), released in 2011, we endeavour to work with industry partners to grow the tourism economy, enhance visitor experiences and to strive for sustainability and good governance.

Responsible tourism in South Africa is a great way of making a positive difference through travel. You return home refreshed, carbon-neutral and culturally enriched, with memories to last a lifetime.

We will look at incentivising the retrofitting of tourism attractions and accommodation for energy and water efficiency as well as universal accessibility. Sector-wide retrofitting could create new and green jobs for years to come, and lower operational costs while doing what is best for the environment.

I would however encourage you to think beyond green building design and energy efficiency in physical facilities. You will have to look into your supply chains, including the procurement of sustainable food supplies, lower-carbon land transport and waste management. And, very importantly, the extent to which local communities benefit.

Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) is a pioneering initiative that promotes equitable and sustainable tourism development in South Africa through a range of activities including awareness raising, capacity building, advocacy and the facilitation of the world's first Fair Trade tourism certification programme. The FTTSA certification programme awards a special certification Trademark (label) to tourism enterprises in South Africa that meet specific sustainability criteria based on global Fair Trade standards and locally relevant issues such as skills development, ownership and HIV/Aids management.

We continue to work in partnership with product and service owners in the tourism sector to find ways in which we can strengthen the quality of our destination offering, and the ease with which you can conduct business.

This trade show, and all the other platforms of this nature, provides the kind of access to markets that is essential for us to continue growing. However, it is also important when you are signing your deals to think about the benefits that your business can bring to the communities where these tourism products and services are located. Platforms such as these offer a business to business networking opportunity that goes a long way towards strengthening our tourism brand.

Destination marketing alone would prove futile without opportunities such as this where buyers and product owners can conduct transactions and close deals. It is in this space that public private partnerships play an important role, and we appreciate all platforms that create such interaction.

I wish you many productive and profitable engagements during your stay here and urge you to take some time out and enjoy our beautiful city with all its sites. We wish you many happy returns.

I thank you.