



**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

**Opening address by the Minister of Tourism, Mr Derek Hanekom to the SAACI
Congress held on 3 August 2015 in Cape Town**

03 August 2015

Officials and members of the South African Association for the Conference Industry,
Congress delegates,
Media representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and a privilege to be in the company of key players in the business events industry. This year's theme: "It's business – it's personal" really resonates with me. I firmly believe that the best business done is business driven by passion, conducted with personal integrity, and sincere belief in the greater good. On the other hand, the personal experiences we provide in the tourism sector must be backed up by a high level of professionalism and excellence.

This is particularly significant when one considers the immediate impact and the ripple effect of the work of the conference and meetings industry. These events bring people into our country, and when they have a truly memorable experience, which is largely the result of experiencing excellence and quality contact with people, they will spread the word about our amazing offerings around the world, and many more people will want to experience it for themselves.

And this, in its turn, contributes to our overall tourism performance, and allows tourism to continue supporting one in every ten South Africans in employment, and to continue contributing about 9.5 percent of the country's GDP in total.

Your commitment to making our national tourism sector successful, and making our country globally successful, is an inspiration for all of us. This is demonstrated by the pledge you took three years ago, when we adopted South Africa's Business Events Strategy. You expressed your commitment to work together as an industry, and to include government to ensure that we accomplish big milestones by working as a unit.

These milestones are about your personal and business achievements, and about those of the entire country as well. After all, the growth of this industry is also about the growth of our nation.

As Thulani alluded to in his introductory remarks, the effect of your work is far-reaching. You have been able to create businesses that touch the lives of people in significant ways.

When the strategy was conceptualized four years ago, you had a pretty good idea of the type of skills needed to grow and strengthen our country. Six priority economic sectors were identified in which the business events industry can play a meaningful developmental role. These were: Manufacturing, Mining and Metals, Business Process Outsourcing, Creative Industries, Life Sciences, and Information and Communication Technology.

As an industry, you had the foresight to understand that attracting conventions in these key sectors would assist our country in advancing towards a more knowledge based economy.

You vowed to take the entire industry, and our country, to new heights. For that, I salute you. Your success equates to our country's success, and that is what we so badly need - growth and success for our country, and for our continent.

Meetings Africa, our hugely successful regional business events trade show, has generated quick wins for the business events industry on the entire continent.

To strengthen and grow collaboration on the continent, the South African National Conventions Bureau developed a dedicated corporate buyer's programme at Meetings Africa, and this created new opportunities for the industry. This was in keeping with the global trend that National and Corporate Meetings events are just as important as international business events in growing the industry.

Exhibitors have already secured business deals directly from participating in the programme.

All of you here today have affirmed the world's confidence in South Africa as a capable business events destination. It is because of your professionally managed international convention centres, smaller business event facilities, and your well known hosting capabilities, that we occupy the 32nd spot on the ICCA rankings.

We continue to hold the top position for Africa and the Middle East. This is no small feat, considering the fast evolving and dynamic global environment that we operate in.

Ladies and gentlemen, I do not want to downplay the many challenges you face in securing association events for our country.

It is imperative that the industry works together with key decision makers in government to identify and try to overcome the barriers that impact on hosting events in our country successfully.

Factors such as the safety of delegates, affordability of our offerings, air access and ease of entry into our country all impact on the success of the industry.

We are all aware that the recently introduced visa regulations have had an impact on tourism. You will also be aware that Cabinet has decided to establish a team of Ministers to consider and review the unintended consequences of these regulations.

While this process is underway, we should all reaffirm our commitment to work together, and make the best of the growth opportunities emerging around us.

The international association industry is a very competitive market, and it is driven by membership growth opportunities. Many of these rotating conferences have never been to the African continent, and Africa offers them a growth opportunity that cannot be matched by any other continent.

The African continent hosts, on average, about 350 of the 12,800 international association meetings held around the world. Hosting more of these events in Africa will make the continent more globally competitive. South Africa's stature as the leading host destination for international association meetings is well established. Our ICCA rankings continue to get better, and this is a powerful endorsement of our country's professionalism and excellent infrastructure.

South Africa is also well represented in the international association industry. For the first time in the 50-year history of ICCA, an African and Durbanite, Nina Freysen-Pretorius was elected president of this prestigious organisation.

The value chain of an international association meeting consists of many key elements, and a wide range of stakeholders without whom it will not be possible to organise these type of events. This ranges from professional conference organisers, venues, convention bureaus and support services, who all need to play their part in staging world class meetings. South Africa is fortunate to have globally recognised service providers that allow us to stage highly successful events.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to assure you that you have the full support of government, and in particular the National Convention Bureau (SANCB)

This year we introduced the Tourism Incentive Programme, which is geared towards supporting market access opportunities for the industry at international trade shows. Participation at these shows is already subsidised by the Conventions Bureau as a value-added service to the industry.

Under the leadership of this bureau, South Africa has already secured 177 international association conferences for the country over the next five years, which will attract over 253 128 professionals. This will create 753 event days and generate an estimated R3.5 billion in economic impact.

I remain convinced that we are a nation of visionaries, and that our intellectual capital reaches far and wide. But we are also a nation of doers, giving life to our aspirations with creativity and innovation.

We have invested heavily in the conference and business events industry – and these events continue to be good for business and to inspire our knowledge sector. The strongest evidence lies in the huge number of professionals in different sectors that attend association events hosted in our country. Many of these professionals would never have had the opportunity, or the means, to attend an international conference. This demonstrates the wide ranging impact your initiatives have had in securing these conferences for our country.

Ladies and gentleman, taking on the task of hosting an international conference is an enormous responsibility. I am confident that we have the right formula for success, and that, with your valuable contribution, we will achieve our aspirations for the tourism industry.

It is a great pleasure to declare that this Congress is now officially open.

I thank you.