

Media statement by the office of Mr Marthinus Van Schalkwyk, Minister of Tourism

Government and industry to work together to capitalise on World Cup investment

The government and the tourism industry will continue to strengthen their relationship in the wake of South Africa's successful hosting of the 2010 World Cup, Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk said today.

The National Department of Tourism (NDT) and a broad group of stakeholders met yesterday in Kempton Park to analyse the impact of the World Cup, lessons learnt and the way forward for the tourism sector. The matters discussed would help inform the government's ongoing evaluation of South Africa's hosting of the World Cup.

Presentations were done to the meeting by amongst others Mr Jaime Byrom of MATCH, the company appointed by FIFA to provide ticketing, accommodation and information technology services for the World Cup, Mr Brett Dungan of the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (Fedhasa) on accommodation, Mr Michael Tatalias of the South African Tourism Services Association (SATSA) on land transport and other services and Mr Allan Moore of the Board of Airline Representatives of South Africa (BARSA) on air transport.

"The World Cup opened up a new window of opportunity for the tourism industry. It is up to all of us to make use of this opportunity. We must leverage the platform the event has created to reinforce our tourism brand and our competitive positioning. This is an ideal opportunity to take stock and ensure that we create the best possible strategic fit between where we are planning to go and where the future is taking us," Minister van Schalkwyk said.

"The World Cup was about the positioning of our destination. The positive brand value that has been unlocked is immeasurable. The event helped us to turn the corner in terms of foreign perceptions about tourism safety. It was a catalyst for important infrastructure development, amongst others airports, transport and accommodation. These are all important investments in building the future capacity of the tourism sector."

Minister van Schalkwyk said one of the most important next steps to capitalise on the investment in infrastructure development is the establishment of a National Convention and Events Bureau.

"Our proposals in this regard have been received very well by industry. Going forward, I believe it will be critical to focus not only on convention and events tourism, but to make a special effort to enhance our capacity to bid for major events. Our Department will continue to engage with the industry on this, the proposed National Tourism Sector Strategy as well as the proposed comprehensive new tourism bill," the Minister said.

“The World Cup exposed new markets to the South African experience. We will be applying our minds on the best ways and feasibility of unlocking these new markets. At the same time, I also strongly believe that we should not discard our existing market segmentation. Building new markets takes time and huge investment. In pursuing the new markets, we should not forget our ‘bread and butter’ markets. Our decisions should be driven by considerations of tourism volume and value, and a thorough understanding that we are a long haul destination. This should be aligned with our marketing strategies and supported by our airlift planning,” the Minister said.

“Looking back at the World Cup, there were some things that impacted on our industry that we could not change even if we wanted to, such as the strength of the Rand and the timing and scope of the global economic recession. Then there were certain things we know we could have done better at. These include improved structures to manage transport logistics, managing the expectations of the informal accommodation sector and better integration of SMMEs, getting prices right in the face of the global economic downturn and the up-front availability of a database of accommodation.

“Overall, the collective efforts in the tourism sector were key to deliver an exceptional World Cup. As a country, a people, as government and as the private sector we built a shared vision and delivered on it.

“In general we fared very well with tourism safety, service delivery in the formal accommodation sector, the timeous completion of airport and road infrastructure, the management of the increased airlift volumes and the security of air space and the implementation of new systems to facilitate passenger movements.

“Some of the issues we will reflect on further include improved alignment across the three spheres of government, grading and quality assurance, skills development, tourist guide training, the management of media relations, foreign language training and coordinating the national research agenda,” Minister van Schalkwyk said.

“I want to stress the importance of improving alignment across the three spheres of government. As a country we cannot afford to duplicate, for example, international marketing efforts, and from the side of National Government I assured industry that we will actively engage with provinces and local governments to ensure optimal use of our limited resources.”

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