



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Opening address by Minister Derek Hanekom at Indaba 2015**

**9 May 2015**

Tourism Ministers from our continent,  
The Mayor of Durban,  
The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, and members of the Provincial Government,  
The Chairman of South African Tourism and members of the Board,  
The CEO of South African Tourism,  
Exhibitors, buyers, and members of the media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is my first INDABA, in this magnificent province of KwaZulu-Natal.

I stand here proud and impressed. I am impressed by the authentic products and offerings from South Africa and the rest of our spectacular continent. And I am proud to be a part of this spectacular event that takes our extraordinary offers to the world.

It is truly an honour and a privilege for me to welcome visitors from around the world, who are here to discover the wonderful tourism experiences that we offer. I must say that what I have seen so far has got me itching to travel to every corner of this remarkable continent.

INDABA 2015 is really big. We have just over 1000 exhibitors from 20 African countries, and about 2000 buyers from the world's tourism source markets. We also have about 750 members of the media at this event. You – our trade partners, buyers, exhibitors, media partners and other stakeholders – are the people who make it big. And it is you who make tourism the exciting, growing sector that it is.

Today, dear ladies and gentlemen, is also a very significant day for another reason. It is exactly 21 years since Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first democratically-elected President. When he opened the first INDABA in a free South Africa, this is what President Mandela said: "It is in tourism that nature and humanity meet most equitably and profitably.... It also provides the resources for the conservation of our natural heritage. Furthermore, tourism is making an important and valuable contribution to the South African economy."

Twenty years on, and those words still echo throughout our sector.

Taking the direct and indirect impacts of tourism together, our tourism sector now contributes over 9% of South Africa's Gross Domestic Product and supports over 1.5 million job opportunities countrywide. And it continues to grow.

On the African continent, tourism directly and indirectly supports 20.5 million jobs and represents 8.1% of Africa's GDP. In some countries, more than 50% of their Gross Domestic Product comes from tourism.

Driving the growth of tourism in South Africa are a wealth of wonderful tourism assets: our landscape and biodiversity; our wildlife; our people and our cultural heritage. We have also developed a wide range of products and services that create memorable experiences for tourists.

In fact, it must be said that some of the world's unique tourism offerings are found right across our continent.

Where else on earth can you witness the incredible sight of millions of wildebeest stampeding across wide sandy plains, crossing raging rivers as they hurtle towards new grazing grounds in their annual migration?

Only in Africa.

Across Africa, we have unique sites that tell a compelling story about who we are, and the road that humanity has travelled. It stretches from the earliest origins of humankind to our recent struggle for freedom and equality. Chapters of this story have been written in many countries of our continent.

In fact, Africa is the home of the original story: it is the birthplace of humankind.

At South Africa's Cradle of Humankind, hominid fossils tell us about our common ancestry. At Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge, evidence of the early tools made by our ancestors show how we became hunters and social beings.

Where on earth can you find sites that tell such a powerful story?

Only in Africa.

Tourists are astounded by the many wonders on our continent. Churches carved out of solid rock at Lalibela in Ethiopia, and the multi-storey mosque built from mud at Djenne in Mali, reflect how we learnt to engineer the natural environment for our social needs.

Tourists marvel at the remains of 200 pyramids at Meroe in Sudan, the site of one of the wealthiest cities in the Ancient Kingdom of Kush, where they can imagine the splendour of Africa, thriving in a bygone age.

And, much closer to where we are gathered today, is the site of the once prosperous city at Great Zimbabwe, where iron and copper tools were found, along with gold jewelry.

Tourists can take an emotional journey through the East African towns of Lamu in Kenya, and Stone Town in Zanzibar, and hear stories of slavery that will give them a better understanding of what the people of this continent have been subjected to, and make them appreciate what it means to be free.

In South Africa, the struggle for freedom is reflected in many sites.

When people go to Inanda, a short drive from here, they will learn about people like John Dube, one of the founding fathers of the African National Congress. Not far from there, at Phoenix, is the house that Mahatma Gandhi lived in, before he returned to India and became internationally recognized for his stance against colonization.

Places like Robben Island, and the original home of Nelson Mandela in Soweto, have become meaningful for the entire world - they have become iconic symbols of our recent political history, signifying the triumph of freedom over oppression.

Groups of tourists on Robben Island, moving quietly through the corridor in the cell block that held Tata Mandela and other prisoners for decades, go through deep emotional experiences. You can see it in the expression on their faces, you can feel it in their silence.

When tourists see ancient fossils that reflect our origins as a species, it makes a spiritual connection deep within them. These fossils provide the evidence that we all come from Africa, that we are all part of one family of humankind, regardless of where we happen to live now.

This is a connection to the soul of Africa, to the history that brought us together, and the aspirations for the future that bind us together. The unique sites that entice people to visit us, our warm welcome, our vibrant music, dancing and art, the stories told by the people themselves: these are the things that connect tourists to the soul of the people of Africa.

We have everything going as a continent to increase our share of the expected growth in international tourism and travel.

International arrivals in Africa increased to 56 million tourists last year, and are expected to grow by between 3% and 5% in 2015. This will probably exceed the projected growth in global arrivals, which is between 3% and 4% for 2015.

More and more people are venturing out to discover new places, leaving the familiar behind to seek unique experiences, to meet new people and discover their culture.

This reminds us of the words of Christopher Columbus, as he was preparing to set sail on his fourth and final voyage to the so-called New World, just over 500 years ago. He said: "You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore."

For us in the tourism sector, the uncertainty, volatility and constant change in our industry require us to be brave. We must be brave enough to leave behind the shores of yesterday and boldly confront the challenges of tomorrow.

Technological innovation, disruptive business models and changing consumer preferences challenge our ingenuity and agility every single day.

I can confidently say that we are responding to these challenges by differentiating and repackaging our offerings to compete with the best in the world.

In embarking on this journey together, as tourism leaders in the public and private sectors, cooperation and partnership are the keys to our success. When we stand together in the face of challenges, and when we do business together at INDABA, we are so much stronger.

From its early beginnings as a South African trade platform, INDABA has evolved into Africa's largest and most successful tourism trade platform. It is now a truly pan-African trade show, and its brand strength continues to grow year after year.

To exhibitors we say: You are essential members of the team that is driving Africa forward. We appreciate your partnership and collaboration.

Our message to buyers is this: INDABA offers you the African travel trade in its full depth and breadth. This is where you will find the best access to this continent's splendid, authentic and unique offerings.

In the next few months, we will be announcing measures to make INDABA even more competitive. We will be issuing a call for proposals from prospective partners with a global reach to work with us, and to expand this ship's sailing routes.

INDABA is also an important opportunity for us to meet and to discuss common challenges, barriers and opportunities at a policy level. Our point of departure is that we are united in our resolve to build the positive brand of Africa as a continent of unparalleled tourism opportunities, and to enhance tourism as a mainstream economic sector – a sector of hope for Africa and its people.

We are also united in denouncing the spate of recent attacks on foreign nationals living in our country. These deplorable incidents of violence do not reflect who we are as a nation, or who we are as a continent.

Thanks to the swift and decisive action of our government, and the support of the overwhelming majority of our people who respect human rights, the divisive intentions of those behind these attacks have been neutralized. We have also begun the work of addressing the underlying causes of the violence. South Africa will never allow the criminal actions of a few to derail the togetherness forged by the vast majority of our people in the past two decades of our democracy.

We are determined that our country will always be open to welcome people from around the world.

Today, it is a great pleasure to welcome my counterparts from Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritania, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We also welcome representatives of the governments of Algeria, Guinea, Mozambique, the Seychelles and Gabon.

Let me briefly share with you what we are doing in South Africa to translate our ten million arrivals into sustainable jobs and livelihoods, to build a new generation of entrepreneurs, and to grow our sector's contribution to inclusive and sustainable growth.

We have launched a number of initiatives to enhance our amazing destination offerings, including our national parks, our unique World Heritage Sites and other tourism magnets.

We are determined to ensure that we have enough people, equipped with the right skills, to offer services of the highest standard to our visitors. We have the sites, the scenery, the beaches and the wildlife, but without the people who are able to put life and meaning into the sites, who prepare and serve the food, who host and add the warm and welcoming touches, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve tourism's true growth potential.

We will complete a skills audit for the tourism sector and all components of its value chain this year. This will form the basis of a comprehensive skills development drive that will take us into the next decade of ambitious tourism growth.

We are also continuously improving our marketing efforts, as we balance the consolidation of our market share in traditional source markets with aggressive growth from emerging markets. As part of a process of continuous review and innovation, we will be strengthening SA Tourism's hand through new earmarked funding for their domestic and regional African marketing efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to conclude by thanking you for honoring us with your presence, and your commitment to taking Africa to the world and bringing the world to Africa.

You are the lifeblood of this industry. Let us live up to the challenge best expressed in the words of Madiba at INDABA, 20 years ago, when he said: "To reap the full benefit of the increased international interest in South Africa as a destination, we cannot rely merely on our natural and cultural heritage. We need also, as a nation, to make a concerted effort to continually increase the levels of hospitality and friendliness, and the general level of service."

We are doing well – the numbers show that – but let's always strive to do better. Let's not be afraid to innovate, to try harder, to lose sight of the old shores and fearlessly steer our ship across the seas. Let's seek out new frontiers, where we can drop anchor for the benefit of all our people – in South Africa and on our entire continent.

My dear friends, I believe that it is within our collective power to turn the aspiration of a united, successful African tourism sector into a living reality that will bring lasting benefits to millions of people. Do good business, forge some lasting friendships and enjoy your stay in our beautiful country!

Thank you.