



**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

High level Segment Convention on Biological Diversity COP13

Statement by South Africa on the Tourism Roundtable delivered by Deputy Minister of Tourism Hon. T Xasa

2 December 2016

Chairperson, thank you for affording me the opportunity to make this short intervention on behalf of the Government of the Republic of South Africa.

To the government of Mexico, on behalf of the South African delegation may I say: Gracias port u Hospitalidad!

South Africa is the third most mega bio-diverse country in the world, and it is our country's rich and abundant natural resources that continue to attract tourists to our shores.

South Africa has strong legislation that recognizes the links between biodiversity and tourism. These are evidenced through the domestication of the World Heritage Convention in the form of the World Heritage Convention Act, 1999 (Act 49 of 1999), the National Environmental Management Act (1998), the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (1997) and the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (57 of 2003). These pieces of legislation recognize the links between Biodiversity and Tourism within the context of a developmental state. This legislation also recognizes the critical public good role of governments to provide access to areas of rich biodiversity for their citizens.

South Africa is adamant that our country's biodiversity should be sustainably utilized for the benefit of all our people.

Our 1996 White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism underscores the importance of the tourism industry taking a lead in our role of promoting responsible tourism.

To this end we are clear that local communities must be involved in all aspects of planning and decision making; because communities are the cornerstone of conservation and biodiversity management.

Since the beginning of our democratic dispensation biodiversity has been mainstreamed in the tourism sector, undoing a bitter legacy of local communities being denied the benefits of our rich biodiversity.

The sustainable use of natural resources and distribution of benefits to communities is integral to the management of South Africa's network of 294 parks and protected areas on both state and private land. This is a partnership of which we remain immensely proud.

In 2013 the biodiversity sector's contribution to the GDP was estimated at six hundred million dollars. In the same year, tourism's total GDP contribution was approximately seven billion dollars and visitors spent fifteen billion dollars.

The tourism sector remains a massive source of job creation, having during this year employed 660 000 people which is almost 5% of all people employed in South Africa.

South Africa has a number of initiatives and programmes aimed at mainstreaming biodiversity into various sectors. They include:

- A Biodiversity Economy Strategy that will increase the contribution of biodiversity to the GDP utilizing sustainability principles.
- Operation Phakisa that aims to unlock the potential of the country's oceans, coastal and marine tourism, and biodiversity sectors. These include the identification of hectares of land earmarked for transformation of the wildlife economy, formalizing and legalizing the game meat industry and supporting emerging enterprises.
- A National Green Fund to support our country's transition to a green economy through the provision of a catalytic financing. A success story in the bio-prospecting sector is the Muthi Futhi women's cooperative in rural KwaZulu Natal that harvests traditional medicinal plants for commercial purposes. Since 2008 Department of Environmental Affairs has issued 44 bioprospecting permits.

I hope I have served to give you a brief overview of the work being done by South Africa and I look forward to our deliberations going forward.

Muchos Gracias.