



MINISTRY
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X 424, PRETORIA, 0001, Tourism House, 17 Trevenna Street, Sunnyside, PRETORIA, 0002, Switchboard: +27 (0)12 444 6000, Fax: +27 (0)12 444 7000, Website: www.tourism.gov.za

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, MS MAGGIE SOTYU,
AT THE WOMEN IN TOURISM NORTH WEST PROVINCIAL CHAPTER BUSINESS
BREAKFAST
29 AUGUST 2026 | KLERKSDORP, NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

Programme Director,
Chairperson of the North West Women in Tourism Chapter, Ms Memane,
Leadership of Women in Tourism,
Representatives of the North West Provincial Government and our tourism agencies,
Members of the tourism industry and the private sector,
Women entrepreneurs,
Young women in tourism,
Members of the media,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Dumelang. Good morning.

It is a great pleasure to join you here in Klerksdorp as we bring Women's Month 2026 to a close. This year, South Africa commemorates Women's Month under the theme: *"Empowered Women Empower the Nation."* It is a particularly significant Women's Month because this year marks the 70th anniversary of the historic Women's March of 1956.

Seventy years ago, more than 20 000 courageous women marched to the Union Buildings and made it clear that women would not be silent in the face of injustice. Their courage changed our country. Today, we honour that generation not only by remembering what they did, but by asking what their legacy requires of us now. And in the tourism sector, I believe the answer is clear.

We must continue removing the barriers that prevent women from participating fully in the economy. We must create opportunities for women to build sustainable businesses. We must create pathways into ownership and leadership. And we must ensure that women can participate across the entire tourism value chain. Because empowered women empower families, communities, economies, and ultimately the nation.

Programme Director,
Women are already central to tourism. They account for approximately 70% of the tourism workforce, yet they remain disproportionately represented in service and entry-level positions, while women's ownership of larger tourism businesses grows slowly.

That tells us something very important. Participation alone cannot measure transformation. We must ask: How many women own the lodges? How many own the hotels, restaurants and conference facilities? How many own tour operating businesses and tourism transport

companies? How many women supply major tourism establishments? How many are participating in procurement opportunities? How many are sitting at executive tables and in boardrooms where investment, procurement and strategic decisions are made? And how many young women can look at this industry today and see a clear pathway from learning, to employment, to enterprise, to ownership and ultimately to leadership? That is the transformation journey we must accelerate.

For many years, through our Women in Tourism Programme, we have spoken about ensuring that women in this sector are: Respected, Recognised, Represented and Rewarded. Those principles remain important. But the next phase must increasingly be about economic power. Women must not only participate in tourism. Women must own tourism businesses, grow tourism businesses, supply tourism businesses and lead tourism businesses.

I therefore want to acknowledge the North West Women in Tourism Chapter and its leadership, and I urge them to keep strengthening it as a platform through which women connect with opportunity, share knowledge, build partnerships, and grow stronger enterprises.

A Women in Tourism Chapter cannot simply be a structure that meets from time to time. It must be a business network. It must connect women to information. It must connect women to skills. It must connect women to finance. It must connect women to markets. It must connect women to one another. And importantly, it must connect women to the companies and institutions that buy tourism goods and services.

Programme Director,

One area where we have invested as a government is skills and business development. The Department's Business Management Training and Mentorship Programme was designed to strengthen women entrepreneurs in areas such as business planning, financial management, marketing, sales, human resources, operations, risk management and business resilience. But I want us to go further. Training cannot become an end in itself. A certificate cannot be the final destination. Mentorship cannot simply mean regular meetings with a mentor. We must ask what happens after the training. Did the business become stronger? Did its turnover increase? Did it employ more people? Did it become investment-ready? Did it gain new customers? Did it enter new markets? Did it secure a contract? Because ultimately, skills must lead to opportunity. Mentorship must lead to market access. And market access must lead to sustainable businesses. That is how we turn programmes into economic impact.

And this is why market access remains so important. A number of members of the North West Women in Tourism Chapter have benefited from the Department's Domestic Market Access Support Programme and have been supported to participate at important trade platforms, including Africa's Travel Indaba, Meetings Africa and World Travel Market Africa. These platforms expose entrepreneurs to buyers, partners, investors and new markets. But once again, the real test is what comes afterward.

We want to see women return from trade shows with leads, convert those leads into business, and convert that business into income, growing enterprises and jobs. That is why enterprise development and market access cannot be separated from transformation. Skills development, enterprise development, market access, and transformation are interconnected. If we train women but do not open markets, we have not completed the journey. If we provide funding without building strong businesses, we have not completed the journey. If we mentor entrepreneurs but do not connect them to procurement

opportunities, we have not completed the journey. And if tourism grows while ownership remains concentrated, then we have not completed the transformation journey.

Programme Director,

Access to finance remains one of the biggest challenges facing emerging tourism businesses. This is why the Department, working with the National Empowerment Fund, established the Tourism Transformation Fund. This Fund is intended to support black entrepreneurs to develop and expand tourism projects and to help catalyse a new generation of black-, youth- and women-owned tourism enterprises. The Department has capitalised the Fund with R220 million in grant funding, with approved projects able to access a grant component alongside the other financing instruments administered through the NEF.

We want more women to move beyond micro-enterprises. We want to see women building businesses of scale. Owning accommodation establishments. Developing attractions. Operating tourism transport businesses. Owning restaurants. Building conference facilities. Developing tourism technology businesses. Supplying major tourism establishments. And investing in the products that will shape the future of South African tourism.

We must also recognise women who are already taking advantage of opportunities. I am pleased to acknowledge Ms Taelo Moseki, a member of the North West Women in Tourism Chapter and manager and co-founder of Alimo Villa Bed & Breakfast. Ms Moseki was successfully selected to participate in a tourism seminar in the People's Republic of China during August and September this year. The programme provides participants with exposure to operational expertise, leadership strategies, technology and international hospitality practices. Congratulations, Ms Moseki! Your achievement matters because every woman who enters a new market, acquires new skills or gains international exposure opens the door a little wider for the women who will follow. And we want many more stories like yours to emerge from the North West.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The North West is blessed with extraordinary tourism treasures - from Sun City and Pilanesberg to Madikwe, Hartbeespoort, the Magaliesberg and and so much more.

But I want us to think differently about what a tourism treasure means for an entrepreneur. A major attraction is not only somewhere a tourist visits. It is also an economic ecosystem. Around every major tourism destination, there is a value chain. Visitors must travel. They must eat. They need accommodation. They buy experiences. They purchase crafts and local products. They need guides. Tourism businesses require linen, food, beverages, transport, maintenance, cleaning services, marketing, digital services, security, entertainment and events. That means women's opportunities in tourism go far beyond owning a guest house or becoming a tour guide. Women can participate across the entire tourism value chain.

But government cannot deliver this transformation alone. I therefore want to speak directly to our established tourism businesses and private-sector partners. Transformation cannot exist only in strategies and annual reports. It must be visible in supply chains. It must be visible in procurement. It must be visible in ownership. It must be visible in leadership. And it must be visible in the opportunities we create for emerging businesses.

A growing business does not only need encouragement. It needs a contract. This is where government and industry must work together. Government can create programmes and enabling conditions. But the private sector has the purchasing power that can help transform enterprises into sustainable businesses.

We must also look beyond the women who are already in the sector. What are we doing for the next generation? Somewhere in this province, a young woman may not yet know that tourism can become her career or her business. Our responsibility is to make that pathway visible. We need young women entering tourism through education and skills development. We need them gaining workplace experience. We need them entering management. We need them starting enterprises. And we need some of those enterprises eventually growing into significant tourism companies. That pipeline - from learning to skills, from skills to enterprise, and from enterprise to leadership - must become part of our transformation agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The North West also occupies a special place in the history of our national Women in Tourism programme. The last national Women in Tourism Conference was held here in Rustenburg in January 2019, bringing together approximately 200 women.

I am therefore pleased that we are planning to reconvene the Women in Tourism Conference in March 2027, during International Women's Month. This conference must be more than another event. It must provide a platform for government, industry and women entrepreneurs to collectively consider the next phase of Women in Tourism, and our provincial Chapters must help shape that agenda. We also need to collectively determine a strategic direction to advance the sustainable and targeted inclusion of women in our industry and develop a focused agenda for our Chapters. I therefore encourage the women of the North West to begin that conversation now.

As we close Women's Month this weekend, we also stand at the beginning of another important period for our sector. September is Tourism Month in South Africa. It is a time when we celebrate tourism, encourage South Africans to explore their own country, showcase our destinations and recognise the contribution tourism makes to our economy. But I want us to add another dimension.

Tourism Month must therefore also become a business month for tourism entrepreneurs. When we encourage South Africans to travel, we must also encourage them to buy from local tourism businesses. When we showcase destinations, we must showcase women-owned products and experiences. When provinces host Tourism Month activations, local entrepreneurs should be part of those opportunities. And when visitors arrive, our communities must share in the value created. Let us therefore use Tourism Month to encourage South Africans to explore more of the North West Province. Because every tourism rand that circulates through a local business strengthens a community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Seventy years after the women of 1956 marched for freedom and equality, our generation carries a different but equally important responsibility. Our struggle is to ensure that equality becomes visible in economic participation. In ownership. In leadership. In boardrooms. In supply chains. And in the opportunities available to the next generation.

The women of 1956 opened doors for us. Our responsibility is to open doors for those who will come after us. Let us build a tourism sector where women are not simply present, but powerful. Where they are not simply participants, but owners. Where they are not only mentored, but connected to markets. Where they do not only receive opportunities, but create opportunities for others. And where the tourism treasures of this province become engines of inclusive growth for the women and communities who call the North West Province home.

I thank you.

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