



SPEECH BY MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE, MP

DATE: 28 MARCH 2023

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE AT THE
MEDIA LAUNCH OF THE AFRICA TRAVEL INDABA**

NOTE TO EDITORS: The following speech was delivered by Minister Patricia de Lille at the media launch of the Africa Travel Indaba at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban today. The Africa Travel Indaba takes place in Durban in May this year. Read more below...

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Mr. Fish Mahlalela;
Premier of KwaZulu Natal Province, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube
Honourable MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs,
Siboniso Duma

Mayor of eThekweni, Councillor Mxolisi Kaunda
Chairperson of the Board of SA Tourism; Thozamile Botha
CEO of the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre
Industry leaders
Valued members of the media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

It gives me such great pleasure to be here in Durban today, to launch Africa's Travel Indaba. I must tell you just how excited I am that this is one of my first major assignments as the newly appointed Minister of Tourism.

I'm particularly thrilled because of the value that Africa's Travel Indaba continues to deliver - not only for South Africa but for the rest of the African continent.

Africa's Travel Indaba plays a critical role in the advancement of tourism and in the country's economic development.

Economic Impact of Tourism and Indaba

We are excited to be back in Durban, the home of Africa's Travel Indaba. The show continues to be a critical platform for the continent, contributing to Africa's economic growth.

Last year, the show drew over 5500 delegates to Durban, contributing a total of R102.6 million to the City's GDP.

Earlier this year, we hosted a successful Meetings Africa in Johannesburg.

We brought together 352 exhibitors from 22 African countries and over 250 quality buyers from all over the world to experience the best business events products and services that the continent has to offer.

We are enthused by the success of Meetings Africa, and we go into Africa's Travel Indaba with these successes fueling us.

Repositioning Africa's Travel Indaba

A lot changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we felt it necessary and important to reposition Africa's Travel Indaba to ensure it remains relevant in the current environment.

This year, we are launching Indaba under the positioning "Shaping Africa's tomorrow, through connection today".

This positioning speaks to the essence of Africa's Travel Indaba, bringing the world to Africa in an effort to positively influence the continent's trajectory. Later on today you will get a sneak preview of the new look Indaba.

South Africa's tourism performance

Over the last two years, all of our efforts as a sector have been focused on ensuring the highest levels of recovery, following the pandemic.

We are all working towards seeing our various economies return to the pre-COVID 19 performance levels and in fact exceeding these.

Through collaboration and partnerships, we have made great strides in the recovery.

This is evidenced through the tourism performance numbers over the last year.

During the period January – December 2022, South Africa welcomed 5.7 million tourists. This is a sharp increase of 152% when compared to the same period in the previous year.

It is encouraging that arrivals from other African countries continues to be our most substantial source of arrivals, with just over 4 million arrivals during this period.

Africa's Travel Indaba seeks to ensure that we, as the African continent, grow together collectively.

The South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan

Our tourism sector has a major role to play in the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan which is aimed at stimulating equitable and inclusive growth.

Africa's Travel Indaba is one of the various strategic platforms in our powerful arsenal of tools that we can use to attain the goals of the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan

We know our sector was hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and in fact at the time pandemic reached our shores, the South African economy had experienced two consecutive quarters of a recession so our sector was already reeling from this.

Many businesses in this sector folded and many people lost their jobs and now it is up to each and every one of us in this room to play our part to re-ignite the African economy. We win when we all win.

Africa's Travel Indaba presents us with an opportunity to continue with the efforts we started last year when the industry met at this platform in person for the first time post the COVID-19 pandemic.

We committed to building our African tourism sector and reshaping our economy. No doubt over the past year we have done so in our various engagements.

Now is the time for us to gather once again to do business and put into action our plans.

This is my third week as a Minister of Tourism and I have already engaged the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi on the issue of visas together with SA Tourism and the SA Tourism Business Council.

Minister Motsoaledi shared with us the contribution of Home Affairs to Tourism and I will continue to engaging the Minister and stakeholders.

I am committed to working with stakeholders to remove barriers that threaten our growth.

Tourism Sector Recovery plan

We are therefore, steaming ahead with the implementation of our Tourism Sector Recovery Plan approved by Cabinet in March 2021.

The Plan outlines a set of interventions to ignite the recovery anchored in three strategic themes: protecting and rejuvenating supply, re-igniting demand and strengthening enabling capability for long-term sustainability.

We are here to drive transformation and support key players to transform and prosper.

We are here to help SMMEs to grow and compete globally.

We know that for us to return to Pre-pandemic performance levels we must:

- Make sure we focus on all our target markets
- Recover airlift
- Collaborate as the public and private sector
- And very importantly, make sure that Africa in its totality grows and this is why Indaba is proudly Pan African

SMMEs

In this spirit, Africa's Travel Indaba has an objective to create market access for our vast array of African leisure tourism products.

As part of our commitment to the success of the tourism industry, we continue to support SMMEs to attend this proudly Pan African trade show as well as other global tourism trade shows that South African Tourism participates in, in various parts of the world.

We continue to bring our Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) alongside us to showcase their wares abroad.

This is part of our efforts to provide market access to upcoming tourism businesses, aid the sector's recovery, and ensure inclusion in the industry.

I am pleased to say that through the work the Department of Tourism is doing, we are going to have 120 SMMEs participating at this year's Africa's Travel Indaba at the Hidden Gems pavilion.

Through all our marketing efforts we continue promoting villages, small towns and dorpiés to ensure that we drive an inclusive tourism sector recovery.

Airlift/Air Access

Making trade and travel seamless across our continent and the various other markets is an absolutely crucial component of economic growth.

We need to have enough airlift – to meet both domestic, regional and international demand.

Encouragingly, Airlift to and from South Africa has seen continuous recovery.

Last year we welcomed numerous direct flights from our key source markets into various parts of our country, such as the direct United Airlines flight from Cape Town to Newark in the United States of America.

Tomorrow morning, Air China's Flight 867 from Beijing-Shenzhen-Johannesburg is set to arrive at OR Tambo.

This flight marks a significant milestone as the first flight for group tours since the pandemic started in 2020, which is of great importance to Chinese arrivals to South Africa. China is the most promising source market for South Africa.

Just before the pandemic, South Africa received nearly 100,000 visitors from China. It is possible to push the number to 1,000,000 by 2030.

If we reach this target, more than R100billion in Chinese tourism spend could be generated over a five year period and this could reduce unemployment significantly.

The impact on the economy of South Africa will be positive and sustainable.

For this reason I will be working hard with our key stakeholders to remove key barriers such as airlift, visa and safety.

Research has also shown great potential for travel to Africa by tourists from BRICS countries.

Later this year, we are also expecting the LATAM flight from Brazil to OR Tambo International Airport which will also present a boost to the tourism sector and travel of Brazilian tourists to South Africa.

The LATAM Airlines Group plans to re-launch a non-stop flight between São Paulo International Airport, Brazil, and OR Tambo International Airport, in July or August 2023.

The route will resume after more than three years, following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the new route, customers will be able to travel between Johannesburg and Brazil in 9 hours on one of the three direct weekly flights to be carried out on Boeing 787-9 aircraft, which accommodates 300 passengers.

In this regard, South Africa can therefore be gateway to travel for Africa for visitors from BRICS countries.

I will also convene a SADC Ministerial Dialogue at the Travel Indaba in Durban in May 2023.

We will use this opportunity to showcase South Africa's tourism offering and how SADC countries can work together.

Last year, we also saw our national carrier, South African Airways, expand to various markets across the African continent. This is a major success for our country.

These flights undoubtedly contribute to boosting our attractiveness and will contribute to seeing us return to pre-COVID-19 performance levels and beyond.

I am very thrilled to see that there is indeed collaboration with our airline stakeholders as this is a major part of tourism recovery and beyond.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by inviting all the buyers from across the world to South Africa to travel, explore and visit the Africa Travel Indaba in May this year.

I assure you that South Africa is ready to host you and that Africa is open for business and ready to showcase its diverse range of products and tourism experiences.

We look forward to welcoming all delegates to Africa's Travel Indaba and to creating lasting connections which will propel the continent to even greater heights.

Thank you to everyone in the industry for your continuous work and collaboration in this regard. Let us work harder to exceed all expectations and grow tourism together. I thank you and God Bless.

ENDS

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