



MEDIA STATEMENT

24 October 2023

Minister Patricia de Lille hosts BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting in Cape Town

Following the successful hosting of the BRICS Summit in South Africa earlier this year, today, I was delighted to host Tourism Ministers and a high level delegation from the BRICS nations for the BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting in Cape Town, today, 24 October 2023.

The BRICS Tourism Ministers' Meeting for 2023 provided an opportunity for exchange of information and experiences as well as deepen cooperation among BRICS Members to reach consensus on key policy priorities for a balanced tourism recovery.

South Africa's chairship of BRICS has promoted a dialogue among BRICS Members and built on the successes of the previous chairs as well as advance the aspirations of the BRICS Summits where the leaders acknowledged, among others the urgent need for tourism sector's recovery and the importance of increasing intra-BRICS tourism for a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.

To ensure continuity and leverage on the combined strength of BRICS Members, South Africa's theme for chairing BRICS Tourism in 2023 is "***Sustainable and inclusive tourism recovery***", aligned to the overall theme of SA's chairship.

The delegations at the BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting in Cape Town were led by the following representatives:

- Brazil: The Vice Minister of Tourism of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Ms Ana Carla Lopes
- China: The Vice Minister of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, Mr Lu Yingchuan
- Russia: The Director General from the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, Mr Nikita Kondratev
- India: Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of India, Mr Rakesh Kumar Verma

Our goal as the hosts of the BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting was to map the way forward on clear actions we need to take as partners to grow inclusive tourism between our countries.

My goal is clear that we need to work harder to grow tourism through new and innovative travel packages, implement joint marketing strategies and address obstacles that stand in the way of this growth.

We need to work together as BRICS nations to increase Air Access and ease visa regimes to ensure seamless travel between our countries.

This year has already seen great success with direct flights returning from Air China, the return of the direct flight from Brazil's LATAM airlines and SAA's direct flight between Cape Town and Brazil and Johannesburg and Brazil, taking off in the coming weeks.

As stated by President Cyril Ramaphosa following the BRICS Summit in August this year, "our international work cannot be separated from our efforts to end poverty, to create jobs and to reduce inequality in South

Africa.

Through stronger investment and trade relations with other countries, we are able to grow our economy, create more opportunities for new businesses and reduce unemployment”. END QUOTE

The BRICS Summit made several decisions to take forward the struggle for a fairer and more inclusive world order that is focused on the equal development of all peoples.

We have already achieved great benefit from our relations with Brazil, Russia, India and China.

These countries are important destinations for South Africa’s products and services. They are important sources of investment and are becoming even more important as tourism markets.

Tourism is a key sector to enhance economic growth and across the world, the tourism sector is bouncing back.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the first seven months of 2023 saw international tourist arrivals reach 84% of pre-pandemic levels.

As South Africa, our tourism recovery is well underway and we are especially seeing significant growth in arrivals from BRICS nations.

For the first eight months of 2023, South Africa saw 5.5million arrivals, this was a 63.4% increase from the same period in 2022.

Arrivals from the BRICS nations from January to August 2023 compared to the same period in 2022 are as follows:

Country	Jan – Aug 2022	Jan – Aug 2023	Percentage increase year on year
BRAZIL	8 714	12 300	41.2%
RUSSIA	7 532	17 057	126.5%
INDIA	33 198	54 867	65.3%
CHINA	6 846	23 779	247.3%

When compared to 2019 figures for the same period, we saw a 70.1% increase in arrivals from the Russian Federation between January and August 2023.

Arrivals from Brazil, India and China for the first eight months of 2023 are still below 2019 levels but we are confident that with the direct flights, we will see recovery from these key source markets in the coming months.

In terms of the VISA regime, we are happy to report that visitors from Brazil and Russia are listed as visa exempt countries meaning these travellers do not require a visa to enter South Africa for a period of up to 90 days.

China and India are part of the first 34 countries on South Africa’s e-visa system.

South Africa is a popular destination for tourists from the BRICS block, who contribute to the country's economy through spending on transport, accommodation, leisure and business activities.

As the South Africa Department of Tourism, we are committed to significantly growing tourism between ourselves and the BRICS nations and to do this, we will work as partners to:

- **Enhance communication and cooperation**
- **Continue marketing and promotion efforts in BRICS** countries to showcase the diverse and unique attractions of South Africa, such as its conferencing and event hosting capabilities, wildlife, culture, scenery and adventure activities. This also involves creating more tailored and customised products and services that cater to the preferences and needs of different segments of travellers, such as families, couples, seniors, millennials and business travellers. This, also complemented by leveraging digital platforms and social media to reach out to potential travellers and influencers.
- **Improving safety and security measures** in South Africa to ensure the protection and well-being of visitors from BRICS countries and beyond. This includes the Department's Tourism Monitor's Programme, the private sector's Secura Travel app and providing reliable information and assistance.
- **Improving tourism visa and other related processes** to ensure ease of access for visitors and business events delegates who wish to come to South Africa either to visit or to attend Meetings, Incentive, Conference and Exhibitions (MICE) events.

By implementing these measures, South Africa can look forward to welcoming more tourists to our shores and contribute to its economic recovery and social development.

Following our BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting today, I will be having bi-lateral meetings with the various countries to look at specific areas of cooperation between each country and South Africa.

I am therefore pleased to present the following Communiqué on behalf of the BRICS Tourism Ministers and delegated officials:

Communiqué
BRICS Ministers of Tourism Meeting
Cape Town, Republic of South Africa
Tuesday 24 October 2023

1. We, the Ministers of Tourism of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People’s Republic of China, and the Republic of South Africa, met on 24 October 2023, in the city of Cape Town in the Western Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa, under South Africa’s 2023 BRICS Tourism Chairship theme on “*Sustainable and inclusive Tourism Recovery*”; in recognition of South Africa’s BRICS 2023 Chairship theme “BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism”.

2. We recognise that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is far reaching and acknowledge the existence of numerous destinations grappling with other major stresses and shocks, ranging from electricity or water shortages to extreme weather events. On the other hand, we believe that COVID-19 provides an opportunity to implement transformational shifts as the Travel and Tourism sector creates a more resilient and inclusive future.

3. We acknowledge that despite the significant negative impacts of COVID-19 on tourism, the crisis is providing an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future. Achieving greener and more sustainable tourism recovery,

calls for a greater policy focus on the environmental and socio-cultural pillars of sustainability.

4. We recognise the UNWTO's definition of sustainable tourism that is "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"; which describes that the growing demand for sustainable tourism is reshaping people's travel lifestyle, more interested in lower impact trips as a response to the existing climate emergency context.

5. We aim to support post-pandemic socio-economic recovery and the attainment of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals and 2063 AU Agenda on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

6. We recall the Communiqué of the BRICS Tourism Ministers' Meeting adopted by the Ministers in 2022 where they agreed to strengthen the BRICS Alliance for Green Tourism and to establish its working mechanism and explore the potential of cooperation on the green growth and sustainable development of tourism. Ministers further undertook to determine the cooperation modality and development direction of the BRICS Alliance for Green Tourism and to encourage the Alliance to study and share innovative experiences in fields including sustainability principles, digital empowerment, product development, marketing, infrastructure development, and investment amongst others where possible. We envisage that tourism recovery will be resilient and will overcome the disruption of the pandemic, maintain a reliable tourism supply chain, and give play to the due role of tourism in driving economic growth, creating jobs, alleviating poverty, and improving people's communication and understanding.

7. We recognise that in order to achieve a resilient, sustainable and inclusive tourism recovery as well as the promotion of intra-BRICS tourism, we should consider further cooperation on the following areas:

a) ***Mainstreaming sustainable policies and practices:***

Policy-makers, at all levels of government, to be encouraged to take additional steps to better support the transition to a green, low emissions, and climate-resilient tourism economy as well as policies and practises which contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

b) ***Developing more sustainable tourism business models:***

Businesses and other key stakeholders to be encouraged to play their roles by adopting eco-responsible practices for all sectors involved in the tourism value chain for tourism to have a positive impact on sustainability; and use technology to better manage visitor flows and strengthening sustainable and inclusive tourism economy.

c) ***Reconsidering perceptions of tourism success:***

Encourage a paradigm shift in perceptions across all key stakeholders for a greater focus on environmental and socio-cultural pillars of sustainability, so that tourism can be inclusive of indigenous peoples' and communities.

8. We recognize the need to raise awareness among BRICS countries to the importance of developing routes for better tourism mobility and connectivity amongst the Member countries.

9. We agree to continue our cooperation in strengthening intra-BRICS relations and developing mutually beneficial collaboration in the interests of continuity of BRICS cooperation.

10. We express appreciation towards South Africa for leadership during its 2023 BRICS Chairship and welcome the invitation extended to Argentine Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to become full members of BRICS from 1 January 2024.

11. We look forward to Russia 's BRICS plans and Chairship for 2024.

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