



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Minister of Tourism, Ms Tokozile Xasa launches the Solar Power Mini-grid at Robben Island, on 19 October 2017

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Programme Director, thank you.

Let me take this moment to say “what an honour it is to be here and to participate in this momentous development and advancement of our heritage. Today marks the pinnacle on our life calendar, because this day converges the proverbial gaps and brings synergy between heritage and technology.

South Africa’s heritage and her monuments are remarkable. Today, my Department, in partnership with the Robben Island Museum (RIM) and other arms of Government launches the official opening of the Solar-Photovoltaic Mini-Grid, as part of the national calls towards energy efficiency.

Our monuments and heritage belong to every South African and constitute our source of relevance and pride. So, we get extremely pleased when we get the opportunity to witness the meeting of heritage and technology, in ways that give hope that our heritage and monuments will be protected and conserved. To South Africans, Robben Island represents the meeting of the minds in many fronts. It also represents the power of the mind, versus the forces of separate living. It represents the power of the African spirit of Ubuntu that has placed this country on a developmental trajectory, which has enabled South Africans to move from the shackles of confined and separate development and separate living, to a rainbow nation “**for all who live in it**”.

Robben Island is a world heritage site! Today, the island represents hope, prosperity and a breakaway from the shackles of apartheid and racism. It is a place where hope defeats evil, EVERYDAY. No other country in the world can boast the kind of political turnaround that Robben Island represents and no other country in the world boasts the linkage between its past and presence, as Robben Island does. So the occasion today is yet another “**feather on South Africa’s cap**”.

Given the uniqueness of Robben Island, South Africa has become one of the global leaders in heritage tourism. Our aim is, of course, to share our achievements with our stakeholders and to also share best technology innovations with the entire tourism industry and all stakeholders who contribute to making South Africa a tourism destinations that thrives on tourists uptake. South Africa is indeed a gateway to the rest of the Continent and our achievements are indeed achievements of the rest of Africa, uniting us in promoting a new awareness of tourism as an economic enabler and sustainable tourism as the vehicle that will ensure that South Africa and Africa and its future generations continues to enjoy high traffic tourists uptakes, to drive the growth of its economy.

In line with the UNWTO theme, “**sustainable tourism**”, the Department of Tourism, in partnership with the Robben Island Museum (RIM) is today launching the solar PV mini-grid on Robben Island, **a first of its kind on an island, as part of the green revolution to among other things, reduce the carbon footprint**. Robben Island was selected as one of the eight government-owned attractions in the pilot initiative to retrofit tourism facilities with solar photovoltaic (PV) energy generating systems. The other seven sites include the Hantam, Karoo Desert and Free State National Botanical Gardens and the Skukuza and Lower Sabie rest camps as well as the Tshokwane and Nkuhlu picnic sites in Kruger National Park.

The two main objectives of this occasion today, are to:

- publicise the launch of the solar PV mini-grid project on Robben Island; and
- announce the opening of the first applications window for 2017, for the department’s Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP). The programme was developed in collaboration with the Industrial

Development Corporation (IDC), which will not only house and manage it, but the IDC will also drive implementation of responsible tourism practices, but also reduce the cost of doing business for small tourism enterprises.

Through this renewable energy system, the Robben Island Museum will not only become a more competitive and sustainable tourism attraction, but will also save a significant amount in overheads and operational costs.

The Island now has a new solar energy capacity of **666.4 kWp (kilo Watt peak)**, which will significantly reduce the island's reliance on the existing diesel generating system. This integrated system is able to carry the entire daytime electricity load of the island. It also prioritises solar energy generation, with the backup of battery storage to provide the island with energy on cloudy days and at night.

The total cost of the project was **R25 million**. It is estimated that the system will reduce the use of diesel generators by almost 45 per cent, which means that the annual diesel usage will drop from around **619 000 litres to 344 000 litres**, saving the Island about **275 000 litres** of diesel per annum. What we are therefore looking at is that this project will save the fiscal an estimated amount of almost **R5 million per annum**, which means that this project will pay itself within 5 years..

With tourism having been highlighted in the National Development Plan (NDP) as the next gold rush in relation to its capacity to general present and future jobs and to grow the GDP of South Africa, let me say it here and today that tourism is one of our best showcases that South Africa is a country "**working together to "do more"**". For this and other good reasons, I am particularly pleased to be part of this August occasion. People of Western Cape thank you for your warm reception.

This launch today, further enhances our reason to keep saying....."**we do tourism**".

Today is the celebration of the exposition that reinforces a shared vision for the future of tourism. This project is the first step in the longer term initiative of greening the island and discussions are already underway with the management of RIM on the implementation of a range of additional energy efficiency projects. In addition to more energy efficient operations and further reductions in diesel consumption, the associated cost saving will ultimately assist in optimising other parts of the tourism experience at Robben Island that is already underway through collaborative projects to diversify the product offering and enhance the visitor experience at the island.

Ladies and gentlemen, women and young people have a special place in tourism development and in tourism promoting. As such, the Department of Tourism has taken steps to enhance the abilities and capacities of the sector, including a heightened emphasis on role of women and young people in tourism and including the role of cooperatives in advancing economic transformation. This sharp focus is but among some of the activities that truly showcase the government's approach to the empowerment of women and young people. We therefore encourage women cooperatives, youth cooperatives and small enterprise firms to participate in the GTIP processes

In conclusion, I look to you for greater collaboration in the tourism space, so that we do not only grow the pie, but we all work towards ensuring that tourism absorbs all market players, big or small and clear rules for those who wish to access it and benefit from it. With that aim, it is a privilege and pleasure to declare this Solar Power Mini-Grid open.

I Thank you.