

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE OFFICE OF MR MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK,
MINISTER OF TOURISM AND SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

Minister opens Meetings Africa 2011

Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk today opened the first Meetings Africa after South Africa's very successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. "We have always maintained that it is imperative that we leverage the success and learning of the World Cup, especially in the tourism industry in South Africa. It is clear business tourism has been bolstered by a new sense of energy and direction and I believe this will make a significant contribution to consolidating our continent's position in the global arena and demonstrating our capabilities in terms of hosting international events," the Minister said.

Minister van Schalkwyk highlighted the important and growing role that business tourism will play in helping Government's job creation objectives. "Tourism contributed an estimated 7.7% to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2010. Business tourism will no doubt play a role in getting more visitors to South Africa.

"We have already secured almost 200 meetings and conferences in South Africa over the next five years, attracting more than 300 000 delegates to our country. The potential economic impact of these confirmed meetings and conferences is more than R1.6 billion.

"In 2009 we welcomed approximately 500 000 business tourism arrivals to South Africa, representing about 4.7% of total tourist arrivals. This represents a total economic value of about R4 billion, with business tourists spending an average of R5 300 during their stay in South Africa. The average length of stay of business tourists also increased from 4.6 nights in 2008 to 4.8 nights in 2009 " Minister van Schalkwyk said.

"In a recent report by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), South Africa was ranked 34th globally and first in Africa for 2009 in terms of the number of meetings hosted. The report shows that in 2009 almost 8 300 meetings were held globally, of which almost 55% were held in Europe. Africa hosted 3.8% of the total meetings or 314 meetings. Of these meetings, 90 were held in South Africa, followed by Egypt with 32 meetings.

"Cape Town was the leading city in Africa with a total of 49 meetings held in 2009, with Johannesburg ranked 5th and Durban 10th compared to other African cities. Cape Town was ranked 35th globally compared to other cities, with Johannesburg and Durban ranked at 128 and 231 respectively in terms of

number of meetings per city.

“These figures show that South Africa and our leading business tourism cities compare very well in terms of the rest of our continent. We believe Meetings Africa will again be an important opportunity for the entire African meetings and business community to interact and explore opportunities. In terms of our country’s global ranking, South Africa has done well in terms of maintaining its competitive position. I do, however, believe that there is still room for significant growth in terms of amongst others the number of meetings we attract, the spend per visitor and the length of stay, Minister van Schalkwyk said.

The Minister also noted that we could not discount the boost South Africa would receive from becoming the fifth country in the powerful Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) partnership. These countries account for 40% of the world’s population and annual global GDP and are set to become the global growth locomotive.

“Collectively, these countries are expected to outperform major industrialised economies over the next two years. South Africa stands to gain tremendously from our inclusion into the BRIC partnership. Amongst others, we expect that increased levels of trade and investment activity between South Africa and the other partner countries will also lead to increased business travel and business meetings. In addition, South Africa will be able to share and learn from these countries in terms of business tourism success stories and identify opportunities for stronger collaboration in bidding for and staging major business events,” Minister Van Schalkwyk said.

With Africa’s standing as a leading global business and events destination enhanced, South African Tourism is leading the innovation and growth trail with its seminal continental meetings exhibition. In recent years, Meetings Africa has gone from strength to strength and this year’s event is poised to build even further on the heightened awareness and positive global perceptions created by successfully hosting the world’s biggest sporting event.

Setting trends and leading industry innovation, Meetings Africa has launched some exciting new features. With the introduction of savvy and switched-on technology and a stronger focus on ease of networking, the event will connect South Africa and our continent with the rest of the world. There is also a major environmental focus at Meetings Africa 2011 and for the first time its history the exhibition will be audited by the Event Greening Forum, in line with globally developed greening and sustainability standards.

Africa is indeed open for business, and with the developments and trend-setting initiatives on display at Meetings Africa 2011, South Africa is strongly positioned to be the gateway to a continent with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and strengthened capability to host the world’s business market.

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