



MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Kgosi Nyalala Pilane, Chief of the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela,
Hon Dr Leon Schreiber, Minister of Home Affairs,
Hon Deputy Minister of Small Business Development, Raesetja Sithole,
Hon Deputy Minister of Tourism, Maggie Sotyu,
Mr Jerry Mabena, the Chairman of TBCSA and board members as well as its affiliates,
including FEDHASA, SAACI and SATSA
Mr Franco Jordaan, TOMSA Chairman and his board members and,
The South African Tourism Board members

Good morning, Goeie môre, Molweni, Salamalekum.

Colleagues, friends, tourism partners.

It is a privilege to stand before you at this year's TBCSA Leadership Conference. We gather not just as individuals representing different institutions, companies, or government departments. We gather as a community, bound together by a shared mission to grow tourism, to create jobs, and to show the world the very best of South Africa.

Tourism is about people. It is about livelihoods. It is about opportunity. And above all, it is about what we can achieve when we work together. Let me begin with a story that fills me with pride. Exactly one week ago, 48 students from 21 higher education institutions across South Africa came together for our inaugural Tourism Hackathon Challenge.

They were young, determined, and fearless in their thinking. The winning team, The Catalysts, developed a concept called the Hologram Hub, a platform that allows rural communities to share their stories, showcase their culture, and attract visitors. Imagine arriving in a remote village and being welcomed by a hologram that tells you about its heritage, its crafts, its cuisine, and its people. That is innovation rooted in culture.

These students walked away with a combined half a million rand in cash prizes, with overall winner The Catalyst team, bagging R175 000. R1,2 million has been set aside to further develop their projects through an incubation process. These young minds also competed for something far bigger: the chance to shape the future of tourism.

I watched them present their ideas confidently and passionately to the G20 Tourism Ministers in Skukuza. Think about that for a moment: young South Africans standing before the world's most powerful tourism leaders, offering solutions that are proudly African and proudly innovative. And I said to all the students participating what I want to repeat here today: When you innovate for the benefit of South Africans, you are a winner. Colleagues, these young innovators represent the future of our sector: digital, inclusive, and transformative. They remind us why we must always place collaboration at the heart of what

we do. The Hackathon is one spark of a much larger fire. That fire is the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, our collective blueprint for the sector's future.

The Plan is built on five strategic pillars that are the backbone of how we will deliver growth:

1. Job creation and skills development – ensuring tourism provides real opportunities, especially for youth and women.
2. Ease of access – removing barriers like red tape and visas so that visitors can come to South Africa without unnecessary hurdles.
3. Co-ordinated destination marketing – presenting one strong, compelling story of South Africa to the world, not only for leisure tourism but also for the critical business events sector
4. Safety and security – making sure every tourist feels welcome and safe.
5. Infrastructure and product development – investing in the experiences, heritage sites and products that will sustain growth.

We have also identified three crucial cross-cutting issues that are essential for sustaining our gains:

1. Data Generation and Analytics,
2. Economic Empowerment and
3. Community Inclusion, an Investment and Funding.

Each of these pillars is being driven by a dedicated working group of industry and government leaders, supported by a Programme Management Office established with the help of the TBCSA.

Together, we are turning planning into action, with the first Execution Lab already underway to ensure we are driving delivery. This plan is ambitious:

- 1 million direct jobs and 1.5 million indirect jobs by 2029
- 15 million international arrivals within the same period
- And a significant increase in visitor spend, both domestic and international.

One of the most urgent reforms in the Plan is ease of access. For too long, visa policies have held our industry back.

That is why the new Electronic Travel Authorisation system (ETA) is a game-changer. Developed in a partnership with the Department of Home Affairs, State Security and the Presidency, the ETA allows tourists to apply digitally, get approval faster, and travel with confidence.

Research shows that the ETA will add at least one million international arrivals every year and could generate between 80,000 and 100,000 new jobs.

It is not just about technology. It is about opportunity, dignity, and livelihoods. It is about saying to the world: South Africa is open, welcoming, and ready to do business.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Minister Schreiber and the Inter-Ministerial Committee, who have worked so hard to make the ETA a reality. This is what true collaboration between government departments looks like, and it is a shining example of how working together can remove barriers and unlock growth. This is what collaboration delivers.

When we hosted the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting in Skukuza last week, it was a resounding success. Together, we adopted a unanimous declaration to strengthen tourism that is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

But colleagues, let me pause here: a declaration is not just words on paper. It is a recognition by the world's leading economies that tourism policy is economic policy. Tourism must be taken seriously as a driver of jobs, investment, and growth.

I want to extend my deep gratitude to the TBCSA for supporting the G20 Tourism Ministerial Meeting through SACIA. Without your partnership, we would not have had the same impact.

Together, we positioned South Africa as a thought leader in shaping global tourism.

And we are not stopping at policy. We are also unlocking investment. At the inaugural Tourism Investment Summit in Cape Town last week, we launched the UN Tourism Doing Business: Investing in South Africa Guidelines, alongside eight bankable projects to the value of nearly R1 billion, which present concrete opportunities for investors.

As of 1 June 2025, the Amended National Treasury Regulation 16 for Public-Private Partnerships came into effect. These policy shifts allow us to embrace models from Design-Build-Operate partnerships to blended finance and even crowdfunding. These projects will be submitted to other international forums including Turkey, the UAE, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and every international platform where South Africa participates.

In 2026, we'll host the second Investment Summit and, in the meantime, we'll continue to build on the infrastructure projects that are in the pipeline.

Colleagues, the TBCSA theme for this year's summit says it best: Matters of Tourism: Growth, People and Policy. Tourism is not about individuals. It is not about personalities. It is not about noise.

Tourism is about the millions of South Africans whose livelihoods depend on it, and the millions more who can benefit from our collective success.

That is why we must rise above distractions and stay focused on implementation: delivery of growth, delivery of jobs, delivery of opportunity.

This week we announced the successful bidders to host South Africa's premium trade shows, Meetings Africa and Africa's Trade Indaba. For the next five years, the City of Johannesburg will host Meetings Africa.

The 20th edition of the show will take place from 23 to 25 February 2026 at Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg. While Africa's Travel Indaba will take place from 11 to 14 May 2025 at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre. The Indaba will remain in Durban for the next 5 years.

Now that we have dates and venues, I want to ensure that South African Tourism and TBCSA plan these events together. I trust, that with your ongoing support and our collaboration we will build on the previous success.

And let us not forget that this is Heritage Month. Our heritage is one of our strongest tourism assets. It is what makes South Africa unique. On World Tourism Day, 27 September, we will gather at Constitution Hill to celebrate this heritage, not just as history, but as a living, breathing source of pride and economic potential.

Tourism already contributes significantly to GDP and sustains over a million jobs. Every rand or dollar spent in this sector is an opportunity created. But we can and must do more. And let us also be honest with ourselves: there is still so much more we must do if we are to achieve these ambitious targets. Growth cannot be concentrated only in our major cities or flagship destinations. We must spread it geographically, and we must spread it to our small towns, villages and dorpias as well as townships.

This is not a task that the government can achieve alone. Nor can the industry do it alone. It requires every one of us in the public sector, private sector, as well as our communities, working together. Only together can we unlock the full potential of South Africa's tourism story.

The Hackathon innovators, the ETA reforms, the five pillars of the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, the bankable projects, and the G20 declaration: these are proof that tourism is not just a promise. Tourism is delivering. Tourism is growing. Tourism is uniting us. Our job now is simple but profound: to collaborate, to stay the course, and to ensure that the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan moves from targets on a page to jobs in people's homes, opportunities in people's communities, and pride in our nation.

Let us commit, here and now, that when the world speaks about tourism in South Africa, they will speak about opportunity, delivery, a collaboration, and shared success.

Thank you for your support.

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