



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Opening address by Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa at the Tourism Month media launch, Dunkeld Estate – Dullstroom**

**26 July 2017**

Welcome

MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Kholwane  
Emakhazeni Local Municipality Executive Mayor, Councillor Ngwenya  
Nkangala District Mayor, Councillor Malatji  
South African Tourism CEO, Mr Ntshona

Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Head of Department, Mr Mkhize  
Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Authority, Board Chairperson, Mr Nzima  
Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Authority CEO Mr Nobunga  
Board members from various tourism agencies present

Members of the Media

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and partners in tourism and our stakeholders – good evening and welcome to Mpumalanga

It gives me great pleasure to be with you this evening at the official launch of Tourism month

Thank you to our host province, Mpumalanga, for the warm welcome in all ways.

Driving here earlier, I was blown away by the sheer beauty of this province – it was almost as if I was seeing it for the first time.

Tourism is a very important sector for the South African economy

Against the backdrop of the slow growth of the South African economy this year, increased unemployment figures and downgrade threats, the tourism sector is the solution to bringing about economic growth and employment creation.

Together as government and private sector, it is important for us to provide access to information that excites people about our country and dispels concerns.

Tourism Month provides us with that opportunity.

It is the one month where all focus is intentionally placed on South Africa's tourism sector and the players are recognised, the spotlight shifts to the lesser visited places and, possibly most importantly, the entire industry talks to our nation and outlines how we intend to grow this sector.

Tourism Month is also the month where we encourage local South Africans to take a holiday in their own country and get to know their own back yard.

This is very important because by travelling their own country, South Africans will find new appreciation for their country while making an economic contribution that literally changes and uplifts lives and entire communities.

Every South African has a role to play in contributing to the growth our economy. We all need to explore each of the nine provinces of our country and discover the amazing hidden gems along the way.

By travelling across the country, each of us can leave a financial footprint in all the places we visit and therefore become a much-needed growth stimulant to our economy and, of course, create enriching and long-lasting memories.

Ladies and gentlemen, tourism is the new gold for the South African economy.

### **Tourism Month theme: Sustainable Tourism for Development**

Which brings me to the theme for this year's Tourism Month, as articulated by the world travel body, the **UNWTO: Sustainable Tourism for Development**.

Sustainable tourism speaks to an industry committed to making a low impact on the environment, while helping to generate employment for local people.

I find this to be a particularly pertinent theme here in South Africa as now more than ever, we need to ensure businesses, both small and large, succeed as a means of keeping people employed and communities developed.

Just over 10 million international tourists visited South Africa in 2016, 12.5% more than the number of tourists who travelled to the country in 2016. These trips contributed R102billion into the economy.

But, as one knows, competition in the international domain is highly contested and the global economic climate is riddled with many hurdles that can limit our efforts.

Ensuring tourism is a sustainable driver of economic growth will require much more than sustained support for even the best marketing campaigns. It is for this reason why we, together as a collective of the public and private sector, need to plough just as much energy into our domestic tourism offering as we do into attracting overseas tourists.

Our recent tourism performance report shows that in 2016, 24.3 million trips were taken locally and generated R26.5 billion in total direct domestic spend. The bed nights and length of stay among domestic tourists increased, although many were in unpaid establishments – such as in the homes of friends or family members.

Ladies and gentlemen, with the right collaborative efforts in place, together we can ensure that domestic tourism drives traffic into smaller, lesser known parts of the country that are just waiting to be uncovered and explored.

Tourism is the one sector that can ensure sustained economic growth during quieter seasons, long after the fanfare of global world cups and big conferences has left our shores.

As the National Department of Tourism, we are serious about our commitment to ensuring that tourism becomes a sustainable driver of economic growth. We also understand that to achieve this will require the systematic and sustained support of our work from all quarters of society and government.

This is where the I Do Tourism campaign comes in. This is our rallying call to you, our stakeholders, media and partners. This is our call to our ushers today and the receptionists at our accommodation establishments, the porters, the officials at the airport. It is our call to every single South African to recognise that the future of this country lies in tourism and in making sure South Africa is well represented at every single juncture that a tourist – local or international – may encounter.

The I Do Tourism initiative was launched at Africa's Travel Indaba in May and since then, the South African Tourism team has travelled the country punting its objectives and meeting with trade and key stakeholders to get their buy-in.

I am particularly encouraged to hear of the positive feedback around this initiative and hope we can rally the nation to stand behind, beside and amongst us to grow tourism for all - by "doing tourism".

This Tourism Month, as we commit ourselves to doing tourism sustainably, we endeavour, too, to be mindful about supporting the businesses whose very existence serves their immediate communities, who have at their heart business practices that are kind to the environment and society at large.

For Tourism Month and beyond, we will strive to travel locally and see the country and make our own contribution to economic growth, create jobs and enjoy this wonderful country of ours we all call home. We invite you to do so, too.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us “do tourism” this Tourism Month – it is for the benefit of everyone in our country.

Thank you.