



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Opening address by Deputy Minister of Tourism, Hon. Ms. Maggie Sotyu (MP) at the Tourism Leadership Conference 2024**

Programme Director,

Minister of Home Affairs, Hon Dr. Schreiber;

Premier of the North West Province Hon. Mr Lazyzy Mokgosi;

MEC for economic development, environment, tourism and conservation  
in the North West Province Hon. Ms. Bitsa Lenkopane;

Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA), Chairman Mr. Jerry  
Mabena,

TBCSA Board Members and CEO Mr. Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa

Director General of Tourism Mr. Victor Tharage and all other Directors-  
General and Heads of Departments present,

CEO's and representatives of Tourism bodies both in private and public  
sectors,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I greet you all,

It is a privilege and honour to address you on this special occasion of the  
third Tourism Leadership Conference. Congratulations are in order.

However, it is my very first one and will certainly give us an opportunity to get to know one another better. After all, ours is a symbiotic relationship.

I must also declare that I am not a total stranger in the sector as I have been with the portfolio responsible for National Parks, Botanical Gardens and regulation of activities such as hunting, boat based whale watching and shark cage diving amongst others.

I am really pleased to be here with you today, especially on Tourism Month which we are celebrating under the theme “Tourism and Peace - 30 years of connecting people, places and culture” and adapted from “tourism and peace” UN Tourism theme.

This kind of gathering also signifies the power of pulling together.

Without an association, coordination between government and industry as well as maintenance of a unified voice within industry remain challenging.

It is therefore important that you stand together united by a common goal of growing an inclusive sector.

We have over three hundred delegates representing the sector, which is testimony of our success in working together to fully recover from COVID19 shocks and further grow the tourism sector.

We are here to not just reflect on the past but also to look forward, charting a course for the future of the tourism sector.

From the onset, I must applaud the tourism sector for its resilience and perseverance since the COVID-19.

By continuing to adapt and find ways to maintain operations, the tourism sector plays a vital role in supporting local economies and communities.

While we are here to understand the business landscape and plan together for a prosperous sector ahead, let us acknowledge our achievements that materialised since the last conference.

I want to emphasise that the tourism sector is a crucial economic sector for our country.

In the 2nd quarter GDP figures announcement by the Statistician General, Mr Risenga Maluleke, it was clear that both accommodation and catering services were significant positive contributors.

Another notable achievement is that we are on our way to achieve our collective target of 2019 international arrivals by 2024 and we must build on this to achieve our NDP revised target of 15,1 Million tourists by 2030.

Also pleasing is that we have fully recovered on the domestic tourism front and now need to consolidate on the gains and go beyond just travel.

Allow me to express our appreciation to yourselves in your participation in the shotleft campaign in numbers.

The listing of your products and the all-important discounts on the shotleft website is much appreciated. However, we need more in the future campaigns.

The individuals gathered in this room have first-hand knowledge of how tough it has been to grow this sector to this point but we also know the

potential of the sector to propel growth and job creation in the near future.

The Department of Tourism is grateful for the opportunity to update the sector on policy developments including initiatives around travel facilitation.

In September 2023 the Minister released the green paper on Tourism for public comments. Over 3500 submissions were made to the Department which were all considered and the white paper is currently under consideration by Cabinet.

The gazetting of the white paper for implementation will improve the enabling regulatory environment.

Programme Director - A month after the last TBCSA conference, Cabinet approved the Tourism Sector Master Plan and extended its implementation until 2026.

The reason for this extension was based on the fact that the sector has not fully recovered from the Covid-19 impact and more still needs to be done (e.g. increases aviation capacity, improved visa facilitation for large markets especially India and China).

I would like to indicate that the implementation of the Tourism Master Plan is well underway and the tourism stakeholders are holding each other accountable through the Master Plan structures.

Additionally, the Department of Tourism partnered with the sector and developed the Tourism Crisis Management Strategy to build the resilience of the sector.

If anything, COVID19 taught us to anticipate any scenario. The strategy aims to ensure that the sector is able to mitigate and respond to and manage crisis as and when such occurs.

Programme Director, we look forward to the Minister of Home Affairs addressing us on the progress being made on visa facilitation matters.

The Department of Tourism acknowledges significant progress made by the Department of Home Affairs in facilitating easy access into destination South Africa.

Today, passport holders from hundred and thirty-two (132) countries that South Africa has diplomatic ties with, enjoy visa waiver, making our country one of the leaders in the visa waiver categories.

But as Minister will outline, more is required and working together will be done to enable better facilitation.

The Department of Tourism, with the support of the industry embarked on policy advocacy around the facilitation of ease of travel, especially for Chinese and Indian markets.

It included an outreach to the Chinese travel trade late last year, Minister de Lille's engagements with the Chinese Ambassador this year and the Presidency's Operation Vulindlela programme technical support.

We also acknowledge the implementation of e-visas for these markets including the roll-out to thirty-six (36) countries, however, technological enhancements will provide further improvements.

We look forward to further resolution of turnaround times and systematic delays. The department appreciates the DHA's latest announcements to look into the issue of Chinese and Indian visas, automation, the

exploration of Trusted Tour Operator Scheme and exploring group applications.

The Department is very eager to support these initiatives aimed at facilitating ease of access.

It is also important that I share government's thinking on why China and India was considered:

- Both Chinese and Indian tourists are among the top spenders across the globe;
- Both countries have large populations and are part of the leading outbound markets;
- These two countries have both strong political ties and significant trade relations with South Africa;
- Both countries are members of BRICS which hold enormous economic potential;
- Both countries are in the top ten (10) of overseas arrival figures of the first half of 2024;
- China and India have the potential to positively impact on increasing arrivals to South Africa and therefore contributing to the economy and supporting economic opportunities for small businesses.

On the issue of Tour Operating Licenses, the commitment from all stakeholder to continuously engage in resolving the issue is commendable.

I am happy to report that the department also welcomes the signing into law of the National Transport Amendment Bill by the President.

This will enable the Department of Transport to appoint persons as Non-Executive Directors outside the department itself to serve as members of the National Public Transport Regulator in order to improve efficiency.

I would also like to highlight, that although progress has been registered, reportedly, the slow upliftment of licenses remains a concern for NPTR.

I would like to encourage all stakeholders to look into this issue.

It is with great appreciation that I note that the issue also received attention from Operation Vulindlela in the Presidency.

The Minister had also appointed BBBEE Charter Council, chaired by Dr Eddy Khoza. I look forward to our collaboration in enabling its work in line with the BBBEE Act.

Programme Director allow me to reflect on the following:

We have commenced the 7th administration and our mission is to elevate the profile of tourism by supporting efforts to grow the sector and demonstrating this growth and the sector's impact on the economy and communities.

As articulated by His Excellency, President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa in the Opening of Parliament address this year, Cabinet has defined three priority areas for government for the next 5 years.

Cabinet will receive a final Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP), which translates these priorities into a detailed plan and interventions that government and sector will implement over the next five years.

The Government of National Unity (GNU) has resolved to dedicate the next five years to actions that will advance three strategic priorities, which are:-

- to drive inclusive economic growth and job creation.
- to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living.
- to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

We have placed inclusive economic growth at the centre of the work of the GNU and at the top of the national agenda.

The Department of Tourism is currently working on finalising our 5-year plan which will align to the GNU priorities, the National Development Plan, the Tourism Sector Master Plan and the National Tourism Sector Strategy.

I cannot conclude without mentioning that government wants to ensure that we enable the private sector to create more jobs. This is why the five-year plan and targets will implement programmes for demand-led skills and a greater use of technology such as AI, among other priorities.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and hope we come up with insightful and innovative plans to take our sector forward.

I thank you all.

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