



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Opening address by the Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom at Tourism Indaba 2019**

**2 May 2019**

Deputy Minister Thabete  
Heads of delegation from our continent,  
MEC for Tourism in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, Sihle Zikalala,  
MEC for Tourism in the Eastern Cape, Oscar Mabuyane,  
Chairperson of South African Tourism and members of the Board,  
The acting CEO and staff of South African Tourism,  
The DG and staff of the Department of Tourism,  
Exhibitors, buyers, and members of the media,  
Distinguished guests.

Sanibonani,

And a wonderful welcome to Africa's Travel Indaba 2019.

It is an absolute honour and pleasure to be with all of you today, as we kick off this magnificent show.

Each year that I come to Africa's Travel Indaba I am blown away by how much bigger and better it gets. Most especially, I am delighted by the increasing number of exhibitors from across the African continent, displaying such amazing products and making this a truly African event.

Africa's Travel Indaba has become synonymous with storytelling. And this year's theme, ***Africa's Stories, Your Success*** re-emphasises the importance of telling our own stories and showcasing our successes. Too often the real stories of Africa are not told and not heard.

This continent is teeming with stories and folklore, which are woven into all the products and experiences that are showcased here.

In 2018 Africa reached 67 million international tourist arrivals, a growth of 7% on 2017, comfortably ahead of the world average growth of 6%. This represents 5% of all global international arrivals, up nearly 14 million from the low of 2015, a year when we faced the challenge of Ebola. We have grown on average by almost 8% for three years in a row!

In total, directly and indirectly, our sector contributed 8.5% to African GDP in 2018, supporting more than 24 million jobs on the continent, or 6.7% of all jobs. When you think of the people one income earner often supports in our societies, this is really significant.

Ethiopia was Africa's fastest growing travel economy (and the world's, for that matter) growing by 48.6% in 2018! This extraordinary growth is mostly attributed to Ethiopia's success in establishing itself as regional transport hub.

Air Ethiopia must be acclaimed for bringing volumes of tourists to the whole African continent. Visa relaxation also played a significant role in spurring Ethiopia's growth, something again which many of our countries could learn from, especially South Africa.

Egypt has demonstrated considerable resilience, and through safety improvements, including in key destinations such as Sharm El-Sheikh, have enticed international tourists back to the country.

Kenya saw excellent performance in 2018, with tourist arrivals growing by a whopping 37% to surpass the 2 million mark for the first time ever.

But, while these figures are impressive, the overall tourism contributions to GDP in Africa is still well below the global average of 10.4% of GDP. What this tells us is that we have huge unrealised potential to unlock.

The UNWTO predicts that 1.8 billion people will be travelling globally by 2030, and that Africa will increase its share from our current 5% to 7% of all global arrivals. This would be 126 million arrivals; almost double the number we have now! We will need to see growth of 5,4% every year to reach this.

Are we up to it? Yes, we most definitely are!

We must enhance Indaba every year to drive massive growth in tourism numbers by bringing together a range of our best and most unique products from across our continent, and connecting them with buyers from across the world.

We have **scenery** that would surely surpass any expectation. Vast deserts and huge sand dunes, majestic snow-capped mountains and towering volcanoes, immense lakes and splendid, powerful rivers, rich wetlands, deltas and estuaries, waterfalls including the impressive Victoria Falls, spectacular canyons, endless lengths of magnificent coastline with pristine beaches and imposing rocky formations and cliffs. We have lush vineyards and undulating plantations, rich forests, teeming jungles and rolling savannah, and of course, idyllic tropical islands.

We have significant and unique **heritage and culture** from ancient civilisations such as Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe, and the rock hewn churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia to the myriad of lively, colourful and joyful African cultures from the Masai to the colourful Herero in Namibia, to the vibrant and energetic Zulu culture here in KwaZulu-Natal. We have the ancient San peoples and their culture, and then, much older, the origins of humankind in the Kenyan Rift Valley, Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge and the Cradle of Humankind in South Africa. The truth is, Africa is the place we all come from, and we must proudly proclaim this!

Another big selling point is our **creative and cultural industries and festivals**. We have a huge variety of music, African traditional and contemporary art forms, many genres of theatre and myriads of dance styles. There are monuments and museums telling the stories of our liberation, of the struggles against colonialism, slave trade and apartheid and our celebrated triumphs over such adversities.

We have incredibly diverse **wildlife and safari experiences to offer**. The Ngorongoro Crater Nature Reserve is witness to the largest concentration of wild animals in the world, while nearby in the Serengeti the most spectacular migration of animals on the planet occurs. Whether its the Okavango Delta in Botswana, Etosha with its massive salt pan, our own Kruger National Park, home to numerous biomes, or the amazing parks in Rwanda and Uganda with their incredible gorillas .... the list goes on. We have a host of private Nature Reserves offering absolutely exquisite experiences of flowers, birds, starry night skies and tranquility. Our marine-life experiences are unparalleled – amazing reefs and diving, whale viewing, swimming with sharks, coral reefs and prolific fish and marine bird-life.

And, that is not all. We have unmatched **adrenalin and adventure** experiences to offer: there are mountains to climb, seas to sail and surf, bungee jumping, hang-gliding, zip lines, the list is endless. Add to this our pleasing climates and there can be no better place than our continent for the adrenalin junky and the adventure seeker.

Our buzzing, **vibrant and cosmopolitan cities** offer a kaleidoscope of action ranging from modern shopping malls with international designer brands to neighbourhood and farmers' markets, and restaurants offering every global, and authentic local cuisines.

Most countries in Africa have world class International Convention Centres, like the one we are in right now, theatres, museums, galleries, libraries and parks, and many other cultural offerings, not to mention beaches and waterfronts interwoven into the fabric of some of our cities.

With this indisputable competitive and geographic advantage, we have the base of what the world's tourists are seeking. The seasoned markets of North America and Europe, and the rapidly maturing markets of China and India, are all seeking new and different experiences – different cultures, different heritage, different and stunning scenery and landscapes. This is what we have.

We also have an innate ability to respond to the desire of tourists for experiential authentic travel. Africa offers exuberant welcomes and big-hearted hosting of our tourists, catering for their needs professionally, and sharing our cultures in memorable ways. We offer what tourists are increasingly looking for: meaningful experiences, meeting real people in their homes and communities, experiencing local traditions and customs. This kind of tourism generates real community benefits.

Our offer of this unique blend of culture, heritage, nature-based, rural and urban experiences make Africa a rich and varied, all-year destination, which can offer real value for money, and a quality visitor experience that is diverse and unique to the world. We can and are continuing to attract and grow the traditional markets, whilst at the same time driving growth from the large and fast growing emerging markets.

Our continent is also our own market. All countries in Africa have potential for domestic tourism growth. Intra-continental tourism from Africa's rapidly growing economies and growing middle class is an opportunity begging to be exploited. We need improved collaborative efforts between our countries to achieve this.

We need to action the AU Agenda 2063 – especially with respect to free movement of people everywhere on the continent, and the easing or dropping of visa requirements in the next few years to enable this.

We need to work on all countries signing the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), signed by only 23 countries so far. It's intended to drive down airfares by allowing more airlines to freely access and increase frequency of flights to more countries. We need to be united in our aspiration to build and brand Africa as a continent of successes and opportunity.

As we prepare to start our Indaba, let us spare a thought for the people of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, that found themselves on the tragic receiving end of a devastating tropical storm just six weeks ago.

South Africa, specifically KwaZulu Natal, our host province, and the Eastern Cape also experienced unseasonal rainfall, albeit on a much smaller scale. Tragically, a number of lives were lost and extensive damage caused to infrastructure, including people's homes.

In the spirit of *Ubuntu*, we would like to give you, the tourism industry an opportunity to open your hearts and extend a helping hand to the victims. A special collection desk has been set up at the main registration area, for people to offer their donations. Funds collected will be channelled through carefully selected non-profit organisations, to ensure proper distribution and allocation.

In reflecting on these catastrophes, we must be cognisant that we are experiencing early warning signs of climate change. There is more and worse to come. Our sector must be part of the united global response to the challenge of reducing carbon emissions.

Responsible tourism has to be the way of the future. Practicing tourism that minimises carbon footprints, conserves energy and water, reduces waste and plastic consumption, and ensures that fair benefits accrue to communities and employees, is not just an option - it is vitally important. It is especially pertinent in Africa, a continent which is still home to large numbers of poor and marginalised people. Ensuring that communities access real benefits from tourism is critical to the success and sustainability of this industry on our continent.

We simply must practice responsible tourism. Tourism, after all, is built on sharing and experiencing the bountiful beauty of our living planet, which belongs to us all, and the creativity of our people. We must fiercely conserve our natural environment. And tourism must bring tangible and lasting benefits to everyone.

I would like to urge buyers to support products which demonstrably practice responsible tourism and to visit some of our own so-called hidden gems here at Indaba. The Department of Tourism has once again supported over 100 Small Micro and Medium Enterprises to participate in Indaba. This not only facilitates the growth of small businesses; it also offers buyers a greater variety of choices.

In his State of the Nation Address earlier this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa said that South Africa is looking to double its international tourist arrivals from 10,5 million to 21million by 2030

This 2019 edition of the Africa Travel Indaba will without doubt help us move towards this lofty goal - a goal which has the potential to support 2 million additional jobs in South Africa. This will be incredibly significant for our economy.

A week ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> April, we celebrated 25 years of freedom since our first democratic elections and, six days from today, we will once again be exercising our hard fought for democratic rights to elect parties of our choice to represent us in South Africa's National Parliament and Provincial Legislatures.

When Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first democratically-elected President opened the first Indaba in a free South Africa, he shared these words with us:

*"It is in tourism that nature and humanity meet most equitably and profitably.... It also provides the resources for the conservation of our natural heritage. Furthermore, tourism is making an important and valuable contribution to the South African economy."* Twenty four years on, and those words still echo throughout our sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, over the next three days, Africa Travel Indaba will be a hive of activity. There are hundreds of tourism products from across the continent exhibiting. International buyers and media from all over the world are here to spread the good news and whet the appetite of millions of aspirant travellers to visit our magnificent and alluring continent.

Let's work together to replace the sometimes negative narrative of Africa with the real story of so many nations on the move, of people innovating and moving confidently into the future. Let's ensure that tourism makes a positive and meaningful contribution to the lives of all the people of Africa.

I welcome you all to this event and offer a very special welcome to all the first-time exhibitors and buyers. And a special word of appreciation to the enthusiastic team from SA Tourism for once more delivering a fantastic Trade show – under difficult circumstance, I might add.

I trust you will enjoy the show, have stimulating conversations and leave here inspired by Africa's amazing tourism offering. Seal those deals and secure those partnerships.

With those few words, it gives me great pleasure to declare Africa's Travel Indaba 2019 officially open. I wish you all the best for the next 3 days.

Ngiyabonga. Daaluj. Asante. Waita Hako. Natotela.