



Remarks by the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, H.E. Mr Shipokosa Paulus Mashatile, on the occasion of Africa's Travel Indaba, Durban, 13 May 2025

Programme Director;
Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Province, Honourable Thamsanqa Ntuli and Councillor Cyril Xaba,
Mayor of eThekweni our gracious hosts;
Minister of Tourism in South Africa, Honourable Patricia de Lille and Deputy Minister of Tourism, Honourable Magdeline Soty;u;
Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;
Members of the KZN Provincial Executive;
Executive Mayors and Councillors present;
Leaders and Representatives of Tourism Authorities from across the continent;
Captains of Industry and Business Leaders;
Partners from the Travel and Tourism Industry;
Exhibitors and Buyers;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sanibonani,

Welcome to Africa's Travel Indaba, in KwaZulu-Natal, here in the vibrant city of Durban, eThekweni. A city renowned for its rich cultural history and breathtaking coastline. It is thus the ideal location for this major event, that showcases Africa's tourist offers and potential for growth.

I also like to congratulate you Mayor Xaba and your team for hosting a successful Soweto derby between Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs, well done.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

May is Africa Month. It is a month to commemorate the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, now the African Union (AU). In this month we are reminded to forge unity, strengthen the bonds of solidarity, and cooperation among the African states. This is a call we must never forsake until we witness a more integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa.

Thirty years ago, President Mandela spoke at this very event, which was then named the Indaba International Tourism Workshop. On that day, he reaffirmed our country's commitment to work with the rest of Africa to boost South Africa's and the continent's tourism industry. He underlined that while we work to improve our tourism industry, we can benefit from the continent's wealth of experience in various aspects.

African wisdom and our knowledge systems have flowed like a river and passed through the ages by the ancestors of this great land, who, against the tides of hardship, stood resolute to protect our beloved Africa, our cherished home. These are leaders refused to be defined by their circumstances and instead stood as a beacon of light, illuminating Africa's path.

In particular, I speak of those valiant spirits, both men and women, among them Jomo Kenyatta, who united in a fervent spirit of defiance, like the Mau-Mau in Kenya, who rose to claim the freedom of their beautiful homeland, which encompasses the Savannah, Lakelands, the dramatic Great Rift Valley, and mountain highlands.

I am referring to leaders like Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first president, known for his role in achieving independence for Tanganyika and his efforts to create a unified and egalitarian society. His actions reflected his love and optimism for his country's beauty. Who can today refuse to visit a nation with such amazing wildlife and natural scenery, such as Mount Kilimanjaro, Serengeti National Park, and the Ngorongoro Crater?

We will always be grateful to Thomas Sankara, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Milton Obote, Patrice Lumumba, Kenneth Kaunda, Samora Machel, and other leaders who contributed to the transformation of our wonderful continent. Due to their contributions in achieving political independence, Africa is now welcoming many tourists to explore its beauty, marvels, hospitality, and culture. Many travellers are drawn to uncover the roots that shaped these remarkable men and women of our continent, and for this, we should be proud!

Furthermore, tourists from all over the world can now freely experience a diverse range of attractions, from iconic landmarks like the Table Mountain and Victoria Falls, our vibrant African cities and wildlife reserves, not forgetting Uganda's diverse national parks and Morocco's rich culture landscapes.

When you explore Africa's vast regions and different civilisations, you will surely be met by a rich history, customs, and natural beauties that demonstrate the interconnection of this great continent. From the ancient civilisations that thrived along the Nile River to the vivid cultures that cover the streets of busy cities today, Africa is a land full of stories that are just waiting to be told.

Africa's attractions and influx of tourists also means that our continent is an important part of the world's economy, politics, growth, and humanity. Despite being separated by man-made borders, the humanity of the African people permeates the veins of all African countries. Our unity is cemented by social cohesion!

It is a reminder of how unique we are as humans, created with love, compassion, and care that are inextricably linked to our identities. Our humanity makes us stand out in the world's melting pot of cultures, traditions, and heritage.

As Africans, we strive to live by the principles of Ubuntu, which emphasise interconnectedness and promote a sense of community, mutual support, and respect for human dignity. It is a core value that influences social interactions, governance, and conflict resolution, fostering a sense of unity and solidarity.

In the embrace of an interconnected Africa, it is important to recognise the obstacles that the continent encounters. Africa faces numerous challenges, including political strife, poverty, unemployment, and inequality, which have led to widespread misery, violence, and loss of life. We cannot remain silent when the fabric of our societies disintegrates, torn by widening geopolitical divides, economic tensions, and the harsh impacts of a changing climate, bringing forth catastrophic consequences.

These issues require our collective action. This gathering must confront these challenges and uncover enduring solutions. Africa can overcome any obstacle that stands in her path. However, the key to overcoming lies in our ability to work together.

Compatriots,

Tourism undoubtedly serves as a significant economic engine, a catalyst for social change, and a cornerstone of inclusive growth.

At the heart of this vibrant industry is its human capital. We pride ourselves on the warm human experience and rich cultural diversity that make a visit to Africa unforgettable.

We recognise that for Africa to realise its full potential, we must unlock the vast, untapped opportunities in the tourism sector within our own borders. Tourism contributes significantly to Africa's GDP, directly and indirectly. In 2023, travel and tourism contributed 6.8 per cent to Africa's GDP, up from 5.9 per cent in the previous year.

In South Africa, tourism contributes 8.9 per cent of the GDP and supports 1.68 million jobs – a figure we are determined to grow to 2.2 million jobs by 2030.

Projections indicate that tourism's contribution to GDP could rise to 10.4% by 2030, driven by increased international arrivals, infrastructure investments, and targeted marketing initiatives. We are determined to accelerate investment, open our skies, deepen our partnerships, and position Africa not at the margins of the global economy, but firmly at its centre – where it belongs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa's Unlimited Potential is not just a vision — it's a Pan-African reality waiting to be realised. Our theme, "Unlimited Africa", is not just a statement; it is a bold declaration of Africa's promise and possibilities. It speaks of an Africa unbound by old stereotypes, an Africa driven by its own ambitions and solutions.

This is an Africa where intra-continental trade, investment, and tourism are no longer mere aspirations but rather everyday realities. The African Continental Free Trade Area is expected to significantly benefit tourism in Africa by fostering intra-African travel, attracting investment in tourism infrastructure, and stimulating economic growth.

What is also important is that we boost our intra-Africa travel while also increasing the share of international tourism. Intra-African tourism is crucial for boosting local economies, fostering regional integration, and promoting cultural understanding within the continent. It creates jobs, strengthens economies, and contributes to infrastructure development while conserving natural environments and cultural assets.

Therefore, Africa's Travel Indaba stands as a beacon of what is possible when we act together. It reminds us that tourism is not just about travel—it is about connection, empowerment, and shared belief. It is about promoting each other's markets and harnessing what we have as diverse nations.

The South African Government has already begun this journey of promoting tourism by enabling seamless African travel. We aim to remove barriers, unlock access, and make it easier for Africans and the world to experience Africa. We remain committed to ensuring that travel is safe, secure, and seamless for all. We want each traveller to find joy in their journey through our land.

This will be the case for those who will be travelling to South Africa for the historic G20 Summit, in November. The hosting of the G20 positively catapults Africa into the global spotlight. It signifies a progressive milestone for both South Africa and the African continent, providing an opportunity for us to highlight African perspectives on global economic and development issues.

We need to echo a united African voice on every global stage. With one voice, we boost Africa's role in global matters, strengthen country-to-country integration, and enable better support for important issues like development, peace, and security.

Furthermore, we must engage constructively with our global partners within the G20, developing relationships based on mutual respect, understanding, and reciprocity. Together, we can create a more egalitarian and inclusive global order that benefits all countries by overcoming divides and forging partnerships.

Compatriots,

Over 200 G20-related meetings will take place across South Africa, putting our country and our continent at the heart of the world's most important economic conversations. We have already hosted a successful first G20 Tourism Working Group meeting. The G20 Tourism Working Group has also hosted a second meeting, with subsequent meetings and the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting expected towards the end of the year.

South Africa's tourism priorities for the 2025 G20 Presidency are consistent with the continental priorities outlined in Agenda 2063 and the core objectives of the UN Tourism Agenda for Africa - Tourism for Inclusive Growth, the strategic roadmap guiding the promotion of sustainable tourism development across the African continent.

As the only African member of the G20, South Africa has a solemn responsibility and a proud opportunity to advocate for developing nations and the global South, to champion sustainable tourism, and to secure investment in Africa's future.

Let us be clear, Africa's future lies in Africans choosing Africa!

We must choose to explore each other's countries with curiosity and determination.
We must choose to invest in each other's businesses.

Over the decades, we have noted meaningful progress that signifies a shift from viewing tourism purely as leisure to recognising it as a strategic driver of economic development.

This gathering and those that follow ought to act as sparks for greater regional cooperation, enabling African nations to present themselves together as diverse yet unified destinations. We need to integrate our technologies, innovation, and sustainable practices into the tourism strategies.

More importantly, we must be able to identify the implementation of tangible Empowerment Programmes targeting our local communities through tourism-linked employment and enterprise development.

We must deepen our efforts to build resilient and inclusive tourism economies that benefit women, youth, and people with disabilities. As we come together in discussion and reflection during this Indaba, let us also think about meaningful strategies to enhance our infrastructure, connectivity, and visa systems to facilitate travel throughout our continent.

Last year, we implemented key visa reforms, including the Remote Work Visa and the Points-Based System for skilled workers. Other reforms included revised immigration regulations for countries such as Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa.

Indeed, we have seen how this has contributed to the growth in tourist arrivals from Ghana and Kenya. This is without a doubt a clear indication of the power of easing and streamlining immigration requirements combined with targeted and strategic marketing. These success

stories are evidence that when we reduce red tape and increase access, our entire tourism economy benefits.

We need to invest more in skills development and digital transformation for the tourism sector to thrive. We must foster innovation and sustainable practices to ensure long-term economic growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us celebrate the bond that unites Africa, honouring the vibrant cultures, breathtaking landscapes, and the incredible people that make this continent shine with brilliance.

Let us demonstrate to the world that Africa is ready for business.

With these words, I would like to officially declare the Africa Travel Indaba 2025 open!

Asante Sana, Medaase, I thank you!