



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

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**REMARKS BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, MR. FISH MAHLALELA, AT THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE BEST PRACTICES WORKSHOP HELD AT
DESTINY HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTRE ON 04 MARCH 2020.**

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, I welcome you to South Africa. It gives me pleasure to welcome all of you from different corners of our beloved African and the Asian continents.

The South African Government places tourism high on its agenda for sustainable growth and job creation. You might be aware that our President, in his State of the Nation Address, set a target of 21 million tourist arrivals by 2030 for the tourism sector. It is through initiatives and platforms such as the Best Practices Workshop that will make meaningful contributions in achieving such targets.

When Former President Nelson Mandela opened the Indaba International Workshop in Durban on the 1 May 1995, he alluded to the importance of tourism in growing the economy when he said:

“Never before has tourism offered us such possibilities. We believe that, with international support, tourism can become one of the corner-stones in the generation of sustained economic growth so critical to the building of our nation.”

Indeed, African Ministers of Tourism during the 41st World Tourism Organization Commission for Africa Meeting, held in Mahe, Seychelles, made recommendations on the need to place tourism as a key instrument, especially for Africa’s transformation and development initiatives. In July 2014, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the 3rd Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly adopted such a recommendation.

The South African government to date, signed a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreements with 27 countries across the globe, and continue to negotiate others with the aim to strengthening bilateral relations in the field of tourism. It is through such cooperation that countries may collaborate with ease in dealing with and resolving such challenges through sharing of information and expertise.

Once more, I am taken back to what former President Mandela shared with the delegates in the Indaba International Workshop of 1995 when talking about the lessons learnt. He said:

“Amongst the lessons that we have learnt is that, in order to reap the full benefit of the increased international interest in South Africa as a destination, we cannot rely merely on our natural and cultural heritage.”

I therefore feel delighted that this workshop seeks to align tourism’s contribution to Agenda 2063 through improving the standards, systems and policies in regulating the tourism industry whilst creating jobs and alleviating poverty.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The potential of economic growth and development related to the tourism sector are fully recognized at both the continental and international levels. In the African context, the tourism sector is confronted with a number of issues, not only in its long-term development and prosperity, but also in the strategic orientation including dealing with issues such as safety and security, as well as health challenges, e.g. current Corona virus.

Thus, it is important to develop a tourism action plan with the view to optimize the role of tourism as an engine and catalyst for economic development and growth in Africa, through the establishment of conducive environment, regional cooperation advocacy and stakeholder participation.

As the experts in the sector, we need to respond to the needs and be innovative and strategic in our ways to develop Africa as a destination tapping into various attractions across the continent without creating unfair competition, but through cooperation in programmes like this workshop, wherein you will share amongst yourselves the best practices.

To this end, it is important to recognize that a platform like this one, will address the key challenges with the view to improve and harmonize standards in quality assurance through the grading and classification of the tourism establishments, and services rendered in this industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I trust that you will spend the two days sharing information frankly about your own experiences in this regard whilst learning from each other as you share the best ways of dealing with the challenges in the area of grading and classification.

In South Africa, the Tourism Grading Council is the only officially recognised quality assurance body for tourism products, in in terms of the Tourism Act 3 of 2014.

The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) operates as a business unit of South African Tourism (SAT) and is the only recognised and globally credible quality assurance body for tourism in our country.

The TGCSA aims to be established as a recognisable and credible globally benchmarked system of quality assurance for accommodation and Venue experiences, which can be fully relied upon by visitors when choosing an establishment.

Qualified accredited grading assessors assess facilities based on a number of assessment areas including amenities, available facilities, location, food and beverages. Establishments are awarded a star grading (one star to five-star Premium) which is corresponding with the quality of their facilities and services. This is valid for one year.

Grading also assists the travel trade to understand the offerings and match supply and demand. Moreover, it facilitates the monitoring of hotel inventory and accommodation standards. To date, over 5 200 establishments are graded across the country.

TGCSA Recent Updates:

The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) recently announced that the new and revised grading standards for South Africa were approved by the Minister of Tourism and implemented as of 01 April 2019.

The new grading criteria include the introduction of three new categories in the form of “apartment hotels” and “small hotels”, in which the luxury form (boutique hotels) would be incorporated.

In addition to this, grading levels have been enhanced and will now also include a new 5-Star Premium grading level which is a recognition reserved for the pinnacle of luxury product in South Africa and will only be for those products that far exceed premium expectations with respect to quality standards and service excellence.

The TGCSA has also introduced a new dimension to grading which allows for properties to capitalize on niche market differentiation. This new addition termed “accolades” includes insignia and criteria for niche markets such as child-friendly, pet-friendly, wedding venues, spa and wellness facilities, 4x4.

Ladies and gentlemen

Allow me to borrow from the wisdom of Thomas Sankara when he said:

“Our revolution is, and should continue to be, the collective effort of revolutionaries to transform reality, to improve the concrete situation of the masses of our country.”

In conclusion, I wish you a wonderful stay in South Africa and know that you will enjoy your site visit to some of our tourist attractions as We Do Tourism.

I thank you