



REMARKS MR FISH MAHLALELA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE NETWORKING EVENT IN NAIROBI, KENYA ON 21 NOVEMBER 2023

His Excellency High Commissioner Mr MJ Mahlangu, South African High Commissioner to Kenya

Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners in our midst

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my singular honour indeed to share with you, warm compliments and gratitude from our people and government back in South Africa in this event as we collaborate with our SA Embassy in Kenya.

I guess this is a networking event in a relaxed atmosphere with an amazing venue as a backdrop that aims to showcase SA as an ideal destination for both business events and leisure travel, specifically targeting travellers.

Let me once more acknowledge all dignitaries, Industry leaders; Corporates, Travel Trade Associations, and prominent media personalities in our midst

This international platform is the 3rd East Africa Tourism Expo (EARTE) and the 13th Magical Kenya Travel Expo (MKTE) 2023. The two tourism expos are combined because Kenya is the host of EARTE and did not wish to lose the status of and MKTE brand.

Our messages are quite clear we want to emphasize our government's commitment to this market and the importance thereof for tourism.

Again, appreciate the South African product owners for their role in growing tourism and lastly express our gratitude to the industry for its performance and to the SA Embassy in Kenya for the support.

SA's market share of the Kenyan outbound market is now at 5% compared to 2% in 2019.

Kenya is the land of Jomo Kenyatta an anti-colonial activist, revolutionary, political theorist, and cultural theorist who played a significant role in the transformation of Kenya from a colony of the British Empire into an independent Republic.

Ideologically an African nationalist and a conservative, he led the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party from 1961 until his death.

Kenya remains a key player in the East Africa region for our tourism prospects and theirs too.

Our Country remains profoundly indebted to the people of Kenya for their continued support, moreover, our mutual partnership and respect for each other's sovereignty enable us to accelerate collaboration in various areas.

To all our **highly-valued** partners from Kenya and indeed the rest of the East Africa region – we might not be doing enough and I would like to reassure you, that the South African government remains fully committed to removing barriers that hinder the growth of our sector.

From January to September this year, South Africa welcomed a total of 28,554 visitors from Kenya, representing a 100.5% surge from the 14,243 visitors during the same period in 2022.

This is in **great part** due to collaborating with you as these figures underscore the strengthening ties and growing travel interest between Kenya and South Africa.

The bilateral ties, reinforced through various agreements, speak volumes of our shared commitment to progress.

As we forge ahead, we focus on further enhancing and capitalising on our combined strengths, significantly contributing to further growth and development.

As we navigate challenges and seize opportunities, we remain guided by the principle of Ubuntu – I am because we are! and this principle has been the cornerstone of our relationship, reminding us that our progress is interlinked.

To all our South African products present here today, I am grateful, I am thrilled by the fact that we are joined by a diverse group of South Africa's product owners and some small businesses.

As government, we all know that for our sector to flourish we need to continue to support SMMEs and we are committed to this because you all work extremely hard to showcase and market our wonderful destination to the world.

By contributing to the growth of the tourism industry, you help to grow our economy and to create employment opportunities for the people of South Africa.

We truly value your contribution.

This auspicious event tonight is about networking and I invite everyone to do so over some delicious South African food and wines – all in between conversations that will no doubt further connect us.

In conclusion, our journey together, marked by mutual respect and friendship, lays a strong foundation for future further collaboration.

The road ahead is paved with even more possibilities as we continue strengthening our partnerships, let us remain committed to a shared future of prosperity and unity.

Together, we are not just partners; we are architects of a winning African narrative.

I thank you all