



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Remarks by the Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, at World Tourism Day, Mpumalanga**

**26 September 2020**

**Programme director**

**Mr Fish Mahlalela, Deputy Minister of Tourism**

**Pat Ngomane MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism**

**Cllr Muzi Chirwa, Gert Sibande District Municipality**

**Cllr Yvonne Thandi Ngxonono, Mayor Govan Mbeki Municipality**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Thank you for availing yourselves for this fundraising dinner this evening. Your presence tonight is a clear indication of the value you place on the future of this country. For the contribution that you will be making tonight to support students studying Travel and Tourism and other related courses, you will be making a commitment to creating an advanced cadreship of young people in whose hands the future belongs.

However, if our economic performance continues in the current trajectory the young people of our country will not have much of a future to inherit. As you are aware the past six months of lockdown have been very difficult for our economy and in particular the tourism sector. However since moving the country level-1 of the risk-adjusted strategy, we have seen the tourism sector rapidly coming back to life. For this reason we are convinced that the tourism sector will be a key pillar of the overall recovery of the South African economy, following the devastation of the pandemic.

In his April 21<sup>st</sup> address to the Nation, President Cyril Ramaphosa said the following amongst other things, "The pandemic requires an economic response that is equal to the scale of the disruption it is causing. We will forge a compact for radical economic transformation that makes our cities, towns, villages and rural areas vibrant centres of economic activity..."

We believe that tourism has an important role to play in making our cities, towns, villages and rural areas vibrant centres of economic activity. Attached to this economic revival is the constitutional imperative of driving transformation so that we build a more diversified economy. As a key pillar of the economic recovery, the tourism sector will need to pay more attention to ensuring the participation reflects the diversity of our country.

The Mpumalanga province in particular boasts of some of the world's most beautiful tourism destinations in the world. From the wild life in the Kruger National Park, through the scenic and the spectacular panoramic route of the Blyde river canyon to the Highlands meanders that are ready to receive the adventurous amongst us. This province will be a key pillar of the tourism sector recovery, thus the opportunities for tourism entrepreneurs will be limitless.

Just to put the role of tourism in the economy in perspective, the records show that for the past decade the tourism sector has outperformed every other sector of the economy, globally. Its contribution to the global GDP has been growing very rapidly and its contribution to job creation has been immense. Here at home, tourism made a total contribution of R 441 billion to the GDP in 2019, coupled with a total contribution of 1.5 million jobs.

The devastation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has created a temporary slump on this otherwise upward trajectory of the tourism sector growth. However, we need to bear in mind that restoring the performance of the sector to pre-COVID-19 levels and even surpass this level, will require all of us to join hands and work together to implement the tourism recovery plan.

The department has just concluded a tourism recovery strategy that will be taken to cabinet in the coming weeks for approval. The plan envisaged that the recovery will, at first, be driven by domestic tourism, then regional and latterly, international tourism. In the past three weeks, we have seen a rapid increase in the number of domestic travellers who are heeding our call for South Africans to travel their own country.

The pandemic has had a very negative impact on the supply side of the tourism sector, for example more than 30% of restaurants that were in business before the pandemic will not be reopening. The magnitude of the impact varies from subsector to subsector. The flipside of this crisis is that it presents opportunities for new players to get into the market. For our part as the Department of Tourism, we will be using instruments such as the Tourism Equity Fund, a combination of a loan and grant, to crowd-in private sector investments for purposes of deepening transformation. We will announce the launch of this programme in the coming days.

The nature of tourism is such that it provides jobs and economic empowerment for all, including for women and youth thus creating a truly inclusive economy. Tourism gives rural communities the ability to protect and promote their natural surroundings, as well as their culture and heritage.

As we celebrate heritage month which happens to coincide with tourism month, we need to remember the importance of heritage in forging a national identity which will form the glue of our unity in diversity. Our country boasts a total of 10 World heritage Sites such as Mapungubwe, Cradle of Human Kind and Robben Island, amongst others, and these sites tell a story of where we come as a human species, as a historical and political entity called South Africa as well as how far we have come as a civilization.

The development of the Gert Sibande Liberation Heritage Route has added another piece to the great puzzle of the tapestry of South African history. In promoting and honouring the four struggle stalwarts like Gert Sibande, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme and Saul Mkhize, this heritage route brings to life the idealism that was a guiding light for the fight against apartheid.

Indeed our struggle heroes were imbued with the consciousness whose fundamental element is that you should leave the world better than you found it. The struggle heroes whose heritage route we honour today were born into the world that was characterised by racial injustice and economic exclusion. Whereas they could have decided to focus on improving their own life chances and those of their own families, they decided to dedicate their lives to fighting for a cause that culminated in the democratic breakthrough of 1994. This means they decided to fight for a cause that ensured they left the world better than they found it for all to prosper without hindrance.

By organising this fundraising Gala dinner in their honour, these four struggle stalwarts Gert Sibande, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme and Saul Mkhize, you immortalise them by using their legacy to continue the struggle they waged while they lived and that is to create a better society.

By contributing to the funds that will go towards supporting the education of these children, you are helping them to attain the necessary tools to stand on their own two feet. This is in keeping with words of wisdom from one of Africa's great writers, Chinua Achebe, who said "While we do our good works, let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become unnecessary." Let us find it in our hearts to contribute towards changing the lives of the young people who are going to benefit from these funds. Let's contribute towards a better future for all.

I thank you.