



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Remarks by the Minister of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, at the Meetings Africa launch, JSE, Sandton**

**07 February 2020**

Programme director  
Distinguished guests  
Morakane Mosupye, MEC, Economic Development, Agriculture and Environment.  
Geoff Makhobo, Mayor of the City of Johannesburg  
Sisa Ntshona, CEO, SAT  
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

Thank you for joining us today as we launch the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of Meetings Africa. In the 15 years of its existence, Meetings Africa has become a premier business event that is attended by notable exhibitors and delegates from Africa and beyond. One of the key objectives of Meetings Africa is to encourage and stimulate the rotation of meetings on the African continent. It is the ultimate platform for regional business events industry to engage in a bid to attract more global and regional business events to Africa.

The business events sector is crucial to the tourism industry as well as the economy of our country and continent. The industry directly and indirectly sustains more than 250 000 jobs, and contributes an estimated R115 billion to South Africa's GDP, annually. Africa's growing economy, improved infrastructure and growing tourism sector in globalised environment has led to the improvement in the continent's MICE supply sector. The global meetings industry has begun to recognise Africa as a sought after business events destination. As such, we need platforms like Meetings Africa which serve as a primary platform for Africa's business events professionals to showcase their diverse services and products offerings to global buyers.

Ladies and gentlemen, tourism is a huge contributor to economic growth, job creation and social development both in South Africa and the rest of the continent. For this reason, Meetings Africa is a great platform to showcase Africa's diverse offering of services and products to help transform our continent's fortunes.

Meetings Africa has grown significantly over the years, with 2019 being the biggest show thus far. Last year saw 343 exhibitors which is 37 more than in 2018. Eighty-six of these exhibitors came from 14 fellow African countries. This event is just another way that South Africa and Africa in general, are making an effort to gain a significant share of the global MICE industry which is projected to reach \$1.4 trillion, by 2025 according Allied Market Research.

Last year the president made an undertaking during his SONA that as a country "will make good on our ambition to more than double international tourist arrivals to 21 million by 2030".

To work towards achieving this goal he announced a number of initiatives that have to be embarked upon which include "the renewal of the country's brand, introducing a world-class visa regime and a significant focus on Chinese and Indian markets and air arrivals from the rest of our continent".

**ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

I'm happy to report that with regards to world class visa, significant strides have been made. Working together with the Minister Motsoaledi and the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) we have made it easy for tourists from all parts of the world to access our country through all our ports of entry. In addition to lowering the turnaround times for visa application, the DHA launched the testing and piloting of an electronic visa application system. The E-visa pilot started in Kenya last year while India was added as a pilot country in January this year. Depending on the success of the pilot, the system will soon be launched across the world.

The addition of more countries to the list of countries that no longer require Visas to travel to South Africa and the scrapping of the requirement for the unabridged birth certificate for minor travellers has also gone a long way in making it easy for travellers to access our country.

Having identified priority markets namely, China, India and Nigeria for increasing the number of international arrivals we embarked on a program to intensify our marketing activities in these markets. In this regard, I led a team from my department together with SAT to a roadshow in China in October 2019 where we met with representatives of China Tour Operators, and media houses. During this visit to China we also signed a joint marketing agreement between SAT and Tencent the owner of WeChat one of the largest social media platform in China.

This was followed by a trip to Nigeria in November 2019 in which we had the opportunity to interact with the representatives of the Nigerian government, the media and Tour operators, this for us became a platform to restore our brand as a country following the attacks on foreign nationals. In India to which we visited last month, we engaged with two of the largest tour operators in India Thomas Cook and SOTC, tourism trade CEOs in roundtable, movie producers, decision makers in various corporations in relation to MICE and we concluded the visit with an interaction with various media houses.

The engagements with stakeholders in all these source markets are part of the newly adopted marketing approach which aims to pay greater attention to the needs of tourists.

The President also committed to ensuring "tourists who come to our country are safe." In December last year, we launched a tourism safety campaign together with the Minister of Police, Bheki Cele and business, represented by TBCSA. This Tourism Safety Plan involved the entire security cluster coordinated by the police, and integrating a (1) proactive preventative measures to potential incidents (2) Responsive measures that to ensure quick and effective operational response, and importantly (3) An aftercare programme that focuses on measures to facilitate and provide victim support after an incident has occurred.

We are happy to report that we received calls from our stakeholders in Mpumalanga and Kwazulu-Natal, expressing their appreciation for police visibility in various tourist attractions and the good work that the police were doing in ensuring safety for tourists.

These initiatives collectively have made a huge contribution towards restoring our country's brand. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the South African Convention Bureau for doing a stellar job of not only bringing the show to life every year, but also ensuring that it occupies a prominent spot in the global business events calendar. We look forward to welcoming the world to South Africa.

I hope to see you all at Meetings Africa 2020, which will take place at the Sandton Convention Centre from 24 to 26 February 2020.

I thank you.