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## **SA DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM FISH MAHLALELA ATTENDS UN WORLD TOURISM MEETING FOR AFRICA IN NAMIBIA**

**15 JUNE 2021**

**WINDHOEK** - South African Deputy Minister of Tourism, Mr Fish Mahlalela, today began his two-day visit to Namibia where he participated in the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Regional Conference for Africa, taking place in Windhoek from 14 to 16 June 2021.

Addressing the High-Level Ministerial Panel under the theme, “Strengthening Brand Africa for the swift recovery of the tourism sector,” the Deputy Minister highlighted the importance of rebuilding the continental brand through actions that dispel negative perceptions about the business environment on the continent.

“We need to understand the current perceptions about Africa’s ability and what informs such perceptions, and as we do that we need to answer as to what we as African governments are doing to eliminate those negative perceptions about ‘being African’, and not over time, but urgently.”

The Deputy Minister called for the development partners to drive initiatives to change the narrative about Africa. “This is Africa’s moment to reclaim its positioning globally. As the world reopens Africa has the youngest youth population of all continents in the world. If Africa is to become the economic and social superpower that it is meant to be, then Brand Africa must leverage the youth mindset, creativity and innovation in whatever positioning it adopts,” he added.

“To position Africa – we need to show the best of who we are – position us as an active and sustainable continent, we need to highlight our best features and tourism adventures, and in addition we need to further position Africa within the minds of consumers and travellers, we need to listen and see what they want.”

The Deputy Minister also acknowledged that air connectivity was a key driver for outbound travel for business tourism within Africa, as he reassured partners of commitments to support intra-Africa travel.

“As we discuss Brand Africa, we need to answer as governments on how we are contributing to making the continent more attractive to established professionals and business leaders in the diaspora, those who are ready to contribute in developing and re-positioning our continent as a prime destination for investment, work and leisure.”

“Collectively, we must create a conducive environment to drive growth in our tourism markets, by providing policy that will drive collaboration in the areas of product development, regional routes, air access and data sharing,” said Mahlalela.

The Deputy Minister will utilise the occasion of the working visit to explore further collaboration with other African delegations attending the meeting as well bilateral discussions with his Namibian counterpart, Deputy Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Heather Sibungu. South Africa and Namibia have close economic cooperation ties with a bilateral agreement in the field of tourism currently under consideration.

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## **NOTE TO EDITORS:**

### **1. CONTINENTAL CONTEXT FOR TOURISM RECOVERY**

#### **African Union (AU)**

At its meeting on 21 April 2020, the AU Bureau of the Subcommittee on Tourism of the Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC-TTIET) decided to set up a High-Level Task Force, with a view to developing and implementing a comprehensive Post-COVID-19 Continental Tourism Recovery Strategy. The Bureau of the Subcommittee on Tourism also called on the African Union Commission (AUC), Regional Economic Communities, the African Civil Aviation Commission, the African Development Bank, UNWTO, and international development partners, to provide technical expertise and support for the Continental Tourism Recovery Strategy.

The First Extra Ordinary Session of the AU STC-TTIET held virtually on 12 January 2021 directed the AUC to fully and expeditiously implement the decision of the Bureau of the Subcommittee on Tourism to ensure that the process of developing a Continental Tourism Recovery Strategy is expedited with a view to have the recovery strategy finalised in 2021. This is ongoing work for the AUC.

#### **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

Early in 2020, the SADC Member States requested that, in cognizance of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the SADC region, the Costed Action Plan for the SADC Tourism Programme must include an overview of the impact of the pandemic on tourism in the SADC region and recommended responses at a global and regional level. The SADC Secretariat commissioned a consultancy to assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic at SADC level.

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