



tourism

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Speech delivered by Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk, Minister of Tourism, on the occasion of the launch of the South African Tourism office - Nigeria

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Growing Africa as South African Tourism opens in West Africa

The South African Tourism Minister Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk, accompanied by Nigeria's Tourism, Culture and National Orientation Minister, Chief Edem Duke, today officially opened the very first South African Tourism regional marketing office on the African continent in Lagos, Nigeria.

Addressing the West African travel trade and guests in attendance Minister van Schalkwyk said:

"On behalf of my fellow South Africans here with me, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the very warm reception afforded to us since our arrival in this beautiful and vibrant city of Lagos.

This morning we are here to officially open the first South African Tourism regional marketing office on the continent. It's a momentous occasion for us.

South African Tourism's new home in Lagos demonstrates and confirms the resolve between our two countries to strengthen our relations for the mutual benefit of our peoples and, indeed, the long-term gain of the African continent.

Our presence here serves to confirm our support for increased economic co-operation between the southern Africa and western Africa regions.

As a nation, we see the special and longstanding relationship between Nigeria and South Africa as pivotal towards building an Africa that is economically vibrant and resilient.

Key to creating economic vibrancy and resilience is working together to develop tourism industries that have the potential to contribute meaningfully to GDPs and to job creation on the African continent.

Tourism is certainly one such industry. Investing in our tourism network on the continent is not only indicative of our commitment to African co-operation; it makes business sense, too.

Growth in African arrivals is what has been driving the growth of our continent's tourism industry for many years now. Growth in African arrivals is what shielded our tourism industry from the worst of the recent economic downturn and is what we believe is going to keep our continent's tourism industry on a sustainable growth path going forward.

This office will serve as a tourism hub from which we will look to grow our presence in West Africa.

Yes, we mark an important milestone here today, but it is exactly this, a milestone, along a road we have long been walking with the travel trade of this region.

During this time we've invested heavily in understanding the needs of the West African traveler so as to ensure that your holiday experience is as rewarding or memorable to you as it is to us.

To that end, we have also been working tirelessly to ensure that South Africa offers the West African travelers a holiday that enriches their lives through a world of new experiences.

We have extended an invitation to the West African traveler through some of the marketing campaigns that we have done in the various markets. The arrival statistics from these markets already bear testimony to the fact that this invitation was well-received. A total of 73,282 Nigerian tourists visited South Africa in 2012. This is a 13.8% increase to the 64 402 Nigerian tourists who visited South Africa in 2011 an upward trend that we truly welcome.

At the end of June 2013, Nigerian arrivals had continued to grow on a strong trajectory: 15.9% growth on the same period in 2012 to 40,097 tourist arrivals.

Likewise, tourist arrivals from Ghana to South Africa grew a phenomenal 23.8% in 2012, when South Africa welcomed 22, 953 Ghanaian tourists. Up to end June 2013, arrivals from Ghana were growing at 27.3%, to 13, 663 tourist arrivals for the six-month period

These numbers represent more than mere statistics to us; they represent a friendship that grows and strengthens each year. They are an indication that we are indeed delivering on our brand promise.

These strengthening ties, friends, represent the sentiments of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa*, whose vision of African Unity is being realised by our presence here today.

It is our intention to continue to grow arrivals from the west African region to South Africa and as such, we are truly overjoyed today to take our place here as part of the larger regional travel community.

Global interest in visiting Africa is at an all-time high; and it is also our intention to do our bit to convert this interest into increased arrivals across the continent.

South African Tourism has thus officially extended an invitation to the rest of Africa to showcase the continent by exhibiting together at the annual Tourism Indaba taking place from the 10th to the 12th May in Durban this year.

With renewed vigour and an unwavering dedication to showcase the African continent, INDABA offers any exhibitor the opportunity to promote their destination at the heart of Africa's biggest, most established and best-attended travel trade exhibition. So we encourage you to come exhibit at INDABA as we work together to market our continent to the rest of the world.

This new office is our heartfelt and sincere invitation to all Nigerians, Ghanaians and indeed, all West Africans to come and enjoy a memorable holiday in South Africa.

Thank you."

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