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SPEECH

DATE: 13 MAY 2025

SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE'S REMARKS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA 2025 KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

- Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, HE Mr Paul Mashatile and Mrs Mashatile
- Ministers of Tourism from our fellow African countries.
- Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism, Mnganga-Gcabashe and Members of Parliament
- Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Province, Mr Arthur Thamsanqa Ntuli
- Honourable MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs, Rev Musa Zondi
- Mayor of eThekweni, His Worship Executive Mayor Councillor Cyril Xaba
- South African Tourism Board Chairperson Prof Gregory Davids and Board Members
- Director General at the Department of Tourism, Mr. Victor Vele
- CEO of South African Tourism, Ms Nombulelo Guliwe
- CEOs and Chairpersons of Provincial Tourism Authorities
- MECs responsible for Tourism from all nine provinces
- Representatives from the private sector, including TBCSA, TOMSA, SATSA, SATOVITO and Tourism Transformation Council.
- UN Tourism Executive Director Ms. Natalia Bayona
- Industry Associations, business owners, partners and our Tourism Stakeholders
- Representatives from the G20 Member Countries
- Valued Media representatives from across the world including India, China, Africa, UK and USA
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning, Sanibonani

Welcome to Africa's Travel Indaba 2025 – the premier tourism gathering.

It is therefore an honour that the Deputy President of South Africa, HE Mr Paul Mashatile, is here today to open Africa's Travel Indaba.

The Indaba is a catalyst for inclusive growth, job creation, and sustainable development in tourism, not only in South Africa but throughout Africa.

This year, Durban is the host city of Indaba and a symbol of momentum for the entire African tourism community.

It is fitting that the G20 2nd Tourism Working Group Meeting is taking place on the side-lines of Africa's Travel Indaba, placing African tourism at the centre of global dialogue.

Tourism in South Africa makes a significant contribution to the economy, creating jobs and independent livelihoods.

It reaches parts of the country where there are very few other opportunities.

Tourism remains a powerful economic driver in South Africa and across the continent. In 2024, South Africa alone welcomed 8.9 million tourists, and their direct spending contribution was R91.6 billion, supporting an estimated 1.6 million jobs.

In the first quarter of 2025, South Africa welcomed close to 2.6 million tourists, reflecting a 5.7% growth compared to the same period in 2024.

Let us remember: 75% of South Africa's international arrivals come from the rest of Africa.

According to UN Tourism, in 2024, tourism in Africa saw a sharp rebound, with a 96% recovery compared to 2019, positioning our continent among the world's fastest-growing regional tourism destinations.

I am proud to announce that this year's Indaba welcomes over 1,300 exhibitors, delegates from 27 African countries, and over 1,200 vetted international buyers from 55 source markets.

Our collective presence here signifies more than market access – it signals Africa's readiness to lead, innovate, and inspire the global tourism landscape.

We are especially honoured to welcome new participants from Chad, St Helena, and Burkina Faso, whose presence affirms Indaba's growing role as a truly continental platform.

The tourism economy of tomorrow is African. It is diverse, youthful, digital, and green. But we know that we cannot rest. We need to break through to a much higher rate of growth. We need a plan we can implement immediately.

That is why the Department of Tourism is working on finalising a Tourism Growth Partnership Plan for the next 5 years. We aim to:

- Grow total employment from approximately 1,840,000 in 2024 to 2,500,000 jobs;
- Grow domestic spend by 25%;
- Grow GDP Contribution from approximately 8.8% in 2024 to 10%;
- Welcome an extra one million international air arrivals annually.

This means growing by 35% from 2.8m in 2024 to 3.8m and beyond. This is not a difficult ask if we all work together. Anything is possible if we work hard.

We are also proud to spotlight South African Tourism's new global brand campaign, "South Africa awaits - Come Find Your Joy," a heartfelt invitation to experience our country not just through places but also through people, culture, and emotion. Joy is Africa's gift to the world, and our tourism offerings are its vessel.

As we look ahead, let this Indaba mark a new chapter of African leadership in global tourism. Let us commit to building an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient sector—one that lifts communities, bridges borders, and protects our shared heritage.

This is our time. This is our Africa.

To every delegate, thank you for showing up for your countries, businesses, and dreams.

To our buyers, thank you for placing your trust in Africa's value.

To our partners, thank you for walking this journey with us.

Let's use this platform to shape a stronger, more united tourism future for our continent—one in which Africa is included and leading. Come find your joy. Come build your future. Come shape our beloved Africa.

I am honoured to introduce the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, the Honourable Paul Mashatile, a leader whose commitment to inclusive development and continental progress inspires us all.

Thank you.

ENDS

Media Queries:

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