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## **South Africa propels the continent into the forefront of the tourism sector**

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South Africa blazed the trail by being the first African country to host the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Africa Leaders Forum since the first WTTC Global Summit hosted by Portugal in 1996.

The Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom, expressed his gratitude at the opportunity and confidence given to South Africa to be first host of the forum on African soil, as he delivered the opening address in Stellenbosch on Thursday.

“The growth of this sector will catalyse job creation. We require greater active participation of the continent in the work of WTTC,” said Minister Hanekom.

For 26 years, the WTTC has been the voice of the global tourism industry. This organisation promotes sustainable growth in the sector, works with governments and international institutions to create jobs, to drive exports and to generate prosperity.

South Africa sees the value of the WTTC as being the voice of this industry globally bringing specialist knowledge to guide government policy and decision-making, raising awareness of the importance of the industry as an economic generator of prosperity.

Given the potential of Travel and Tourism in Africa, WTTC gathered the CEOs and regional leaders of the top Travel & Tourism companies from across Africa, along with Tourism Ministers and regional experts at its inaugural Africa Leaders Forum in Stellenbosch to discuss the key issues facing the region’s Travel & Tourism sector. The President and CEO of WTTC, Gloria Guevara Manzo, praised the South African government for recognising the opportunities in this sector and the steps it has taken to realise this potential.

The Africa Leaders Forum promotes further investment in Africa’s tourism sector and supports innovation in tourism. The Forum also provided a unique and exclusive space for networking among industry leaders. Some of the key issues facing the region’s travel and tourism sector were discussed including Tourism’s role in sustainable growth and development, as well as tourism and inclusive job creation.

As an economic lever and a growth pillar, tourism currently supports about 1.5 million jobs directly and indirectly in South Africa. Growing the country’s tourism sector is a key aspect of the country’s Nine-Point Plan and aligned to the National Development Plan that recognises tourism as one of the main drivers in the economy. By achieving the objectives of the National Tourism Sector Strategy (2016-2026), there will be more sustainable jobs and a more inclusive tourism sector. This strategy is a guiding document for the Tourism Sector in South Africa, with particular focus on inclusive growth, job creation and transformation.

“The African Continent has huge growth potential if we harness the tourism sector opportunities”, Minister Hanekom concluded.

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