



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X 424, PRETORIA, 0001, Tourism House, 17 Trevenna Street, Sunnyside, PRETORIA, 0002, Switchboard: +27 (0)12 444 6000, Fax: +27 (0)12 444 7000, Website: www.tourism.gov.za

SPECIAL ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF TOURISM,

PATRICIA DE LILLE,

CNBC AFRICA CEO BUSINESS BREAKFAST: TOURISM DIALOGUE

SANDTON, GAUTENG

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A very good morning, sanibonani, dumelang

It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning, during Tourism Month.

When I saw the theme of today's dialogue, "*Gauteng's Next Growth Phase: Capital, Connectivity, Confidence*", I was immediately struck by how closely it mirrors the economic conversation taking place in our country.

Last month, President Cyril Ramaphosa launched Phase Three of the Government Business Partnership. At the centre of Phase Three is a focus on accelerating economic growth, creating jobs and strengthening confidence.

Four new growth drivers have been identified: tourism, mining, infrastructure, and agriculture & agro-processing. These sectors were selected because of their potential to unlock investment, expand output and create jobs at scale.

So, I want to use the three words in today's theme to make a simple argument about tourism: Capital. Connectivity. Confidence.

Let us start with capital.

On 1 October, we will host the second edition of the South Africa Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit here in Gauteng, under the theme: “Invest in Tourism Infrastructure, Invest in Growth.”

At the Summit, we will unveil a pipeline of 15 tourism infrastructure investment opportunities. These projects have gone through a screening process because we have moved beyond simply talking about South Africa's tourism potential.

We want to put bankable opportunities in front of capital. Investment in these projects is ultimately investment in the people of South Africa. Because investment creates infrastructure, infrastructure creates businesses and businesses create jobs.

Last week I returned from Geneva, where I served as Co-Chair of the inaugural Beyond Tourism Day, convened by Alois Zwinggi, President and CEO of the World Economic Forum. There I repeated an argument I have made consistently: Tourism policy is economic policy.

The World Economic Forum annual gathering is one of the places where business leaders, governments and policymakers gather to discuss the future of the global economy. Yet historically, tourism has not occupied the place on the main economic agenda that its contribution deserves.

For too long, South Africa's understanding of economic development has focused overwhelmingly on industrialisation and manufacturing. Those sectors remain important, but our understanding of the modern economy must broaden.

The World Bank Group, which was represented at the WEF Beyond Tourism Day, has also identified tourism and infrastructure as part of five sectors with significant potential to generate jobs at scale.

That should tell us something. Tourism is not peripheral to the jobs debate. Tourism is part of the jobs solution.

Globally, travel and tourism supports over 366 million of jobs and represents around 10% of global GDP.

Here at home, the evidence is equally compelling. According to Statistics South Africa's *Tourism Satellite Account for South Africa*, tourism directly employed 953 981 people in 2024, representing 5.7% of total employment.

That means approximately one in every 18 employed South Africans was directly employed in tourism. In the same year, tourism directly contributed 4.9% to South Africa's GDP, exceeding the contribution of agriculture, utilities and construction.

So, when we speak about tourism, we are not simply speaking about holidays. We are speaking about economic policy.

The second word in today's theme is connectivity.

Last year, South Africa welcomed a record 10.5 million international tourists. Between January and July this year, we welcomed 6.57 million international tourists, representing growth of 12.4% compared with the same period last year. This growth is not happening by accident.

It is the result of deliberate work between government and the private sector to build a single industry plan for growing domestic and international tourism, with clear responsibilities and accountability.

We are implementing the Cabinet-approved Tourism Growth Partnership Plan which consists of 5 key priorities: Ease of Access, Coordinated Destination Marketing, Safety and Security, Tourism Product Development and Job Creation

To unlock ease of access for seamless travel we have improved our visa regulation through the Electronic Travel Authorisation system which is now live in over 30 countries. The ETA digital visa allows applicants to apply for a visa from the comfort of their homes without filling out a paper form or standing in a queue. It is one answer, one application within 24 hours.

As a long-haul destination, air connectivity is not a luxury for South Africa.

We have also begun addressing the fragmented approach where individual provinces and destinations independently canvas airlines for direct routes.

We are implementing the Cabinet-approved the Tourism Route Development Marketing Plan, which will enable a more coordinated national approach between government and the private sector.

Government has invested R6,5 million in the plan, as we build a special purpose vehicle capable of supporting aggressive, collaborative route-development marketing. Because airlines ultimately want one thing: bums on seats which results into profits.

Gauteng has a particularly important role to play. OR Tambo International Airport is not merely Gauteng infrastructure. It is one of the principal gateways into South Africa and the African continent.

And then there is perhaps the most important word in today's theme: Confidence.

In business, confidence has a very practical language and that is capital and return on investment. We are already seeing that confidence in South African tourism.

One of the clearest recent examples is the more than R2 billion Club Med Beach & Safari Resort investment in KwaZulu-Natal.

On that same coastline, construction is underway at the Oceans Umhlanga North Tower.

In the Western Cape, the V&A Waterfront is investing R24 billion into the expansion of Granger Bay while the R8 billion Cape Winelands Airport is taking shape.

So, confidence is coming not only from international visitors, but local capital too is walking the talk. Which is why I want to challenge the CEOs in this room. If you are a patriot, demonstrate it through your ideas, demonstrate it through innovation and demonstrate it through investment.

When we invest in tourism, we invest in jobs. And ultimately, we invest in the people of South Africa.

Thank you.

THE END

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Media Queries:

Aldrin Sampear

Spokesperson for the Minister of Tourism

Email: asampear@tourism.gov.za

Mobile: +27 67 138 3487