



MINISTRY
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Speech by Deputy Minister of Tourism, Honourable Maggie Sotyu, at the G20 community engagement, Sol Plaatje Local Municipality in Northern Cape on 07 July 2025

Thank you, Programme Director. It is such honour to address you today in the historic city of Kimberley, the heart of the Northern Cape, a place where the past, present, and future of South Africa come together in powerful ways.

As many of you know, our nation has assumed the Presidency of the G20 for 2025 — a first not only for South Africa, but for the entire African continent. This is a moment of immense pride and responsibility. In 2025, South Africa holds the G20 Presidency — a first for our continent and a defining moment for our democracy.

This is not merely a diplomatic role — it is a moment of continental pride, a platform to amplify African voices, and a powerful opportunity to drive inclusive change right down to our communities, especially in cities like Kimberley.

Our 2025 Presidency is under the theme: “Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability.” This theme reflects our commitment to shaping a world that is fairer, more resilient, and more unified — where no person, no town, and no country is left behind.

But beyond the politics and policies, the real question is: *What does this mean for you? What does it mean for Kimberley?*

The answer is: Everything.

Kimberley is a symbol — of resilience, of transformation, and of potential waiting to be realised. This city is rich in stories, sites, and people who built not just the province, but the very backbone of South African industry and heritage.

As the 2025 G20 Presidency focuses on solidarity, Kimberley reminds us of the importance of social cohesion and heritage.

As we promote equality, Kimberley’s experience of uneven development must be acknowledged and reversed.

As we pursue sustainability, Kimberley's landscapes, communities, and tourism potential become part of a global green economy.

It is South African's commitment to ensure that global decisions produce local benefits for all South Africans.

Program Director,

The Department of Tourism is proud to chair the G20 Tourism Working Group. I want to share with you its four strategic priorities, which directly relate to opportunities in Kimberley.

The first G20 Tourism Working Group priority is: People-Centred Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Innovation

We are encouraging innovation in tourism that empowers SMMEs and youth. In Kimberley, this could mean:

- Digital storytelling for attractions like the Big Hole or the Sol Plaatje Museum,
- Local apps that connect tourists with township experiences,
- AI-powered tools that help small guesthouses market globally.

We want to ensure that technology enables, not replaces, human creativity. While AI can provide tourists with instant information, personalised itineraries, and multilingual support, it still falls short of the depth and spontaneity that a seasoned human tourist guide offers. A local guide brings lived experience, cultural nuance, and storytelling that transforms a place from a destination into a deeply human experience. They can read a group's mood, adjust the pace, offer off-the-beaten-path insights, and share personal anecdotes that AI, no matter how advanced, cannot replicate.

Our tourist guides often act as cultural ambassadors, fostering genuine connections between visitors and local communities—something that algorithms alone cannot achieve. In essence, AI may enhance travel planning and support, but it cannot replace the warmth, adaptability, and authenticity of a passionate human guide.

Program Director,

The second G20 Tourism Working Group priority is: Tourism Financing and Investment.

We are pushing for fair access to tourism funding and investment to support inclusive growth.

I would like to point out that the Department of Tourism offers various incentives and funding opportunities. The Tourism Equity Fund was established to promote growth and transformation as well as address the funding challenges faced by enterprises in the tourism sector; and to stimulate job creation in the sector. Applicants for this

fund must have a minimum of 30% black-ownership or achieve a minimum of 30% black-ownership through the transaction prior to funding being disbursed.

I am happy to acknowledge that 16 applications for Tourism Equity Funding were received from Northern Cape businesses and are currently been processed.

Another funding opportunity is the Tourism Transformation Fund which offers a combination of debt finance and grant funding for smaller new and expansion tourism development projects with majority black shareholding. It is important to note that the programme is administered through the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) on behalf of the department and the application follows the same process as that of a normal loan application to the NEF. Loans for tourism projects that are approved by the NEF will then be considered for a grant funding portion of 50% of the loan amount up to maximum of R5 million.

The Department has two approved and completed Tourism Transformation Fund projects in the Northern Cape. The one that is in Kimberley is the woman-owned Nare Boutique Hotel. The boutique hotel was funded by the NEF in 2019 to the tune of R11.7 million, which includes a Tourism Transformation Fund grant of R5 million.

Program Director, the third G20 Tourism Working Group priority is: Air Connectivity for Seamless Travel.

We are prioritising better air access to regional destinations. Kimberley Airport must be part of this conversation. Improved air connectivity will:

- Boost domestic and international visitor numbers,
- Create business travel and conference opportunities,
- And grow employment across the hospitality and service sectors.

Program Director, the fourth G20 Tourism Working Group priority is: Enhanced Resilience for Inclusive, Sustainable Tourism.

Our tourism must be climate-smart, inclusive, and locally anchored. Kimberley has immense potential for:

- Sustainable heritage tourism,
- Rural and township tourism linked to cultural storytelling,
- And green jobs in conservation and eco-tourism.

As South Africa, we want tourism that benefits people and the planet. The Department of Tourism has for this reason implemented for a Green Tourism Incentive Programme which offers partial grant funding support (50% to 90% up to R1 million) on the cost of retrofitting tourism facilities with energy and water efficiency equipment and systems based on the outcome of a resource efficiency audit.

The first stage of the application process involves a resource efficiency audit, the cost of which is fully covered under our programme, followed by a second phase where an applicant can apply for funding support (50% to 90% up to R1 million) on

the cost of installing relevant technologies and equipment recommended in the resource efficiency audit during the first stage.

It is disappointing to see that there are only eight Green Tourism Incentive Programme approved projects in the Northern Cape of which two are completed.

I urge you to apply for government opportunities so that we can transform the tourism sector and implement greener practices.

We also have a Market Access Support Programme for tourism businesses which aspire to exhibit at trade shows. Regular calls are put out on our electronic platforms for domestic and international trade shows. Application periods are also frequently announced for a variety of skills development programme including tourist guides, Recognition of Prior Learning for Chefs, Tourism Monitors and hospitality.

You will find all the departmental programmes on www.tourism.gov.za and the social media channels of the Department of Tourism.

Program Director,

Our vision is clear: The G20 Presidency must not be a story told only in Capital cities — but in communities like Kimberley.

Your city's heritage, culture, and resilience deserve to be seen and celebrated on the global stage. As we move forward in this historic year, I call upon every sector of Kimberley:

- **To our tourism businesses:** prepare yourselves to take full advantage of the fact that many new visitors will be visiting our shores.
- **To our government partners:** let's include Kimberley as part of every relevant G20 opportunity.
- **To our educators and creatives:** integrate G20 themes into local curriculum, exhibitions, and events.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2025 G20 theme — “Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability” — is not just a diplomatic slogan. It is a promise. A direction. A call to action. And Kimberley can be a beacon of that promise.

Let us ensure that the legacy of South Africa's G20 Presidency is visible here in better infrastructure, more visitors, skilled young people and in stronger, more inclusive tourism value chains.

I thank you.