



**MINISTRY
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, MAGGIE SOTYU, AT THE
ATRIUM BOUTIQUE HOTEL LAUNCH – POLOKWANE, LIMPOPO**

06 AUGUST 2025

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to stand before you today as we celebrate Women's Month - a time to reflect, to uplift, and to recognise the incredible contributions of women across all sectors of our country.

During this month, we are reminded of the powerful truth that iron sharpens iron. In tourism - one of South Africa's most vibrant and culturally rich industries - women are not just participating. We are leading. We are innovating. And most importantly, we are lifting each other up.

Together, we are not just shaping a sector — we are transforming it. By sharing knowledge, breaking barriers, and opening doors for others, women sharpen each other's skills, courage, and vision. In this way, we create a tourism industry that thrives on inclusivity, innovation, and the unstoppable force of women working together.

This year marks the 69th anniversary of that historic march of 1956 and the 30th anniversary of the first official National Women's Day. The 2025 celebration will take place under the theme: "Building Resilient Economies for All." The focus of this year's commemoration is to strengthen women's participation and representation in both leadership and economic spheres.

In women's month we salute the pioneering women that open the doors for many young women in the sector and we salute the strong men who provide strength and partnership in these endeavours.

The significance of women in the tourism sector is multi-dimensional, impacting economic development, gender equality, community empowerment, and the cultural richness of destinations. When structures are inclusive and equitable, tourism can be a powerful tool for empowering women economically, offering both income and agency.

Transformation of the South African economy through broad-based black economic empowerment (B-BBEE) is a fundamental principle addressed in key government policy documents such as the National Development Plan (NDP), the New Growth

Path, and the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) of the country. Economic transformation through B-BBEE as a priority in the tourism sector is reflected in the Tourism Act (Act no 3 of 2014), the National Tourism Sector Strategy and the Tourism B-BBEE Sector Code amended in 2015.

Today's launch embodies the ethos of Women's Month and inclusive economic growth. Through the Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF), the Atrium Boutique Hotel is a fully operational tourism development founded by husband and wife, Mr Matodzi Mukwevho and Ms Lesetja Mukwevho. The hotel has a 100% black ownership and 60% women ownership, highlighting the significant role of women entrepreneurs in fostering economic growth.

The project required a total capital investment of R31.3 million for the development and construction of the boutique hotel. The development was made possible through the following blend of finance:

- TTF grant of R5 million,
- National Empowerment Fund (NEF) loan of R10 million,
- SEDFA TEF soft loan of R9.6 million and
- the owner's contribution valued at R6.6 million.

These funds enabled the construction of the hotel, acquisition of furniture and fittings, installation of a solar energy system, and ensured operational sustainability for the first six months. The hotel features:

- 26 luxury rooms,
- 100-seater restaurant,
- 15-seater boardroom,
- 10-seater bar and
- 100-seater conference facility.

These offerings position the hotel as a key player in meeting the demand for quality accommodation and conferencing space in the region.

There was work toward achieving a 4-star tourism grading, targeting the underserved mid- to high-end segment in Polokwane, where a lack of graded and diverse accommodation options have been noted. The hotel is well-positioned to attract business, leisure, and institutional travellers, given its proximity to major schools, universities, Peter Mokaba Stadium, the proposed Polokwane Convention Centre, and Meropa Casino.

Significantly, the hotel is recognised within the Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as a catalytic project for advancing tourism growth and infrastructure in Polokwane, reinforcing its strategic alignment with both local and national development priorities.

The TTF is a dedicated capital investment funding mechanism, established to drive transformation in the tourism sector in a more direct and impactful manner that not only assists small black-owned tourism enterprises to expand and grow, but to catalyse the rise of a new generation of black owned, youth and women tourism enterprises to take the sector to new heights.

This fund provides a combination of grant funding, debt financing and equity contributions to facilitate capital investment in the tourism sector by prospective black entrepreneurs. The TTF is housed, managed and administered by the NEF. While the TTF will only focus on tourism-specific investment, it is linked to all existing debt financing products of the NEF.

The grant-funding component is capped at 50% of the total funding required, up to a maximum of R5 million per successful applicant. The balance is made up of debt finance and equity contributions by the NEF or any other DFIs, as well as the owner's contribution.

The strategic objectives of the TTF are to:

- Facilitate transformation within the tourism sector by enabling black ownership and participation
- Develop tourism capacity through support stimulate empowerment, destination development, job creation and skills development;
- Reduce the debt burden of the prospective investor to finance their business; and
- Encourage the development of innovative, commercially viable and sustainable tourism projects.

Women are essential drivers of the tourism industry - not only as employees and entrepreneurs but also as cultural stewards and agents of change. Promoting their full participation benefits not just the tourism sector, but also broader social and economic development goals.

Allow me to capture the essence of the importance of the economic empowerment of women:

- Direct employment – tourism generates jobs in the tourism value chain.
- Entrepreneurship opportunities – the development of small businesses.
- Skills development – women gain skills in hospitality, marketing, and management, which can enhance their economic agency.
- Preservation of cultural roles – tourism values local heritage, crafts and traditions – turning cultural knowledge into economic capital.

This year, South Africa proudly assumes the G20 presidency, offering a unique opportunity to highlight the country's renowned hospitality, world-class infrastructure, high-quality accommodations, and exceptional visitor experiences—demonstrating its capability to host major global events.

Throughout the year, G20 delegates will explore South Africa's diverse tourism offerings across all nine provinces, immersing themselves in the country's rich heritage and cultural tapestry found in its vibrant cities, charming small towns ("dorpies"), and dynamic townships. From arts and crafts to unforgettable

encounters, these experiences will leave lasting impressions on the delegates while supporting and boosting the South African economy.

As an official G20 engagement group, the W20 plays a pivotal role in shaping global policy discussions on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

As we honour Women's Day and Women's Month, we celebrate the remarkable achievements of women throughout history—their vital role in shaping the country and driving socio-economic progress. At the same time, this moment serves as a call to action: to accelerate women's economic empowerment, break down persistent barriers such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment, and create inclusive opportunities for all.

So today, as we celebrate Women's Month, let us commit to continuing this momentum. Let us:

- Invest in women-owned tourism ventures
- Support mentorship and training initiatives
- Advocate for policy changes that promote gender equity
- And most of all - let us sharpen one another.

Because when women come together, when we inspire and challenge one another, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

To every woman in this room and beyond - your presence, your strength, and your voice matter. You are shaping the future of tourism in South Africa. And remember: Iron sharpens iron. Women empower women. And together, we build a future of infinite possibilities.

Thank you.

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