



MINISTRY
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, MS MAGGIE SOTYU, AT THE LAUNCH OF TOURISM TRANSFORMATION FUND (TTF) PROJECTS

DATE: TUESDAY, 12 MAY 2026

TIME: 16:30

VENUE: NEF STAND – DURBAN ICC

Programme Director,
Representatives of the National Empowerment Fund (NEF),
Distinguished Tourism Stakeholders,
Captains of Industry,
Representatives of Government and Development Finance Institutions,
Our Tourism Transformation Fund Beneficiaries,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon!

It is a privilege to join you here at the Africa's Travel Indaba 2026 for the launch and showcasing of Tourism Transformation Fund Beneficiary Projects - projects that represent more than infrastructure or business investment. They represent hope, inclusion, ownership, and the practical transformation of South Africa's tourism economy.

Africa's Travel Indaba is one of the most important tourism platforms on our continent. It is where Africa engages with itself and with the world. It is where partnerships are formed, investments are pursued, and the future of African tourism is shaped. It is therefore fitting that we use this platform not only to market destinations, but also to showcase the progress we are making in ensuring that tourism growth becomes more inclusive, representative, and economically empowering for all South Africans.

Transformation in tourism cannot remain an abstract policy discussion. It must be visible in ownership patterns. It must be visible in who participates in the tourism value chain. It must be visible in who benefits from tourism growth, who creates tourism products, who employs local people, and who builds sustainable enterprises that can compete nationally, regionally, and globally. And that is precisely why the Tourism Transformation Fund remains such an important intervention.

The Tourism Transformation Fund was established as a partnership between the Department of Tourism and the National Empowerment Fund to support black-owned tourism enterprises

through a combination of grant funding, concessionary loans, and strategic business support. The objective was clear from the beginning: to reduce barriers to entry, unlock participation, and build a more inclusive tourism economy. Today, we are seeing the impact of that work.

From the inception of the Fund in May 2018 through to the end of March 2026, the National Empowerment Fund has received a total of 799 applications. While many applications did not meet the required funding and eligibility criteria, the programme has nevertheless enabled dozens of tourism enterprises to move from concept to operation, from aspiration to implementation.

Forty-one projects are currently active and approved. Thirty-nine of these are at various stages of completion and operation, with funding already partially or fully disbursed. Collectively, approximately R150.4 million in grant funding has been approved to support transformation in tourism enterprises across our country.

These are not merely statistics. Behind every approved project is an entrepreneur who took a risk. Behind every project are families, communities, workers, suppliers, artisans, young people, and local economies that benefit from tourism. Every tourism establishment built, every lodge expanded, every cruise operation launched, every boutique hotel supported, contributes to jobs, enterprise development, skills transfer, and economic participation.

This is particularly important as tourism continues to position itself as a sector capable of driving inclusive economic growth and job creation in South Africa. The Government of National Unity has placed inclusive growth and job creation at the centre of the national agenda. The Medium-Term Development Plan equally recognises tourism as a labour-intensive sector with significant potential to stimulate local economies and create opportunities for small businesses and historically disadvantaged communities.

The Tourism Growth Partnership Plan further reinforces this vision by positioning tourism as a key growth sector capable of unlocking employment, investment, and geographic spread across all nine provinces.

Programmes such as the Tourism Transformation Fund therefore become more than funding instruments. They become nation-building instruments. They help ensure that tourism growth is not concentrated in the hands of only a few or in only a few destinations. They help ensure that transformation is not symbolic, but practical and measurable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the important developments in implementing the TTF was the decision, under the second Memorandum of Agreement, to move away from limited application windows and allow applications to remain continuously open until all available funds have been allocated.

This was an important shift because opportunities for transformation should not be constrained by narrow administrative timelines. Tourism entrepreneurs operate under different realities and different levels of access to information, finance, and support. By keeping the application process open, the Department and the NEF have created a more accessible and responsive system for emerging tourism enterprises.

Equally important is the continued monitoring and support provided during the post-investment phase. Funding alone is not enough. Sustainable transformation requires mentorship, oversight, accountability, and ongoing partnership to ensure that projects succeed beyond the approval stage and become viable long-term businesses.

We also acknowledge that transformation is a journey that requires collaboration between government, development finance institutions, the private sector, and communities themselves. No single institution can transform the tourism sector alone.

Today, we are proud to showcase five beneficiary projects here at Africa's Travel Indaba:

- Elangeni Tourism – Mpumalanga Province
- Galenia Hotel Group – Female-owned in Springbok in the Northern Cape Province
- Kgabo Safaris – North - West Province
- South Hill Trading – Female-owned in the Northern Cape Province
- Tigresse Cruises – Western Cape Province

These projects reflect the diversity and potential of South African tourism entrepreneurship. They demonstrate innovation, resilience, and the determination of black tourism entrepreneurs to participate meaningfully in the mainstream tourism economy.

To the beneficiaries being showcased today: we congratulate you. Your success matters not only to your businesses but to the broader transformation journey of our country. You are helping reshape the tourism landscape for future generations. You are proving that transformation and commercial sustainability can go hand in hand.

I also wish to commend the National Empowerment Fund for its partnership and continued work in administering the programme, conducting due diligence, supporting project implementation, and ensuring accountability in the allocation of public resources.

As government, we remain committed to building a tourism sector that is inclusive, competitive, sustainable, and people-centred. We want tourism growth that reaches townships, villages, small towns, and emerging destinations. We want tourism growth that supports women-owned businesses, youth entrepreneurs, persons with disabilities, and community enterprises. We want tourism growth that creates dignity through work and opportunity. And importantly, we want transformation that is visible not only in policy documents, but in the lived realities of South Africans.

As we gather here at Africa's Travel Indaba - a platform that brings Africa and the world together - let us remember that the true strength of tourism lies not only in the destinations we market, but in the people we empower. Because tourism transformation is ultimately about people. It is about ensuring that the doors of opportunity open wider. It is about ensuring that tourism lives where people live. And it is about building a tourism economy that reflects the full diversity, creativity, and potential of South Africa.

I thank you.

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