



**MINISTER  
TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, MAGGIE SOTYU**

**Theme: UNLIMITED AFRICA: GROWING AFRICA'S TOURISM ECONOMY"**

**DATE: 11 MAY 2026**

**TIME: 09:00 -12:00**

**VENUE: South Foyer, DURBAN ICC**

MEC for KZN Department of Economic Development, Tourism and

Environmental Affairs, Reverend Musa Zondi;

Ethekwini Municipality Mayor, Councillor, Cyril Xaba;

South African Tourism Board Chair and Board Members;

Executive Management of South African Tourism;

Board members of the various Provincial Tourism Authorities;

Board members of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa;

CEOs and Executive Management of Provincial Tourism Authorities;

All media representatives;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning, Goeiemôre, Sanibonani,

Once again good morning, distinguished delegates, tourism leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, public and private sector partners, and guests from across Africa and around the world, and a warm Welcome to

Business Opportunity Networking Day (BONDay), the dynamic prelude to Africa's Travel Indaba 2026.

It is especially significant that we gather during Africa Month, a time to celebrate our continent's unity, resilience, identity, and extraordinary promise. BONDay is therefore more than the opening of a programme; it is a celebration of Africa's collective potential and a reminder that our continent's future is strongest when we grow together.

Allow me also to extend heartfelt wishes to all mothers as we celebrated Mother's Day yesterday, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026. We honour the Women whose care, leadership, and entrepreneurship continue to shape Africa's homes, communities, industries, and economies.

Today, we celebrate a tourism sector that continues to grow across Africa, even amid global shifts and ongoing challenges. Tourism remains one of the continent's most powerful economic drivers, creating jobs, attracting investment, stimulating entrepreneurship, and connecting Africa to the world. Yet this growth is not without challenges. Infrastructure, market access, safety, skills development, competitiveness, and changing global travel dynamics require that we remain agile, innovative, and united.

Africa's tourism story is therefore not simply one of growth, but of resilience, reinvention, and rising ambition.

This year's theme, **Unlimited Africa: Growing Africa's Tourism Economy**, is both an aspiration and a strategic call to action. Africa is among the fastest growing tourism regions globally, according to UN Tourism Africa. This signals that the continent is no longer in "recovery mode" but entering a new expansion phase.

It recognises that Africa's opportunities are vast, but unlocking them requires collaboration over fragmentation, partnerships over isolation, and

innovation over complacency. Unlimited Africa is about unlimited access, unlimited connection, and unlimited growth. It is about ensuring that tourism becomes a shared continental success story that benefits all.

At the heart of Africa's tourism future are its communities, entrepreneurs, and MSMEs. According to the World Bank, tourism supported 357 million jobs globally in 2024, or one in every ten jobs worldwide, because tourism creates direct pathways for communities, small businesses, and local enterprises to participate meaningfully in economic growth.

Tourism connects travellers to local guides, township experiences, transport providers, food producers, artisans, and countless community led businesses. This is particularly important for Africa, where entrepreneurship remains central to economic transformation. Tourism gives communities practical entry points into ownership, enterprise, and participation.

My hope is that BONDay inspires us all to think about how we get communities across our continent to see tourism not as a distant industry, but as a powerful local opportunity, one capable of uplifting households, empowering MSMEs, and creating shared prosperity from the ground up.

BONDay exists to ignite Africa's Travel Indaba with energy, strategic insight, and innovation. Today is about knowledge sharing, thought leadership, and practical engagement. It is a platform where delegates can learn, connect, and be inspired by the voices shaping tourism's future.

I am particularly looking forward to hearing from today's speakers, whose expertise will help us think more boldly about destination competitiveness, innovation, entrepreneurship, and the future of tourism growth across our continent.

In a rapidly evolving world, innovation must lead.... The future of tourism will be shaped by those who are prepared not merely to adapt, but to lead change. Destination marketing is evolving rapidly, and digital platforms such as TikTok are transforming how travellers discover destinations, engage with brands, and make travel decisions.

Africa must embrace innovation, technology, and bold storytelling to ensure our destinations remain globally competitive, culturally authentic, and future ready. Through today's BONDay, we will also explore the critical role that sport and culture play in advancing Africa's tourism economy and strengthening our global competitiveness.

Sport and culture are among Africa's greatest tourism assets and some of our most powerful drivers of economic growth, destination differentiation, and continental pride. Across our continent, Africa's music, heritage, languages, fashion, cuisine, creative industries, and cultural traditions offer the world experiences that are rich, authentic, and unmatched.

Equally, sport continues to drive tourism demand, global visibility, and investment, from major international tournaments and golf events to football, rugby, athletics, and community sporting experiences that highlight our destinations while stimulating local economies.

Together, sport and culture do far more than entertain. They tell Africa's story, strengthen our destination brands, create jobs, empower communities, and inspire both domestic and international travel.

As we engage throughout today's sessions, may we continue to recognise that every cultural celebration, every heritage offering, and every sporting platform is also an opportunity to grow arrivals, unlock enterprise, deepen community value, and position Africa as a vibrant, dynamic, and globally competitive tourism force.

Private Partnerships are Essential, in that Africa's tourism growth cannot be delivered by government alone, nor by the private sector in isolation. Sustainable tourism growth depends on strong public private partnerships. Governments provide policy direction, infrastructure support, and enabling frameworks for tourism to flourish.

The private sector brings innovation, investment, agility, and market responsiveness. Together, these partnerships can unlock greater competitiveness, drive inclusive development, and ensure tourism growth reaches communities more effectively.

Today is also a celebration of Destination Africa in all its diversity, excellence, and potential, including South Africa's key role within this broader continental story. Africa offers the world extraordinary cultural richness, heritage, creativity, landscapes, gastronomy, and opportunity.

South Africa proudly contributes to this collective narrative as part of a continent that is vibrant, resilient, and ready to compete. Africa's Travel Indaba allows us to celebrate not only destinations, but Africa's collective power as a global tourism force.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Africa's Travel Indaba is far more than a trade show. It is a strategic economic platform for knowledge exchange, market access, policy dialogue, partnership building, and continental growth. It is where Africa's tourism sector comes together to share ideas, build connections, unlock trade, and shape a stronger future. It is where we position tourism not simply as travel, but as a serious driver of economic development.

In closing Ladies and Gentlemen, to all delegates, exhibitors, buyers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and partners, I wish you an inspiring, productive, and successful Africa's Travel Indaba 2026. May BONDay set the tone for a week of meaningful engagement, bold thinking, and transformative opportunities.

May it inspire our communities, empower our MSMEs, strengthen our partnerships, and remind us of all that Africa's tourism future is brightest when we innovate boldly, collaborate intentionally, and grow together.

**Happy Africa Month!**

**And welcome to BONDay, where together We Celebrate, Innovate, and Grow Africa's tourism economy.**

I Thank You!! Baie Dankie!! Siyabonga!!

ENDS!!