



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Speech by the Deputy Minister of Tourism South Africa: Tokozile Xasa, at the  
Southern African Women in Tourism - RETOSA Conference**

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Fellow women in tourism, warriors for gender parity and game shakers, but most importantly, sisters from the Continent, mothers and caregivers - I bid you a hearty and warm South African welcome!. I greet you with the sentiments and slogan of the recent launch of 16 days of activism against violence to women and children – Count me In!

We are all in this together – this battle to fight the scourge of violence against our women and children. It means we have a collective responsibility to stand and be counted as a region and do our bit through economic empowerment through tourism.

Flowing from the conference in Malawi, the SADC protocol on the development of tourism spells out an important regional objective to use tourism as a vehicle for socio-economic development, and as a part of implementing its mandate. RETOSA has initiated this Women in Tourism Conference to act as platform promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in Southern Africa.

It has been noted that generally in RETOSA Member States it is the women who are economically disadvantaged, and there is therefore significant potential for tourism to be used as a pivotal tool in the empowerment of women from both the urban and rural areas. It is important to include women from rural areas as the majority of tourism resources in Southern Africa are natural and cultural, and these are found in the communal and rural areas.

In South Africa, we have raised a number of initiatives to address this. In keeping with the theme of this conference, we look at building confidence, capacity and capital to give our women wings to fly – as well as a launch pad to fly from!

In terms of confidence, we are committed to establishing an enabling environment and platform for women to have a voice in this sector.

The establishment of the Women in Tourism (WiT) forum is aimed at addressing the economic inequalities and challenges faced by women within the sector. The Department established Women in Tourism Association in 2013 and it was launched in 2014 at Indaba. Its agenda centres on Commanding Respect, ascertaining Recognition of women contribution in the sector, encourage Representation in economic activities and leadership, and producing results that will enhance the supply and demand for domestic tourism. Its programme of action includes the continued mobilisation of women towards the establishment of chapters in all provinces. Women in Tourism Travel Massive events were hosted in different provinces during August and the South African chapters of Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town hosted events in these three cities simultaneously to celebrate Women in Tourism. The 3rd Women in Tourism Annual Conference in October was a resounding success. This included an insightful high-level talk followed by various panel discussions in the main conference with the goal to bring women together to find solutions to the economic challenges that hinder their entrepreneurial progress in the sector.

We also participated in the Women of Value South Africa (WOVSA) inaugural co-operatives indaba. WOVSA is non-profit organisation formed in 2011 whose mission is to impact on the lives of women and youth to be part of the mainstream socio and economic development in SA. Their role is to mobilise, advocate, lobby, facilitate, monitor and evaluate as well as do research and develop programmes that respond to the mission of the organisation. WOVSA partners with government,

private sector and other social partners in programmes that impact lives of women and youth in a sustainable manner.

This international event was attended by women in leadership from other African countries, to establish a PLATFORM and to give hope and an opportunity for smaller and growing co-ops to share their ideas and dreams with others that have endured and thrived in the African and SADC Countries also. The Indaba was therefore an information sharing, marketing and networking platform on how to grow these co-ops into sustainable business enterprises.

In terms of capacity, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill provides government with the legislative authority to fast-track the empowerment of women and address issues of enforcement and compliance towards the attainment of our target of 50/50 gender parity.

The Department recently appointed the University of South Africa (UNISA) Graduate School of business leadership to develop and run a course on the Executive Development Programme for black women managers in the tourism sector.

The programme is aimed at building strong business skills and leadership capabilities amongst women in the tourism sector to lead key parts of tourism businesses and form a pool of future top leadership, entrepreneurs and industrialists in the sector. It is currently enjoying its first intake.

Tourism cuts across most economic sectors. Let us look at how we position women in SMMEs in this value chain. Subsequent to the launch of our Tourism Incentive Programme (TIP) in March of 2015 – with the overarching policy rationale rooted in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the New Growth Path (NGP) - that recognises tourism as a labour intensive and tradable service sector and a catalyst to support 'faster and more inclusive economic growth', The Department of Tourism has established an Enterprise Development Project Management Unit (PMU). This year at Indaba, I launched our SMME programme. There were 70 exhibiting SMMEs present at INDABA 2016, selected for their uniqueness and authentic representation of South Africa. We look forward to welcoming your SMMEs at Indaba.

Indaba is the Pan African Tradeshow and what better opportunity for us to make great things happen. Let us use this convergent point not only as an exhibition opportunity but more importantly as a platform where we can meet as thought leaders in the industry. Let us talk about how we can invest in each other's countries, how we can effect skills transfer and how we can collectively build capacity in this industry. For example, The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) met on the fringe of Indaba last year and recognises that substantial benefits could be accrued by member states through the enhancement of tourist linkages and marketing within the region. IORA recommends that member states should strive towards regional cooperation in tourism, especially to achieve sustainable tourism growth in the region. The previous year – 2014 – Indaba hosted the inaugural AU Tourism Ministers meeting. Seychelles hosted the African Ministers Working Group. One of the outcomes was the development of the Blue Economy. Africa shares a vast coastline - let us look at how we can unlock economic opportunities across borders through these fora.

Some of the departmental skills development programmes offered through the SRI funding provide a platform for women to venture into new areas like being chefs and Food Safety Assurers.

Other funding opportunities available for women in tourism include the National Empowerment Fund's Isivanda Women's Fund by the Department of Trade and Industry while the CATHSSETA offers formal training, development and bursaries focusing on women development up to PHD level.

Government has also invested in other areas to accelerate economic growth and job creation. The Nine-Point Plan was developed in 2015 to create short term intervention and relief. With the following jobs drivers, this Nine Point Plan cuts across all sectors and beneficiaries. This includes: Operation Phakisa and growing the Oceans economy. The four coastal provinces were engaged on how to best utilise our pristine coastline. In 2015, Cabinet resolved to include Coastal and Marine Tourism and Small Harbours as the new focus areas of the Oceans Economy Phakisa. The Department of Tourism was tasked to lead the Coastal and Marine tourism focus area. Just think of the coastline of the Continent that we share and let us explore possible synergies.

In terms of capital, we need to ensure that our legislation is on track that it rightly articulates the needs of developing women in this sector with the fiscal support. Let's look at development banks for this purpose.

Women represent about half of the available talent to organisations and economies in most countries. Effectively managing the talent pipeline is essential for meeting companies' human capital and enables them to better produce, distribute and deliver their goods. Captains of industry, this is where you continue to render your invaluable assistance to this sector.

However, it is imperative that we do not work in silos but tap into each other's strengths and share best practice. Do not let our differentness supersede our sameness. Let us be united in our diversity.

The Africa of 2063 would see the attainment of full gender parity. It would see women occupy 50% of elected offices at state, regional and local bodies, and 50% of managerial positions in government and private sector would be women. The economic and political glass ceiling hindering women's progress would finally have been broken. But we need to work together to realise this reality.

How do we give expression to this in our tourism space? A good starting point is the equal and fair representation of women in the various spheres of government and private sector decision-making levels, of particular interest to me of course is to see the skewed ownership and management landscape in the hospitality industry. We will continue to make the point that although the tourism and hospitality sector has become an economic and social phenomenon, demonstrating above average growth since the 2009 economic crisis and being set to create 70 million new jobs over the next 10 years, women continue to be marginalised in this lucrative sector.

As women in leadership – especially in government, we need to continually and actively agitate for the upliftment of women. It is our responsibility to go back home from fora like these and actively agitate for change. We need to vigorously engage with legislation that is not conducive to our growth. We need to be part of policy making. And where there are none, we need to draft White Papers. These deliberations produce tangible proposals that we need to take back for implementation.

Let us continue to use the partnerships we have created beyond our provinces and countries. Let us go beyond borders and build one Africa, one people.

I would like to conclude with the following quote: "You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things!"

I thank you.

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