



Speech by Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, MP at the opening session of World Travel Market (WTM) Africa

Date: 3 April 2023

WORLD TRAVEL MARKET - A VIBRANT AND VALUABLE PLATFORM FOR AFRICAN BUSINESSES TO CONNECT AND GROW TOURISM FOR THE CONTINENT

Good morning, goeie more, molweni

It gives me great pleasure to return to World Travel Market (WTM) Africa in my new role after having supported and attended this exciting event for many years before.

WTM Africa is a lively and vibrant celebration of the travel industry in South Africa, Africa and the world and we are pleased once again to welcome attendees from all over the continent and the world.

Tourism has for many years made a great contribution to the livelihoods, economies and vibrancy of our cities and countries.

It was also one of the industries most impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic but let me say, we are all ready to come back with a bang and we have started already.

This is evident in the fact that tourist arrivals to South Africa is on the rise.

During the period January – December 2022, South Africa welcomed 5.7 million tourists. This is a sharp increase of 152% when compared to the same period in the previous year.

It is encouraging that arrivals from other African countries continues to be our most substantial source of arrivals, with just over 4 million arrivals during this period.

Our tourism sector has a major role to play in South Africa's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan which is aimed at stimulating equitable and

inclusive growth.

Tourism Sector Recovery Plan

Following the pandemic, the National Department of Tourism adopted the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan which was approved by Cabinet in March 2021.

The plan outlines several strategic interventions we need to take as partners - public and private sector to boost the economy back to pre-pandemic levels and beyond.

The interventions aims to ignite the recovery of the sector and is anchored in three strategic themes: protecting and rejuvenating supply, re-igniting demand and strengthening enabling capability for long-term sustainability.

Air Access

Air Access is also a key area we need to drive harder to meet both domestic, regional and international demand.

Encouragingly, Airlift to and from South Africa has seen continuous recovery.

Last year we welcomed numerous direct flights from our key source markets, such as the direct United Airlines flight from Cape Town to Newark in the USA.

Last week, Air China's Flight first flight since the pandemic, from Beijing-Shenzhen landed in Johannesburg.

Later this year, we are also expecting the LATAM flight from Brazil to OR Tambo International Airport.

The LATAM Airlines Group plans to re-launch a non-stop flight between São Paulo International Airport, Brazil, and OR Tambo International Airport, in July or August 2023. The route will resume after more than three years since COVID 19.

Last year, we also saw our national carrier, South African Airways, expand to various markets across the African continent.

These flights undoubtedly contribute to boosting our attractiveness and will contribute to seeing us return to pre-COVID-19 performance levels and beyond.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Ladies and gentleman while there are major actions we need to take on the level of improving safety, increasing air access, increasing investment and growing tourism's contribution to the economy.

I am very proud to report that this year, the Department of Tourism has once again supported, through funding, 30 small to medium enterprises to be here at WTM to showcase their tourism offerings and products.

So far since the start of the Market Access Programme, 410 beneficiaries received support to participate at international trade platforms and 577 beneficiaries were supported to participate at South African travel trade shows for several years.

The Return on Investment to the 410 Market Access Support Programme beneficiaries at international trade platforms is an estimated R265million in foreign exchange earnings from the R35million in government spending for those trade platforms.

An estimated 1 000 permanent jobs have been created by the SMEs due to this support by government.

Of the 30 SMEs we are supporting at this event this year, 25 are majority black owned, of which 16 are women owned and two businesses are youth owned.

Half of the SMEs are tour operators and the other half of the 30 SMEs are accommodation service providers.

Some of the companies we are supporting at WTM this year includes:

- Nomusa and Jenny's B&B, a black owned business in Richards Bay in KwaZulu Natal.
- Profound Travel and Tours which is youth owned from KZN which provides packaged tours and sightseeing and travel related services. Profound Travel has won a number of awards.
- Under African Skies travel is 100% black women owned and manages exclusive tourism services and tailor made safaris.
- Travel Daring Adventures, a black and women owned business from Gauteng.
- Lapologa B&B from Tzaneen in Limpopo also black and women owned.

We have enabled their participation at this important platform, an invaluable opportunity to showcase their business offerings to the many buyers and investors here.

To these businesses owners and to all emerging SMEs, I want to say that you are the lifeblood of this sector. Keep pushing and keep being part of offering visitors a truly South African experience.

We are proud to support you and we hope that your businesses grow from strength to strength.

Ladies and gentleman, with that, let us take full advantage of being back together in person and let us move ahead full steam to broaden our horizons, increase travel, trade, investment, jobs and increase the economic contribution of tourism to all our economies.

I wish you all well and may this platform bring your businesses many successes for years to come. Let's do Tourism.

Thank you and God Bless.

ENDS

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