



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Speech by Mr Fish Mahlalela, Deputy Minister of tourism on the occasion of the world
tourism day celebrations
Clarens, Free State**

27 September 2021

“Tourism for Inclusive Growth - Rebuilding Better”

MEC Mr. Makalo Mohale

Thabo Mofutsanyana District Executive Mayor, Cllr. Malefu Vilakazi and Dihlabeng Local Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr. Lindiwe Makhalema

Director General - Mr Victor Tharage

South African Tourism Board Interim Chairperson – Adv Mujanku Gumbi and Board members

South African Tourism Acting CEO – Ms Sthembiso Dlamini and the South African Tourism Executive Committee members

Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) CEO Mr. Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa

Country Tourism Authorities and Industry Experts

Industry Associations and the Entire Supply Value Chain for Tourism

Invited guests, Media representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you all know, we cannot begin to talk about tourism without reflecting on the major hindrances that are impeding tourism recovery. We cannot talk about tourism without indicating the progress we are making in reversing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It does not matter how much of statistical language we speak it will only be when we share the efforts we are making in removing South Africa from the red lists of our major tourism source markets that we can begin to talk sense on whatever we want to share with you.

I would like to report to you that I have received a full briefing during the week on countries that still have some form of restrictions on travellers coming to South Africa or our own tourists and business people going to those countries. I am seized with these matters, top of which is the United Kingdom.

Last week when I addressed the World Travel and Tourism Summit in Sandton I reflected on the initiatives we have taken in engaging the UK on the matter of red listing. I pointed out the misconceptions around the variants of the virus in South Africa including concerns by the UK Government about our anti-virus measures. We are now finalising all logistics for our scientists and their scientists to meet and compare notes and address their concerns.

I have written to the Health Minister that we are available 24 hours any day to attend to this matter. We have also been engaging with the Acting High Commissioner of the UK. I have asked him as well to urgently arrange a meeting between myself and the Minister of Transportation in the UK, who is leading the Task Force dealing with transportation and the restrictions. I am told that Brazil and also other few countries also have us still on some restrictions. This is also a matter that we are busy with, we are all hands-on deck.

We however welcome Germany, the United States of America, the United Arab Emirates and many other countries that have removed restrictions against us. I must also indicate that some of the concerns that are being raised include issues around the vaccination certificate including the digital vaccination certificate, which Cabinet is busy with. Vaccination, the beta variant and compliance with COVID - 19 non-medical protocols that are outlined regularly by our President like wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing and vaccination are in the mix of concerns that our source markets often raise.

We are very proud of the work already done in the sector in all of these issues but we need to communicate more our state of readiness to welcome visitors. We need to show it more that we are ready and prepared and I have tasked the Director General to continue to engage with sector leaders for the message to go out that we are ready, our sector is ready and our workers in the sector are being vaccinated.

Next week, this very coming week, I have said to the Director General let us launch our sector vaccination programme to make sure that all our tourism workers are being vaccinated. So on the 30th of this month we are launching that in Pretoria. Tourists coming to South Africa need to know that our workers and service providers are vaccinated. We must lead the sector in vaccination.

As I conclude on these matters of restrictions, transportation and health protocols, I must say that we are in the new normal, we are in a world we do not know. As restrictions will always be there, we need to define or design or imagine how our sector will operate in the world with COVID - 19, The Director General, the Board of South African Tourism and our MINMEC will need to work with sector leaders and the Ministry to define this new normal and indicate what and how we will support it short, medium and long term.

But what is more urgent today is that we must work with our friends in the UK and in other countries to lift restrictions. We must respond to their concerns and provide the information they need. I know that DIRCO, Health and Home Affairs and other departments are busy with these matters. It is for this reason that I want to assure the sector that these matters are a priority for Government.

World Tourism Day Celebrations

Since 1980, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has celebrated World Tourism Day. This date was chosen as on that day in 1970, the Statutes of the UNWTO were adopted. The adoption of these Statutes is considered a milestone in global tourism.

Today we join and connect with the world as we mark World Tourism Day. Today we celebrate our resilience, recovery and inclusive growth.

Themed; *"Tourism for Inclusive Growth,"* the celebrations aim to inspire and highlight the initiatives that are poised to drive tourism recovery, in a "new and better normal", post the pandemic. For two years in succession, South Africa is celebrating Tourism Day under the cloud of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, the industry has demonstrated resilience and promises a strong rebound through recovery.

Tourism played a pivotal role in the broader South African economy before the pandemic. It is a tertiary sector with strong linkages to transportation, consumer retail, financial services and other network industries.

In 2018, the tourism sector accounted for 2.9% of GDP (8.6% indirect), supported over 725 000 jobs directly (1.49 million indirect) and accounted for 8.2% of total investment activity (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018). Inbound tourism generated approximately R82.5 billion in direct foreign spend (R126.7 billion total), contributing an equivalent of 9.2% of total national exports. This positioned tourism as the second most important export sector in the economy in 2018. Domestic tourist activity contributed a further R9.49 billion in direct expenditure.

The COVID-19 pandemic might have brought us to our knees but it did not topple us. A pivotal economic lever, the tourism sector has proved to be resilient and with the Recovery Plan in place, it promises to rebound.

Historically, the tourism sector has demonstrated resilience through global financial challenges and health crisis. This time is no different. Building back better means that we draw on the lessons we have learnt. The pandemic has taught us to do things differently as we reimagine and reposition tourism for inclusive economic growth.

The tourism sector is one of the critical intervention areas that have been identified in the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan as tourism is a key driver of the economic recovery in the country.

A people-orientated sector, tourism supports a vibrant and diverse value chain which is responsible for employment opportunities, geographic diversification and increased foreign currency receipts. This sector is therefore a strategic development priority and a catalyst in growing other linked sectors.

With its extensive value chain and labour absorption capacity, tourism is a significant tool for economic development as well as responding to the country's socio-economic challenges – one of it being transformation.

TRANSFORMATION IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

We have as Government taken an unapologetic policy position of fostering transformation and black economic empowerment in the tourism sector. It is a pity that some people have tended to understand transformation in a negative sense of it undermining free market principles and slowing down the momentum of hard-won gains in the tourism sector, or the broader economy. To the contrary, we as the ANC Government see transformation as a necessary tool for nation building and social cohesion which helps us redress the imbalances of the past. It helps us to ensure that people who were historically excluded from this sector of the economy also find a fair share of participation.

Transformation helps us to drive gender parity, enterprise development and balanced ownership and management of the means of production. We are able to drive inclusivity by ensuring that everyone participate in tourism and those who lack sufficient means are supported by the state. Inclusivity does not however end there. It also entails that we broaden the scope of the tourism sub-sectors, to expand tourism beyond its conventional reach to include other sub-sectors such as rural and township tourism, cultural and sports tourism just to mention a few. But most importantly and looking to the future, transformation helps us reimagine tourism.

It helps us embrace innovation and digitalization. It spurs us to begin to do things differently, to explore new products and new markets. Today, we are poised as a Department to make tourism and all what it offers to be the centre of economic activity and to be part of the topical issues that define the national discourse.

As we embark on measures to reopen tourism to ensure that our establishments, our destinations and our product offerings begin to work as normal, we will also take similar measures to promote other neglected tourism sub-sectors. We want to ensure that even the smallest of tourist establishment somewhere in the hinterland of our country also get exposure and support from Government programmes.

As much as we want to see our hospitality sector functioning in full capacity, international and domestic tourism soaring again, we also want small entrepreneurs and other previously excluded role-players also contributing and benefiting from the tourism sector. We want to see the whole of government – national, province and local government – collaborating with the private sector and civil society organisations in rejuvenating tourism. We want an invigorated new beginning, a new beginning that elevates our resilience to new heights, and a new beginning that establishes a strong fortress that will protect us against future pandemic threats.

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY - WE HAVE STARTED MOVING

In light of growing inequality, it is important to highlight how government aims to position tourism to make it more inclusive

The Department of Tourism has developed the **Tourism Sector Recovery Plan** which contains a set of interventions to protect and rejuvenate supply, reignite demand and strengthen enabling capability to support the sector's recovery. The Tourism Sector Recovery Plan was developed to ensure that the tourism sector adapts and thrives in a new post-crisis era. We need to ensure, together with the sector, that this Plan is implemented successfully.

NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SAFE OPERATION ACROSS THE TOURISM VALUE CHAIN

In addition to the tourism sector implementing Covid-19 protocols to protect tourists, Government is also rolling out measures to strengthen the quality of our tourism offerings.

This includes the Norms and Standards approved by Cabinet which I will be gazetting them on 1 November 2021, in time to prepare for the arrivals of our Festive season visitors.

As time goes on, more countries are considering turning to Covid or vaccine passports as a way of opening up and allowing people to travel. These systems are being created to enable businesses, events, travel, hospitality and much more, to reopen safely.

In South Africa, the Government and its social partners are engaging on the form this passport or certificate should take in the light of the international trends. This might simply mean a proof of vaccination in a format that is not forged or altered, and will be developed specifically to integrate with information of all official vaccinations and test types, including PCR and rapid tests.

STIMULATE DOMESTIC DEMAND THROUGH TARGETED INITIATIVES AND CAMPAIGNS

In this difficult economic environment, it remains a challenge to encourage South Africans to travel domestically with many losing their income due to the pandemic or other already persistent deprivations. This is a challenge we are embracing and are ready to confront

The Department and SA Tourism, together with the provincial agencies, have developed a robust domestic marketing programme. SA Travel Week held from 6 to 12 September, is a campaign where South Africans are offered multiple tourism related discounts to book during that week which may be redeemed until 2022.

Let us find meaning in our travel habits, by visiting our country. Let us all travel and take a Sho't Left. Travel is so much more than generating revenue – it generates goodwill and fosters social cohesion and nation-building.

STRENGTHENING THE SUPPLY-SIDE THROUGH RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION

Indeed, we will have to re-evaluate the extent to which the supply side of the tourism value chain has been affected by the pandemic.

The Tourism Transformation Fund and the Tourism Equity Fund were launched to move towards a more inclusive tourism sector as black entrepreneurs face numerous challenges and barriers to enter the tourism sector.

The Department is relaunching our support mechanisms and funding initiatives and these include the **Transformation Fund**, the **Tourism Equity Fund** and a **Green Tourism Incentive Scheme** which funds outbound shows when they are reborn.

SUPPORT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CORE TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSETS

We are already working with other departments to ensure that we re-invest in our infrastructure but more importantly, we dedicate financial resources to maintaining tourism assets.

The Department has appointed the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) as an implementation agent for the maintenance of infrastructure development to be executed by the Department's **Working for Tourism** Programmes.

EXECUTE A GLOBAL MARKETING PROGRAMME TO REIGNITE INTERNATIONAL DEMAND

SA Tourism is launching during this month two Global Campaigns; a Global Advocacy Campaign and Global Brand Campaigns. These campaigns are aimed at attracting tourists back to South Africa.

I am proud to announce that we have been accepted into the full **Council Membership for the United Nations World Tourism Organisation** and will use our work we are doing on the Continent, to strengthen our impact and cooperation in Africa.

TOURISM REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND MARKETING

Tourism should also leverage on displaced regional and international markets, tap into new markets, develop new products and promote investments. As we continue to develop a strategy for regional marketing, numerous pilot programmes have demonstrated success, e.g.

- (1) Mpumalanga / Swaziland / Mozambique Cooperation;
- (2) KZN / Swaziland / Mozambique and
- (3) Gauteng / North West and Botswana.

REVIEW THE TOURISM POLICY TO PROVIDE ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR SECTOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

We must re-write the rules. Tourism in South African can only transform if all tourism stakeholders work together to make it more inclusive.

A policy review panel has been working on various “issue papers” to drive discussion around policy in the areas of

- (1) Shared economy,
- (2) Digitilization,
- (3) Grading,
- (4) Service Excellence and
- (4) Transformation.

This work will be given more impetus to ensure inclusivity and reach.

LET US EXPLORE OUR COUNTRY

As we have said, certainly we will travel again soon, whether it is to gather to host a small get-together with friends or celebrate a party or a wedding. Let us all please book an event venue to support a local restaurant or hospitality venue.

We have suffered major losses as a sector but returning to the old ways of doing things like having large events, 24-hour nights clubs, events with no crowd control etc. will simply not be the solution.

As we yearn for recovery, there are many things a person can do as a day tourist. To mention a few

1. Hiking with friends - Most towns have excellent hiking trails for nature lovers, visit a Botanical garden or nature reserve, provided they are safe and affordable.
2. Visit a local museum and Heritage Sites AND Go to picnic sites – where you buy your supplies at the convenience shops close to most of these sites
3. Take Open Bus City Tours or Boating Excursion (almost all dams have leisure boat experiences) - to promote inclusive growth, support our Women and youth-owned enterprises
4. Take up recreational fishing and visiting a beach is a must this summer, where we buy our supplies from local vendors. Tourism has to be exercised sustainably so as not to compromise its environmental integrity.
5. For the art aficionados, support a local Art gallery, take a local wine tour or visit a local flea market or a small food festival.
6. Affordable local productions in the City Theatres is also an option to explore cultural tourism.

All in all, we are saying there are a wealth of activities to do at affordable prices, and importantly, that are within local travel distances and are safe. These experiences clearly demonstrate that we are indeed open for tourism, while continuing to vaccinate and encouraging those we know, to do so.

While vaccination remains absolutely important, non-pharmaceutical interventions such as maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and sanitising remains critical.

Recovery will drive the way forward for us and has become our new North Star. It allows us to reimagine and reposition tourism for optimal inclusive growth.

Tourism Month is a celebration of people, products and places. It's a celebration of all that is South African.

Our work is to make sure that South Africa re-positions itself as the destination of choice, here at home and abroad, so that we can all enjoy and marvel at this beautiful country of ours and equally encourage all South Africans to explore it, and once again claim our stake as an international destination of preference and choice.

We also need to change the perception of tourism as the preserve of wealthy local and international people taking a holiday. All of us are potential tourists if we take the time to explore outside our everyday environment and the social and cultural richness all around us.

It has often been said that tourism is the number one industry with the greatest potential to stimulate inclusive economic growth and employment, with the greatest multiplier effect in terms of jobs and growth potential. We must redouble our efforts to make this a reality. Become a tourist in your own country and take a Shot'Left to explore all the beauty that South Africa has to offer.

It is essential that we expand our communications efforts to send out the message to every corner of the world that South Africa is open for tourism and that this beautiful nation is alive with possibilities.

Let us get to work, the time is now to build a more resilient tourism economy and ignite our domestic tourism market. South Africa's future is indeed bright and beautiful.

I Thank You