



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Speech by the Minister of Tourism, Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, at World
Tourism Day, KwaZulu-Natal**

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Programme director

Mr Fish Mahlalela, Deputy Minister of Tourism

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Mr Supra Mahumapelo, Chairperson of the Portfolio committee on tourism

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Chancellor Sizwe Sokhela

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I greet you all on this important occasion as we celebrate the world tourism day. We are meeting here today at a very historic site, the Mandela capture site, which in many ways carries a message that says: no matter how great challenges we face today, we should never lose confidence in humanity's capacity to overcome those challenges.

This monument erected in honour of the late Former President Nelson Mandela and his efforts to free South Africans from one of the most vicious system humanity has ever witnessed, is a fitting representation of the multi-faceted influences and the nature of a single human being who had an enormous effect on the identity of our nation. Mandela led a collective that made a tremendous contribution in the creation of a new South Africa which now stands as a monument of unity in diversity and a nation alive with possibilities. The Mandela generation has bequeathed on us a great gift which we need to nurture not only for South Africans and future generations but for humanity as a whole.

South Africa is a country known for its beauty, wildlife and the warmth of its people. Three days ago the tapestry and the diversity of our cultures and customs were in full display as we celebrated Heritage Day. The celebration of our heritage was an occasion for us to show the world that we are proud of our cultures and customs as Africans and that in keeping with the spirit of Ubuntu we have also embraced cultures and customs of the other compatriots within our country.

Our tourist attractions as a country can only do so much to attract tourists, however, the people of South Africa need to make a concerted effort to continually increase the levels of hospitality and friendliness, and the general level of service. In the words of our icon Nelson Mandela during his Address at the opening of Indaba International Tourism Workshop in Durban back in 1995, "...our natural beauty only offers a fitting setting for our country's most valuable asset: its people. Ours is a nation of warm and generous people. Its great variety of culture and heritage, once exploited to divide our people, has been turned by them into a source of strength and richness in every sphere of life. Indeed our cultural diversity is increasingly... becoming one of our major tourist attractions."

In this connection, we must, all of us, resist the lie that is starting to take root in the public discourse that seeks to suggest that South Africans are Xenophobic, or Afrophobic. The perpetuation of this lie, sometimes through our own media and through the distribution of fake videos of violence against migrants has dealt a significant blow in our country's brand and our standing in the family of nations.

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Since the discovery of gold mining in what is today Johannesburg, African migrants who came to work in the mines settled and made South Africa their permanent home. This migration pattern has continued unabated since then and South Africans have lived peacefully together with other Africans for many years. The lie that South Africans have suddenly developed hatred for other Africans cannot be sustained.

We are therefore pleased that President Ramaphosa has taken an extraordinary step of sending envoys to African leaders to reassure them that South Africa remains a home for all Africans.

Our country is beset with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequalities. Under the weight of these socio-economic challenges our people find themselves in the margins of society scrambling for very limited resources in the most degrading and dehumanising conditions. Undoubtedly, such a situation becomes a breeding ground for social ills that are threatening our stability, peace and security. It is therefore unsurprising that in some instances the scramble for limited resources has been characterised by violent scenes such as we have witnessed recently. It is only by growing our economy in an inclusive way that this race to the bottom can be brought to a halt.

By committing ourselves to the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals we are enjoined by one of its pillars which is the pledge to leave no one behind. We have to ask ourselves the question: How is it that we are going to overcome our triple challenges, achieve inclusivity and ensure that we leave no one behind? More importantly, how are we going to place tourism at the centre of our economy so that we can grow the economy and create jobs?

Tourism has been a pillar of our economy and under the current economic conditions it presents us with the best chance of increasing social inclusion. As we intensify our efforts to grow our tourism sector, and ensure that we live no one behind we need to do the following amongst other things:

- We need to adopt a whole of government approach to tourism so that there is consistency in the message that we send to the world at all levels of government
- We need to create a tourism infrastructure coordination framework so that government investment in infrastructure at all levels is complementary
- We need to crowd-in private sector investments in the tourism sector so that our tourism product offering can be diverse
- We need to work closely with communities so that they can take ownership of projects within their localities and ensure that they maximise their benefits and that of the country as whole
- We need to work together to transform the sector so that all South Africans can equitably participate in the sector including our disabled compatriots

This year we are celebrating World Tourism Day under the theme “Tourism and Jobs – A better future for all”. This is in a context in which the world is undergoing the most dramatic change brought about by the technologies that underpin the Fourth Industrial Revolution. As the fourth industrial revolution becomes a way of life, most of the economic sectors will become less and less labour intensive and more people will lose their jobs. Very few sectors will continue to be labour intensive and the tourism sector is one of them.

The United Nation World Tourism Organisation has estimated that one job in the core tourism sector creates about one-and-a-half additional or indirect jobs in the tourism-related economy. Overall, it is estimated that tourism accounts for one in ten jobs worldwide. Tourism is one of the sectors that has the highest potential to absorb both skilled and unskilled people ranging from tour guides who can enter the sector without a matric certificate to hotel managers. The only way that we will be able to create jobs in the tourism sector is by increasing the number of tourists in our country both domestic and international.

We must also acknowledge that the technologies of the fourth Industrial revolution will also have an impact on the tourism sector. We have already witnessed certain job profiles in the hospitality such as front desk jobs in other parts of the world becoming obsolete as machines take over those jobs. It is only a matter of time before this trend takes root in our country but we still believe that tourism sector will remain labour intensive.

Technological platforms have already been created that have fundamentally transformed how tourism products are marketed and traded in the market. Fortunately, some of these platforms have lowered the

barriers to entry for small businesses and homeowners who want to turn their homes into income earning assets. These new businesses will only be sustained if the number of tourists increase in our country. Recent trends have shown that the number of international arrivals to our country has been on the decline. This development poses a great danger to the survival of the South African businesses and job opportunities and ultimately our economy. This decline of tourist arrivals in our country is happening at a time when the number of tourists are increasing globally. This means that tourists are choosing other tourist destinations other than our country. The way we manage our tourism sector, our actions and what we say, needs to take into consideration that tourism is very competitive sector. If tourists don't feel welcome in our country they will go elsewhere.

All of us as South Africans need to ask ourselves the question: what is it that we are going to do in our various areas of responsibility to ensure that South Africa remains a destination of choice for tourists?

Amongst other things we need to do the following:

- We need to work together to ensure that tourists that come to our country feel safe to enjoy their holiday and take away memorable experiences
- We need to ensure that tourists who decide to travel to our country do so with ease and have access to all products across the country
- We need to practice sustainable tourism so that we can preserve the environment and the wildlife

As we celebrate this day, let's remember the historic injustices of the past that led to majority of South Africans not enjoying traveling their own country. We must ensure that we provide all information about various attractions and destinations so that it's easy for them to make choices to travel. We must encourage the sector to package their products and take into consideration various household disposable income. In this way we will be able to reintroduce South Africans to South Africa.

Indeed South Africa is a country alive with possibilities. And as South Africans we need to rediscover the hope and optimism that inspired our people to overcome their divisions and come together to create a united nation. In this regard, I find it inspiring that a group of South African have started a campaign called #I'm staying. This is campaign aimed at elevating that which is good about our country and the warmth of its people. I have joined them to tell my personal reasons of why I would not leave my country.

The President has given us a very ambitious target of increasing the number of tourist arrivals to 21 million by 2030. We believe that our country has all the necessary tourism elements to achieve this target. South Africa is a great tourist destination, it is in the hands of South Africans to turn it into a destination of choice.

Fellow Country Men and Women, Happy World Tourism day.

I thank you.