



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Speech by the Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa, on the occasion of the
Ambassadors Working Dinner**

28 April 2017

Your Excellency's
Ladies and gentlemen

It is my extreme pleasure to welcome you here tonight.

Having just celebrated the dawn of our democracy, we are on the cusp of Africa month. And that means that we are gearing up for our annual Tourism Indaba. This Pan-African tradeshow will be held over three days in Durban from 16 to 18 May 2017. The objectives of Indaba are to create a platform for African tourism products for market access and market growth. It is also to leverage existing relationships with key local and international stakeholders. Exhibitors are at the core of Indaba's success and it aims to facilitate exhibitors' growth to sustain tourism in Africa. In essence, Indaba will lead in the African competitive travel trade show space.

In celebrating Africa month, we also want to build on a united Africa. The AU Agenda 2063 is a roadmap for Continental development. To build a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth. It espouses an integrated continent, politically united, and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.

In March 2014 African Union hosted a meeting Seychelles with the intention to establish the platform for African Union Ministers responsible for tourism to collectively deal with the challenges facing the industry. This initiative was followed by the meeting hosted by AU and UNWTO in Togo in March 2017. It is important to note that the African Union has acknowledged tourism is an important economic pillar in the Agenda 2063 documents.

The disjuncture in decisions between those made by Ministers of Tourism and those at continental level are due to lack of platform that brings together African Ministers to input into the AU decision making machinery.

Tourism in Africa is seen largely as a leisure activity rather than an economic industry and, therefore, is often placed at the bottom of the priority lists within African counties' national budgets.

The Continent needs to realize that tourism for Africa is closely linked to biodiversity and aviation, and therefore there is a need to invest in these sectors in order to preserve and grow Africa's tourism and improve its market share currently at +/-5%, especially by controlling poaching, developing aviation infrastructure and having less restrictive visa regimes.

Africa needs to promote the branding of the continent "Brand Africa" which needs to be effectively promoted outside of Africa, as perception of the continent is still largely negative and uninformed, and such affects tourism flows, as was the case during the Ebola outbreak.

It is important that tourism should be placed as a tool for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production. It is critical that the policies in AU space should make emphasises on sustainable use of resources and that the tourism sector should develop policies to be reflected within the AU Agenda 2063.

If we work together in the continent as the tourism fraternity, it improve and strengthen the implementation of the SDGs possible and that important decisions made at UNWTO General Assemblies, in Commissions and Executive Council level by Tourism Ministers will find policy expression at the continental level. Thus, the sector is likely grow if it is effectively channelled into the AU Agenda 2063.

To this end, I would like to acknowledge my counterpart from Zimbabwe, the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality – Dr Walter Mzembi – who is the AU and SADC endorsed candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations world Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). This is a true expression of Africa Rising. One of the aspirations of AU Agenda 2063 is Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner. Having Dr Mzembi as the AU candidate, lends impetus to this.

I would like for us to take this opportunity to interact and look at strategic synergistic opportunities on how we can grow this sector and address the challenges - in the Continent and beyond.

In the spirit of this great Continent, I would like to conclude with the following African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Enjoy the evening