



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speech by the Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa, at the Discover Beautiful China event – PPEM side event

24 April 2017

H.E Mr Wang Xiaofeng – Vice Minister of the Chinese National Tourism Administration (CNTA)
Mr David Frost – CEO of SATSA
Mr James Vos – Member of Parliament SA and Portfolio Committee on Tourism member
Mr Victor Tharage – Director General Department of Tourism
Members of the tourism industry
Distinguished guests

We are very delighted to be hosting our friends from the People's Republic of China,

It is my extreme honour to be with you this afternoon as we celebrate the launch of the People to People Exchange Mechanism between our two countries today which serves to strengthen the mutual understanding between the peoples of South Africa and China and to enhance people-people exchanges. Without a doubt, tourism is a people-driven industry and is the perfect platform to give expression to this concept.

South Africa and China enjoys a special relationship which was nurtured over the years. The Governments of South Africa and China signed the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Tourism in October 2013. The key focus areas of the agreement include the following:

- Skills development: exchange of capacity building initiatives.
- Promoting tourism development and investment opportunities, including tourism marketing of both countries

It is against this backdrop that we are here today together with representatives of the South African Tourism, our destination marketing organisation to embrace and support this event themed “discover the beautiful China” hosted by our friends from the Chinese National Tourism Administration. As we discover the beautiful of China, we hope our friends from China will also be discovering the scenic beauty of South Africa and visit more often.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In our bilateral meeting between ourselves and the Vice Minister we committed to support each other in promoting our respective destinations. We also agreed to support businesses in establishing stronger partnerships to grow the tourism industry in both countries. The importance of the relationship between government and business in the tourism industry can never be overemphasised. For tourism to thrive, governments need to forge a stronger collaboration with the industry.

People to People Exchanges are not only beneficial for closer understanding and cultural knowledge between South African and Chinese people but also important to increase the intensity of two-way international tourism between the two countries. People to People Exchange will promote the value of tourism as a driver of job creation, mutual economic growth and development. The Department of Tourism of the Republic of South Africa expresses its gratitude to the Chinese Culture and International Education Exchange Centre and Yangzhou University for the opportunity provided to 20 South African tour guides and frontline staff in tourism establishments to learn Mandarin and Chinese culture. South Africa recognizes the importance of teaching Mandarin and Chinese culture to South

African tourism practitioners as a vehicle to improve the country' competitiveness as a destination of choice in China.

The tourism sector plays an important role as a driving force for economic development in the world. China is one of South African Tourism's (SAT) core markets in Asia, and contributes positively to tourism arrivals into the country. In 2016 South Africa warmly welcomed 117,144 visitors from Greater China representing a 38 percent year on year increase. South African tour companies have added Mandarin speaking guides and translating their promotional materials into Mandarin, while South African Tourism has been holding exhibitions in major Chinese cities across China.

To make the travel experience even more seamless for Chinese citizens, South Africa has established visa facilitation centres in nine Chinese cities : Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Xian, Shenyang, Wuhan, Jinan and Hangzhou, 2 new visa centres will open at the end of April in Kunming and Chongqing bringing the total to eleven visa facilitation centres in China.

South Africa and China also share a platform in the BRICS block of emerging economies. While China houses the headquarters for the Brics Development Bank in Shanghai, South Africa is home to its African Regional offices.

The Department of Tourism recognises that International co-operation in the area of tourism is emerging as an important foreign policy tool and an instrument of economic diplomacy in strengthening the broader bilateral relations between South Africa and China. Thus, we are committed to continue to implement other areas of cooperation identified in the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2013 to increase two-way international tourism between our countries for mutual benefit.

Tourism is much more than an economic driver – it is also a social unifier. It brings people together and it's about creating an experience – an authentic cultural experience. Hence, tourism is the cornerstone of the PPEM launched earlier today. Apart from our touristic attractions, the people of South Africa are its biggest treasures. We invite you to continue to share in our treasure chest and the hospitality and warmth of the South Africans.

I thank you