



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille's opening remarks during Tourism Execution Lab session - Emperor's Palace

Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to the Execution Lab for the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan. Today marks a historic first, a bold and collaborative effort between government, the private sector, and our many partners to unlock the full potential of South Africa's tourism sector.

I am deeply encouraged that we are here, together, to act. I want to thank the Tourism Business Council of South Africa for its steadfast support, and for establishing the Project Management Office that is bringing this plan to life.

To Peermont and Emperor's Palace, thank you for hosting us today and for your generous hospitality.

The Execution Lab is not just another meeting. It is our sector's concrete response to the three priorities of the Government of National Unity: Driving inclusive economic growth and job creation, reducing poverty and the high cost of living, and building a capable, ethical, and developmental state

We are here because we recognise the challenges in our sector. We know what our targets are for the next 5 years. But we are also here because we believe in solutions. As I have often said, we cannot keep doing the same things and expect different results. This lab must be about action, about innovation, and about measurable progress.

Our Tourism Growth Partnership Plan outlines five priorities, and today we must give them life: Ease of Access, Coordinated destination marketing, Tourist safety and security, Tourism product development and Job creation.

On ease of access, we are making real progress. Working with the Department of Home Affairs, the roll-out of the Electronic Travel Authorization system is expected to begin next month. New initiatives in route development, air access, and a new tour operators' licensing system, which we are currently working on with the Department of Transport, are the potential game changers.

On product diversification, we must show the world that South Africa is more than our breathtaking seas, mountains, and wildlife. From wellness tourism to heritage trails, from township vibrancy to the charm of our small dorpies. We can craft a uniquely South African experience that stands out in a crowded global marketplace.

Tourism already supports 1.6 million jobs and contributes significantly to GDP. But we know we are not yet where we need to be. That is why we have set ambitious targets according to the NDP, by 20230 we should have 15 million arrivals. This is achievable. That is why this plan is

incorporated into the Department of Tourism's Annual Performance Plan and into the commitments I have made directly to the President.

Colleagues, my vision is clear: tourism must become a catalyst for inclusive economic growth. At the heart of this vision is the employment of young people. They are the future of this sector, and through this plan, we can ensure that more young South Africans find hope, dignity, and opportunity in tourism.

So today, let us commit ourselves to boldness, to action, and to focus.

- LET US grow tourism's contribution to GDP.
- LET US enable more South Africans to experience and enjoy their own country.
- LET US welcome more visitors to our shores by removing every barrier in their way.

To the Department of Tourism, to SA Tourism, to our industry institutions, and to every partner in the private sector: let us join hands, let us align our efforts, and let us grow this industry together.

As the President always reminds us in cabinet: "Every problem has a solution." Together, we will make it possible for our economy, for our youth, and for the future of South Africa.

Thank you.