

Whilst, still on the continent, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Rwanda, which has been announced as the host of The International Congress and Convention Association Congress in 2027.

High Commissioner Emmanuel Hategeka, this return of the Congress to the African continent after more than 23 years affirms that our continent is trusted, capable and competitive.

Just last year, for this first time on the continent, South Africa hosted the G20 leader's summit with over 135 other G20 related meetings. Through the success of the summit, South Africa also secured the World Economic Forums' Special Meeting, which will be taking place next year. This is confidence that's being demonstrated in our capabilities.

Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions, are aggregators of economic growth and job creation. Since the start of the 2025/26 financial year, the South African National Convention Bureau supported 100 bids for international business events to be hosted in South Africa between 2025 and 2030. Overall, South Africa has secured 52 bids for international and regional business events supported through the Bid Support Programme. These confirmed business events are expected to contribute nearly R1 Billion to the South African economy and will attract over 33 000 international and regional delegates.

These business events will be hosted in a range of cities and towns, including Johannesburg, Tshwane, Durban, Cape Town, Hermanus, Mbombela, Grabouw, Bela-Bela, Skukuza and Sun City.

The SANCB invested R21.3 million through its Bid Support Programme to secure these MICE events, which are central to the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan.

Equally important to this plan, is diversifying our tourism offerings. In response, last year we launched the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, where we unveiled 8 bankable projects valued at around R1 Billion from both the public and private sectors. We continue to build the pipeline ahead of our second investment summit later this year in September.

But before that, we have Africa's Travel Indaba in May in Durban KwaZulu-Natal and we hope to see you there as well. Next month, another first on the continent, is LIV Golf, where over 74 000 tickets have already been sold. The tee-off is a stone's throw away, at Steyn City, and each of the 4 days will end off with a concert, featuring among others Grammy award winners, Black Coffee and Calvin Harris.

Back to the business of Today ...

I have no doubt that the trade floor is beaming with products that you are guaranteed to forge mutually beneficial business transactions with. I wish all the exhibitors and buyers the very best for the next two days.

It makes me so proud to announce that amongst our exhibitors, all of South Africa's nine provinces are represented.

Thank you to our partners Johannesburg Tourism Company and the Sandton Convention Centre, for partnering with us to execute this all-important trade show. It is a purpose designed ecosystem where high quality connections drive concrete deals, unlocking Africa's opportunities through quality connection. Through stronger regional partnerships, greater collaboration with Convention Bureaux and increased participation at key continental platforms, we are strengthening what we as Africa can offer the world.

I thank you.