



## tourism

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Tourism  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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### **Tourism players strategise on advancing women in tourism in Africa**

**04 October 2016**

Women empowerment and issues pertaining to entrepreneurial development on the African continent featured highly on the agenda at the round table discussion hosted by Deputy Minister, Tokozile Xasa, on the eve of the official opening of the 2016 Women in Tourism Conference in Pretoria.

The session afforded African dignitaries and key tourism industry players an opportunity to discuss state of women in tourism on the continent, with a view of collectively formulating solutions to grow and develop female entrepreneurs that can shape and influence the African Tourism Agenda.

Premised on the aspirations of the African Union's 2063 Agenda, the discussion delved into the importance of leveraging on the potential of African people, especially women and the youth, to advance the continent's economy, promote inclusive growth and sustainable development.

"Women make up 70% of the tourism workforce, however there is a marked under-representation of women in senior positions, with women holding less than 40% of managerial positions, less than 20% of general management roles and between 5-8% of board positions."

"We need to work together to ensure that women in Africa are adequately capacitated and elevated to make a meaningful contribution to the tourism economy," said Deputy Minister Xasa.

The 2063 Agenda endeavors to empower women in all spheres, with equal social, political and economic rights, including the rights to own and inherit property, sign contracts, register and manage businesses.

"The African Union recognises our talents and potential in the starting and maintaining sustainable businesses, and have prioritised the empowerment of women. Let us take up the mantle and commit to supporting each other by initiating programmes and opportunities that will catapult us to leadership levels in the tourism industry," added Xasa.

Social cultural beliefs, evolving tourism trends and the lack of exchange programmes were highlighted as major contributors to the slow progression of women empowerment in the industry. Cultural beliefs hindered women from participating in educational programmes, as a result women were unable to keep up with the changing trends in the tourism industry.

"Our cultural practices and heritage are what make us unique, and we can leverage on these attract tourists to our countries. It is critical for us to find a balance, so that our cultural practices do not hold us back from advancing in this industry," emphasised Xasa.

High Commissioner of Tanzania, Ms. Rosemary Jairo, was among the dignitaries and influential African tourism players who attended the event. Jairo urged women to be assertive and take hold of the opportunities that exist in the industry.

"The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) forecasts that international tourist arrivals will reach 1.6 billion by 2020. We need to be ready to welcome these guests in our countries. We can achieve this by looking beyond the cultural barriers that hinder our entrepreneurial progress, and influence African markets to invest in initiatives run by women," said Commissioner Jairo.

The dialogue on women empowerment will continue on the 5th and 6th of October at the Sheraton Hotel where the Women in Tourism (WiT) conference will be held under the theme "Tourism: is a women's business."

The WiT conference is a Department of Tourism initiative that brings women together to find solutions to the economic challenges that hinder their entrepreneurial progress in the sector. The agenda will center on Commanding Respect, ascertaining Recognition of women contribution in the sector, encourage Representation in economic activities and leadership, and producing results that will enhance the supply and demand for domestic tourism.

For more information, visit our website on [www.tourism.gov.za](http://www.tourism.gov.za)

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**Issued by The National Department of Tourism**