



tourism

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Speech delivered by Minister Van Schalkwyk at the opening of the Travel Agents Federation India 2013 Durban

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"Distinguished guests

Last year, I joined a two-day roadshow to India to promote South Africa as a tourism destination by highlighting the potential and importance of India as a source market for tourism to our country. But, of course, we understand that for tourism to flourish between the two countries, tourism flows must be in both directions. Let me immediately add that India is a wonderful destination, and I appreciated the warmth and hospitality that I experienced during my visit there.

Our two countries share a rich history nurtured by mutual respect, which now extends deep into trade and business. This is clearly illustrated by the number of businesses present at this convention today. Both our countries of course share a passion for sports, with cricket as our common denominator. It was to India that South Africa's international cricket team travelled for the first time after the end of apartheid, in 1991. Incidentally also, that flight by Clive Rice's team was the first time that a South African aeroplane entered Indian airspace. Soon after, in 1992, India became the first touring team to play in a South Africa on route to democracy on the Friendship Tour in proud recognition of India's role in the fight against apartheid and South Africa's readmission to the international sporting arena.

Chair, it is worth recalling that this year marks the 20th commemoration of South Africa and India's signing of their first agreement establishing full diplomatic relations. The bilateral relations between India and South Africa have grown so much stronger since. We have developed very close strategic, cultural and economic ties.

In the meantime, the tourism agreement between South Africa and India has also been signed. The two countries share many international platforms, such as the G20 and the T20 for tourism ministers. Both countries are members of BRICS as well as the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) dialogue forum and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). India and South Africa are also both members of the Executive Council of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), where we collaborate very closely.

It delights me that our world-renowned South African events and lifestyle offerings have proven to strike a chord with the Indian traveller. India is not only already a source market for South Africa, but also an emerging travel market with massive growth potential. India's economic growth is expected to continue over the next 40 years, and by 2050, India is expected to be among the top three global economies. As of 2013, the five BRICS countries represent almost three billion people, with a combined nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$14,9 trillion, and an estimated US\$4 trillion in combined foreign reserves.

Now, if we look at many of the debates and discussions in international tourism trade platforms and think tanks, be that at the World Travel Market, ITB or in industry analyses, I often get the impression that some of our colleagues are stuck in a frame of mind that

emerging markets are source markets only. Yes, of course, GDP growth and travel propensity as well as expanded airlift render the emerging markets very attractive source markets. But that is a very narrow approach. In the emerging markets, we are not only source markets, but we are the most amazing destinations in our own right.

In the emerging-market destinations, we have offerings unparalleled in the world, and we offer great value for money. Where else in the world do we find natural treasures such as the Amazon rainforest and Kruger National Park, most of them larger than some European countries? Think of some of our ancient world heritage sites, like the 8851 km Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal in India, Sugarloaf Mountain in Brazil, Table Mountain in Cape Town and the Isimangaliso Wetland Park here in KwaZulu-Natal. The intrinsic and tourist value of some of the heritage left behind for future generations in emerging markets lets some of the most-visited attractions in the North pale into insignificance. So yes, the emerging markets are important source markets, but even more importantly, we are emerging destinations bound to change travel patterns around the world. In our lifetime, I have no doubt that we, as emerging destinations, will become the centre of the universe for international tourism flows.

This will also be linked to the broader shift in geopolitical and economic power from traditional developed economies to the emerging BRICS economies. It is part of the global rebalancing of forces that will shape our tomorrow.

Looking at tourist arrivals from India to South Africa from January to September 2012, South Africa attracted a total of 79 000 tourists from India, which constitutes an 18% increase compared to the previous year. Each tourist spent an average of R12 000 per trip. South African Tourism has been promoting our destination in India since 2005, focusing on film, fashion, sports, and food and wine. Three years ago, we identified India as a core market, and capacitated it with a fully operational South African Tourism office.

Our goal is to break through the 100 000 arrivals mark by 2014, and we are confident that we will achieve this. We have just launched our new campaign, "The More You Do, The Closer You Get", meaning that the more experiences you have and activities you undertake, the closer you get to the people with whom you are travelling. We are also launching another campaign next month, with Jonty Rhodes. South African Tourism is currently training over 1000 Indian travel agents and tour operators to enable them to sell South Africa to the Indian source market.

Chairperson, I trust that this conference will lead to profitable business relationships on a business-to-business level, but more importantly, also to warm relations on a person-to-person level. As much as the conference is about unlocking new opportunities, it is also a celebration of our long walk together over many decades.

Mark Twain was right when he said: "So far as I am able to judge, nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his rounds. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked."

Ladies and gentlemen, the possibilities of what we can achieve together as emerging markets and destinations are truly endless.

"I thank you."

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