



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Private Bag X424, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa. Tel. (+27 12) 444 6780, Fax (+27 12) 444 7027
Private Bag X9154, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel. (+27 21) 469 5800, Fax: (+27 21) 465 3216

**Welcoming remarks by Deputy Minister, Elizabeth Thabethe
African Responsible Tourism Awards, Cape Town Convention Centre**

20 April 2017

Program Director
MEC Alan Winde
Mr James Vos, Member of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism
Mr Tim Harris, Wesgro CEO
Prof Harold Goodwin, Char of the Judges
Mr Bongani Dlamini, Swazini Tourism
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Still fresh in my third week of assuming the portfolio of Deputy Minister of Tourism it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you all, from near and far, to the Third African Responsible Tourism Awards here in the southern most City of Cape Town.

Join us for an exciting evening of celebrating achievements which is the annual culmination of consistent and dedicated hard work of all role-players in this important field of responsible tourism. We indeed salute them and already wish them luck for possible consideration for the WTM awards later this year in London.

Although the focus at times tonight may fall on the well-deserved awardees, let us remember that we are all collectively winners as we strive to give life to the principles of responsible tourism in our daily lives. Be this as travelers within South Africa or around the globe, or as conscientious suppliers, service providers and stakeholders in the tourism value chain.

It is encouraging that the United Nations has declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development as this is another recognition of the importance of global tourism and its contribution to greater awareness about diversity of humanity, and importantly, its contribution to economic upliftment of marginalized communities and world peace. This should provide all of us with a rare opportunity to advance the contribution of the tourism sector to sustainable development and raise consciousness about responsible tourism to our stakeholders and partners.

Program Director, allow me to place all this in context. In 2012, the National Department of Tourism developed the Responsible Tourism Strategy that would promote sustainable development, growth and promotion of tourism in South Africa. The strategy is a tool of inspiration towards responsible tourism implementation and serve as a map to guide the sector along the way. The National Responsible Tourism Strategy is a response to the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) objective 'To promote responsible tourism practices within the sector'. The NTSS has been reviewed and will in due course be gazetted for comment.

Some of the National Department of Tourism programmes to support responsible tourism:

- The South African National Minimum Standard for Responsible Tourism (SANS 1162), launched in September 2011, is a detailed set of requirements aimed at establishing a common understanding about Responsible Tourism, and a basis for the harmonisation of tourism sustainability certification in South Africa.
- Tourism and Resource efficiency Programme, is aimed at supporting tourism businesses to conserve and manage water, energy and waste in tourism. The department will be supporting use of energy efficiency technologies through the Tourism Incentive Programme.
- The community participation programme promotes and supports implementation of Universal Accessibility in tourism, and recently published the Operational Guidelines for Community Based Tourism.

However we should actively ensure that in all our endeavours, not only Mother Nature but also our communities benefit directly and tangibly from our enduring efforts as responsible tourism practitioners.

The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. As the Tourism sector in South Africa, we can contribute to the realization of these goals by ensuring that we create meaningful and sustainable opportunities for poor and marginalised communities throughout the tourism value chain.

With its unique natural and cultural landscapes, Africa offers many opportunities for responsible tourism. It is encouraging to see that tourism organisations are already growing tourism in a manner that preserves, respects and benefits African destinations and African people. With the growing trend and demand by the modern traveller for real and authentic holiday experiences, Africa has an opportunity to use the Responsible Tourism approach to develop new products and experiences which respond to this consumer demand, and in so doing reduce poverty, and improve livelihoods.

Program Director, I would indeed be failing in my duty as Deputy Minister of Tourism if I did not enjoin you to take time off your busy schedule to savour the tourist offerings in Cape Town. However if possible, do consider extending your explorations further afield in the province and the rest of our vibrant and beautifully welcoming country.

Enjoy the evening!

I thank you

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