



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speech by the Deputy Minister of Tourism Tokozile Xasa on Women and Tourism Conference

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Chairperson of FEDHASA, Mr Eddie Khoza

It is indeed a great pleasure to stand here and be part of this conference. In the year 2010, the UNWTO released the Global Report on Women in Tourism, highlighting the value of the sector as an engine for economic development through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of direct and indirect employment.

Tourism presents a number of income generating activities for women and the jobs are flexible, able to be carried out at different locations, home, community and the workplace. However, the challenges facing women are their concentration in the low status, low paid and precarious jobs in the sector.

The existence of this forum gives a voice to the women in the sector, and will address challenges, gaps and issues faced by women within the sector. But then the primary beneficiaries of this initiative are all women in the sector as employees and entrepreneurs.

Some of the key findings are that women make up a large proportion of the formal tourism workforce. They are also well represented in service and clerical level jobs but poorly represented at professional levels. Women in tourism are typically earning 10% to 15% less than their male counterparts.

With the majority of employees in the sector being women, an empowered women talent pool can only serve to strengthen the sector's global competitiveness. Various studies have also shown that the leadership style that the women bring to organizations tends to create more responsible organizations that achieve sustained growth over time. Through this initiative organizations in the sector will have access to most talented women they can collaborate with to grow the sector.

One in five tourism ministers worldwide are women and they make up a higher proportion of own-account workers in tourism than in other sectors. However, a large amount of unpaid work is being carried out by women in family tourism businesses.

In the same year the report commissioned by UNWTO and UN-Women was released. Here in South Africa there was a meeting of minds under the transformation banner to rally women in the sector to initiate a discourse on the participation of women in the sector. From 2010

there were a series of annual events aimed at mobilizing women to begin focusing on relevant issues impacting on their participation in the sector and to recognize their achievements. Some of the challenges women put forward as barriers to their meaningful participation in the sector were:

- Skills and Enterprise Development
- Access to funding with favorable terms
- Lack of communication on support programmes for women in the sector
- Loss of women executive leadership - succession planning absent to support women's development and growth in the sector.

Although different countries have in the past decade tried to create crevices in the concrete ceiling which has suffocated African women empowerment. The situation is for human being significantly approved. The African woman is normally applauded for being industrious shouldering most of the responsibilities especially relating to mother earth, and pivotal in any country's transformation.

However despite all this rhetoric, the social norms and cultural demands have hindered the African woman's visibility in society and kept her in the low profiles of the social structure.

It is therefore worth noting that tourism has the capacity to contribute to the African Women empowerment mainly by breaking through the social and policy obstacles. As African writer Chimamanda Ngozi emphasizes "**KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO EMPOWERMENT AND THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR WOMEN TO BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE**".

In Africa there is a significant number of organizations which are related to community empowerment through tourism, from which some of it have a special focus on women. It is striking that most of these organizations are located in the Middle of South Africa. In the North and the West it is very hard to find such organizations, even if these women do not have a much better position in society.

There is a clear resolution of the inaugural Women in Tourism Conference which is to unpack the key drivers of the initiatives agenda being Respect, Representation and Recognition of Women in the sector, which is also our theme of this Conference, meaning that women in the sector commanding Respect for the role they play and also to mobilize membership upon which the institution will be built and towards whom the institution will be accountable.

Thank you.