

## MEDIA STATEMENT

6 August 2025

### **WOMEN-LED LUXURY HOTEL LAUNCHES IN LIMPOPO AS TOURISM FUNDING TOP-UP FUELS INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

*Trailblazing 4-Star hotel opens in Limpopo, powered by women and transformative tourism funding*

Polokwane – In a powerful celebration of Women’s Month 2025, the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Maggie Sotyu, today officiated the launch of the Atrium Boutique Hotel — a 100% black-owned, 60% women-owned 4-star luxury establishment located in the heart of Polokwane, Limpopo.

The launch honours the entrepreneurial journey of Ms Lesetja Johanna Mukwevho, who holds a 60% stake in the enterprise she co-founded with her husband, Mr Matodzi Joseph Mukwevho. Their achievement represents a significant step toward inclusive growth, gender equality, and transformation in the South African tourism sector.

“This is more than a hotel—it is a vision realised. Atrium Boutique Hotel showcases the power of women-led businesses and the strength of blended funding models to unlock opportunity where it matters most,” said Deputy Minister Sotyu. “It stands as a symbol of resilience, innovation, and economic empowerment.”

The event was also attended by key representatives across government and development finance institutions, including:

- Mr John Mpe, Executive Mayor of Polokwane, who welcomed guests and lauded the hotel as a catalytic investment for regional tourism.
- Ms Susan Mangole, Acting Deputy Director-General at the dtic, who emphasised the importance of aligning public-private funding partnerships with national development priorities.
- Mr Tshitereke Matibe, MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Limpopo, who praised the project as a boost for Limpopo’s economic landscape.
- Ms Mmapaseka Letsike, Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, who highlighted the significance of women’s economic participation in rebuilding South Africa’s economy.

The NEF CEO, Mr Mziwabantu Dayimani, delivered remarks on the rationale for investment: “The TTF is proof that capital, collaboration, and capability can unlock extraordinary impact. At the NEF, we are proud to partner with the Department of Tourism in enabling inclusive growth and empowering underrepresented entrepreneurs.”

Sedfa Board Member, Mr Patrick Makape, echoed these sentiments, “Our investment in Atrium Boutique Hotel through TEF is a symbol of empowerment and inclusive ownership. With 60% Black female ownership, it reflects the strength of a family-run business with women’s entrepreneurship at its heart, a prioritised demographic in all our plans.”

The launch featured a commemorative plaque unveiling, a hotel walkabout, and a networking luncheon.

### **Transforming Tourism through blended capital**

The Atrium Boutique Hotel development was made possible through a strategic funding structure that represents a model for transformation in the hospitality industry. Funding partners included:

- National Empowerment Fund (NEF): R10 million loan
- Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF): R5 million grant
- Tourism Equity Fund (TEF) loan through the Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency (Sedfa): R9.8 million

The hotel has already created 56 permanent jobs and contributes meaningfully to local tourism infrastructure and inclusive economic growth.

### **New capital fuels future transformation**

At the launch, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Maggie Sotyu, emphasised a recent R100 million recapitalisation of the Tourism Transformation Fund. This new capital injection will help fund both the current pipeline of tourism development projects and unlock new applications from black-owned enterprises across the country.

“The additional R100 million will support our transformation efforts in the sector while growing the tourism economy,” said Deputy Minister Sotyu. “This is how we realise the goals of our tourism sector recovery — by investing in inclusive growth, catalysing enterprise development, and enabling women and youth to lead in hospitality and innovation.”

Since its inception in 2017, the TTF has:

- Approved over R369 million in transactions
- Benefitted 31 companies
- Created 491 new direct jobs and maintained 654 existing ones
- Enabled 19 businesses with majority or full women ownership

### **Building the future: strategic instruments for inclusive growth**

The Tourism Transformation Fund (TTF), a partnership between the Department of Tourism and NEF, blends grant funding, debt financing and equity contributions to support black-owned tourism enterprises. The grant portion helps reduce loan or equity contributions, improving project viability.

This funding model is enabling the rise of a new generation of high-impact tourism entrepreneurs—particularly women and youth—in both urban and rural areas.

Ends.

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