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MEDIA STATEMENT

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World Tourism Day – 30 years of connecting People to Places and Cultures

Northern Cape - South Africa joined the global community today to mark World Tourism Day (WTD) at a joint celebration hosted by the Department of Tourism (DT), in collaboration with the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), to promote domestic travel and to showcase the country's diverse tourism offerings.

In 1980, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) declared the 27th of September as WTD. The day is celebrated annually affording the global tourism community an opportunity to reflect and commemorate its milestones in relation to the fulfilment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

South Africa's World Tourism Day celebration was held in the Northern Cape Province under the localised theme ***Tourism and Peace – 30 years of connecting People to Places and Cultures***, highlighting how our diverse cultural and historical heritage continues to foster peace, making the country a preferred holiday destination.

The quaint 1800's historical charm of the town of Carnarvon, and its clear night skies, provided an apt environment for a celebration that connected guests from diverse cultures and sectors at a place that is predestined and poised to be a part of South Africa's world class astro-tourism hub near the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project.

"South Africa is blessed with diverse culture and nature offerings. These offerings have afforded us a space to be innovative, and to create unique tourism experiences."

"Access to these protected spaces has also enabled us to also educate tourists about our indigenous cultures, whilst empowering our communities on the value of conserving our habitats."

"We are extremely privileged to be able to leverage on our nature offerings and historical heritage to create tourism employment and business opportunities for our people."

"The clear and beautiful skies in the Northern Cape offer an uncharted space for us to grow a niche astro-tourism experience that will boost tourism to the province, and grow local economies sustainability," Minister of Tourism Ms. Patricia De Lille said.

On 18 September 2024, the Cabinet of South Africa approved Tourism and DSI's National Astro-Tourism Strategy and Implementation Plan for publication and public comment. The strategy aims to

position South Africa as a world-class astro-tourism destination, boosting economic development and employment in the sector.

Astro-tourism activities include star and sky gazing with the naked eye and through a telescope, observing lunar and solar eclipses, meteorite showers, viewing comets and the northern lights, visiting planetariums and observatories and experiencing the unique indigenous star lore narratives.

“South Africa is the first African nation to develop a National Astro-Tourism Strategy that will focus on various pillars, namely infrastructure development, optimising astronomy-tourism streams, public private partnerships, inclusive tourism and transformation. We are excited for this joint venture as it will create much-needed opportunities across multiple sectors,” Tourism Minister De Lille added. This September, tourism sector stakeholders held various festivities throughout the country to highlight the plethora of tourism offerings in our nine provinces. The festivities provided a platform for the sector to share its affordable travel deals, inspiring South Africans to explore the country in its entirety from the coastal regions to small towns, villages and dorps.

“We ran a successful Sho’t Left Travel Week Campaign from 02 to 08 September 2024 led by South African Tourism to encourage domestic travel. The campaign offered 655 discounted deals to make travel accessible and affordable.”

“We are thrilled to announce that we made 13 866 bookings compared to 10481 last year. We encourage those who missed out on travel week to visit the Sho’t Left website on www.shotleft.co.za to access deals that are still on offer through our provincial authorities,” Minister De Lille concluded. The Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation Prof. Blade Nzimande, welcomed the collaboration with the Department of Tourism and the Northern Cape Province in promoting mega science initiatives like the Square Kilometre Array in Carnarvon and the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) in Sutherland.

“My sincerest gratitude to my cabinet colleague, Ms. De Lille for her support and the Premier of the Northern Cape, Dr Zamani Saul, for this partnership across all tiers of government. This cooperation is a good example of how we should continue to work as the 7th administration.”

Minister Nzimande said the Department of Science and Innovation believes that building science infrastructure can make a bigger contribution to the development of local communities. He added that one such contribution is in how science infrastructure can boost the local economies of rural towns, through what some call science tourism.

The Minister added that the Astro-Tourism Strategy demonstrates the connection between Astronomy and Tourism.

“As you may be aware, astrotourism is the practice of travelling to different locations with dark skies or radio quietness to observe astronomical phenomena such as meteorites, eclipses, galaxies and stars as the Earth moves in its orbital plane.”

Minister Nzimande believes that the Astro-Tourism Strategy can change the lives of the young people of Carnarvon and the Northern Cape province for the better.

For more information on the National Astro-Tourism Strategy visit www.tourism.gov.za

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