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## **Address by L N Sisulu, MP, Minister of Tourism on the occasion of the Africa Travel Indaba, Durban**

**3 May 2022**

Premier of Kwa Zulu-Natal, Mr. Sihle Zikalala  
Honourable Dr Michael Bizwick Usi Minister of Tourism, Culture and Wildlife in Malawi  
Honourable Pohamba Shifeta , Minister of Environment and Tourism in Namibia  
Honourable Moses M Vilakati, Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs  
in the Kingdom of Eswatini  
Honourable Modero Nsimba Matondo, Minister of Tourism in the Democratic Republic of Congo  
Honourable Col. Rtd. Tom Butiime Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities of the Republic of Uganda  
Honourable Martin Mugarra Bahinduka, State Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Uganda  
Deputy Minister of Tourism Honourable Fish Mahlalela  
MEC of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs in Kwa Zulu-Natal, Mr. Ravi Pillay  
MECs of Provinces  
The Mayor of eThekweni Mr. Mxolisi Kaunda  
South African Tourism Interim Board Chairperson: Advocate Mojanku Gumbi and other Board Members present  
Director General: Mr. Victor Tharage  
Members of my War Room and Advisors  
DDGs in the Department of Tourism  
HODs and CEOs responsible for Provincial Tourism present  
South African Tourism: Acting CEO, Themba Mzilikazi Khumalo and Executive Members and staff from the various offices  
And especially to you, the exhibitors, buyers and of course media  
Ladies and gentleman

I am delighted that we are finally here and that we have been able to meet again after a two-year hiatus. The recent months of devastation in the Province have presented us with an additional set of challenges, on top of those presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. I know I have said numerous times before, but I will say it again, the tourism sector is incredibly resilient. And us being here today is testament to that.

Even as we meet here today KwaZulu-Natal is still recovering from the devastation of the recent torrential rains which caused flooding in various parts of the province. I would like to thank each and every South African as well as partners from across the world, for the support they have shown in ensuring that our sector and the people of Kwa-Zulu Natal, get back on their feet. I am encouraged by the efforts and swift movement of the provincial leadership team, led by the Premier Mr. Sihle Zikalala.

In reflecting on these catastrophes, we must be cognizant that we are experiencing warning signs of climate change, therefore our sector must be part of the united global response to the challenge of reducing carbon emissions.

We know from our insights that responsible tourism and sustainability are big consideration for travelers from various parts of the world. Over the years, they have placed in even greater importance on this issue when choosing a destination to visit.

Responsible tourism has to be the way of the future. Practicing tourism that minimises carbon footprints, conserves energy and water, reduces waste and plastic consumption, and ensures that fair benefits accrue to communities and employees, is not just an option - it is vitally important. Ensuring that communities access real benefits from tourism is critical to the success and sustainability of this industry on our continent.

For now, though, Africa's Travel Indaba is back, this time around with renewed energy and focus. This is the continent's leading travel trade show and the foremost business platform, geared at reconnecting the tourism sector in person whilst networking and doing business which will contribute to the much-needed recovery of our sector on the continent.

The theme for Africa's Travel Indaba is Africa's Stories, Your Success. When we start telling our own story as a continent, we embark on the journey of changing the narrative about Africa. We invite the world to join and journey with us as we together, tell the story of Africa. And importantly, we ourselves rediscover who we are, a proud invincible people who survived the brutality of colonialism.

And this is the essence of Africa's Travel Indaba, it is a proudly Pan-African show. As a continent we are a unique blend of culture, heritage, nature-based, rural and urban experiences make Africa a rich and varied, all-year destination, with a unique history of courage, resilience and historic sites that tell of our advancement in??

It tells of a beauty that can't be equated. The beauty of Table Mountain and the horror of Robbin Island. The beauty of the sand dunes of Namibia, the breath-taking cascades of the Victoria Falls (which should by now have been renamed). The splendour of the river Songwe forming the border between Malawi and Tanzania and pouring into the extraordinary Lake Malawi. The magnificence of Kenya from the Lamu Archipelago to the breathtaking Rift Valley Lakes and savannahs rich with wildlife.

But we are also 54 unique countries within the continent and there's beauty in the appreciation of the unique attributes of each country. This is the beauty of ATI. By telling our own stories, we ensure that the world understands the beauty of our continent beyond any pre-conceived stereotype they may have of Africa.

I am pleased that in telling our story, we have 18 African countries represented at this year's Indaba, including South Africa.

Despite the effects of the COVID-19, every year going forward, we must enhance Africa's Travel Indaba to continue to drive growth in tourism numbers by bringing together a range of our best and most unique stories and products from across our continent, and connecting them with buyers from across the world.

Joining us at this year's Africa's Travel Indaba are 625 buyers, who have come from various parts of the world to come to experience the diverse, authentically African products and experiences that our continent has on offer. We thank these buyers as they are a valued partner in helping to package Africa as an attractive tourism destination, to various travelers from across the world.

Showcasing these products and experiences are 634 exhibitors from across the African continent. To enable seamless engagement and interaction, our matchmaking diary system has ensured that

the right buyers have been matched with the right exhibitors. This is evident in the more than 22000 that have been confirmed to take place throughout the next three days.

We are confident that a lot of mutually beneficial business deals will be borne out of Africa's Travel Indaba.

#### Tourism sector recovery

It is without a doubt that the entire world is still navigating and recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism sector has been amongst the hardest hit yet has led economic recovery and bringing us together again. But on the brighter side the hard lockdown has created an urge to embrace the freedom of movement we have now.

The latest UNWTO data shows that global international tourist arrivals more than doubled in January 2022 compared to 2021 with 18 million more visitors travelling worldwide in the first month of 2022. In January 2022, Africa saw a leap in growth of 51% in 2022 over 2021 and we all reap the benefits when travel and tourism recovers.

Africa's Travel Indaba is a springboard for the continent to achieve even greater levels of recovery. We are here because we have a collective responsibility to reignite the African continent's tourism growth and economy. As a sector, we are here to cement our partnerships and collaborations. It can only be to our benefit that we are a sector committed to sharing ideas and knowledge, in a bid to ensure that the we advance our tourism sector recovery plan.

Together we can breathe again and live again. As we do business, we must remember that our continent is also our own market. All countries in Africa have potential for domestic tourism growth. Intra-continental tourism from Africa's rapidly growing economies and growing middle class is an opportunity begging to be explored. We need improved collaborative efforts between our countries to achieve this.

In this regard, we continue to build an events pipeline that continues to demonstrate that Africa is a premier destination for tourism focusing on trade, investment and tourism. Africa's Travel Indaba is one such event.

The pace of our recovery is dependent upon us addressing some of our challenges, both historic and new. While COVID-19 has placed a specific emphasis on safety, we know that barriers such as xenophobia, immigration regulations as well as limited direct airlift, remain key challenges.

Since my appointment as the Minister of Tourism, I have had several engagements with my fellow cabinet members in related departments, in a bid to partner and address these challenges as we together work towards our sectors' recovery. We have already seen positive developments around the roll-out of the e-visa regime for some of our key source markets. This is not only important for South Africa's tourism sector recovery, but also for the greater continent's intra-trade activities.

I am committed to continue with these engagements in addressing the barriers that continue to plague our destination and hinder us from becoming and even more appealing destination for more tourist and with that realising much-needed growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am personally looking forward to a buzzing Africa's Travel Indaba over the next three days. I look forward to walking the floor and meeting with some of the tourism products from across the continent exhibiting and of course to engage with some of the buyers.

I would like to also thank members of the media from here at home and indeed from all over the world. You are our valued partners and you help us spread the good news and indeed keep us accountable on issues that pertain to our sector. We remain committed to working with you in replacing the sometimes negative narrative of Africa because tourism makes a positive and meaningful contribution to the lives of all the people of Africa.

I would like to extend a word of appreciation to the greater South African tourism sector. Your passion for our country is undeniable. Collaborating and partnering with you since my appointed as Minister of Tourism has been reassuring. I have no doubt we are ALL in it to win!

And a special word of appreciation to the enthusiastic Indaba Project management team - from our value bid partners, our partner agencies and the SA Tourism staff members. You have once again delivered a fantastic Trade show – under difficult circumstance, I might add.

You come to us as a time when we have just experienced the worst rain ravages, where as you no doubt have been told, more than 430 people died. Coming on the back of covid-19 you can imagine what this means to so many families who have lost loved ones where each person is an irreplaceable treasure. We mourn with all those families and pray for their healing.

We also remember the people that have passed away and the many Tourism warriors we sadly lost during the height of Covid. To name a few of our fallen Tourism warriors:

Jabu Mabuza - Sun International/Tsogo/Chair of SAT  
Bill and Mary Harrop - Harrop's Balloons  
Lebo Malepa of Lebo's Backpackers  
Bradley Brouwer - Hub Head Asia SA Tourism  
Khehla Mthembu - past SAT BoardMember/Tourvest/ Business Man  
Mandlakazi Skefile - Board Chair Mandela Bay Tourism  
Chef Lesego Semenya - Independent Chef  
Sibongile Khumalo - Cultural Activist and sang at our last Lilizela Awards  
Joe Motsogi - JMT Tours

I would like you to bow your heads for a Moment of Silence as we honour all our fallen warriors.

It warms my heart to welcome you all to Africa's Travel Indaba 2022 - here's to stimulating conversation, formidable partnerships and sealed deals. With those few words, it gives me great pleasure to declare Africa's Travel Indaba 2022 officially open. I wish you all the best for the next three days.

But we have resolved among us here that we will live again, to celebrate the value that each life now extinguished – celebrate the time we had with them – that which has made each one of us who we are.

Ngiyabonga. Daalų. Asante. Merci beaucoup.

I thank you.