



MINISTRY  
TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## **SPEECH BY MINISTER OF TOURISM, PATRICIA DE LILLE**

**Issue Date: 13 May 2024**

### **AFRICA TRAVEL INDABA: AFRICAN MINISTER'S DIALOGUE AFFIRMS THE NEED FOR ENHANCED AIR ACCESS TO SUPPORT TOURISM GROWTH ACROSS THE CONTINENT**

***Note to editors: The following speech is issued under embargo until 18h00 on 13 May 2024 as will be delivered by Minister of Tourism, Honourable Patricia de Lille as the host of the African Minister's Dialogue ahead of the opening day of Africa's Travel Indaba. Read more below...***

Our host, KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube  
Fellow African Ministers  
Mauritius Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Louis Steven Obeegadoo  
Malawi Minister, Ms Vera Kamtukule  
Lesotho Minister, Mr Motlatsi Maqelepo  
Eswatini Minister, Ms Jane Mkhonta-Simelane  
Ghana, Deputy Minister Mr Mark Okraku-Mantey  
Namibia Deputy Minister Ms Heather Sibungo  
Deputy Minister of Tourism, Mr Fish Mahlalela  
MECs for Tourism from South Africa's Nine Provinces  
Ethekwini Mayor, Cllr Mxolisi Kaunda  
Members of the Diplomatic Community  
Director General for Tourism, Mr Victor Tharage  
HODs of Provincial and Heads of Tourism Agencies  
Our Moderator for the Dialogue, Ms Poppy Khoza, CEO of the South Africa Civil Aviation Association  
Our panellists, Mr Fouad Caunhye from Qatar Airlines,  
Mr Abel Yifru from Ethiopian Airlines,  
Mr Tebogo Tsimane from South African Airways,  
Mr Dale Woodhouse from Singapore Airlines  
and Mr Wilson Tauro from KLM/Air France  
Members representing the Airline Industry  
Members representing the Tourism Industry in South Africa and Africa  
Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon, Sawubona

Honourable Premier Dube-Ncube, thank you for welcoming us to your beautiful province, home to the Valley of the Thousand Hills. I am sure our guests will experience the warmth of our people while attending Africa's Travel Indaba 2024.

Tourism is a powerful engine for economic growth and development, contributing to job creation, infrastructure development and foreign exchange earnings.

The economic power of tourism is evident not only in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa but also throughout Africa.

Tourism has the potential to jumpstart our economies, alleviate poverty, and foster inclusive and sustainable growth across many sectors.

Between January and March 2024, South Africa welcomed 1.8 million tourist arrivals from the rest of the African continent, representing 74.5% of all arrivals.

One sector intertwined with tourism's sustainable growth is the Airline Industry.

Airlines allow us to see the sunrise at Pereybere Beach in Mauritius with Prime Minister Mr Louis Steven Obeegadoo and the sunset outside the beautiful Santa Isabel Cathedral in Equatorial Guinea with Secretary of State Ms Catalina Martinez Asumu.

But as we know, it is impossible to see both countries on the opposite shores of Africa in one day. We still face challenges in interconnecting our African countries.

So, how do we make it possible? We face headwinds head-on.

With the dialogues we are having today, Tourism and Aviation can make the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and the Yamoussoukro Decision a reality.

We need open and frank discussions to hold each other to account with clear and measurable outputs for all partners.

South Africa's Transport Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga started the conversation last week with the Aviation Summit, and we are continuing it today.

Most of you landed at King Shaka International Airport, which is a testament to how partnerships can tackle pressing issues such as investing in Infrastructure, Promoting Air Connectivity, and making it easier for travellers to reach their destinations.

These are the exact stumbling blocks the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) identifies in its recent report on Opportunities for Africa.

King Shaka International Airport is 14 years old and, despite challenges, remains a beacon of excellence.

Like KwaZulu-Natal Premier Dube-Ncube and the team from Durban Direct will tell you, the work is never done.

The airport is focused on expanding traffic and positioning itself as a destination in its own right. It is continually enhancing facilities and infrastructure and supporting airports in Zambia, Ghana, and many other regions.

Airports Company South Africa (Acsa) will spend R21.7 billion to develop airport infrastructure in South Africa.

So, what is the aim of today's dialogue?

We will have representatives from airlines from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe on the panel, as well as Ms Poppy Khoza, CEO of South Africa's Civil Aviation Authority, to guide us.

I call on African Tourism Ministers in the front row and industry leaders in the room to point out the stumbling blocks and identify concrete solutions so we can create opportunities to grow air connectivity in Africa.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA's) January 2024 report shows globally, in 2023 air traffic was at 94.1% of pre-pandemic levels. Fourth quarter traffic was at 98.2% of 2019, reflecting the strong recovery towards the end of the year.

Despite the growth in global aviation, Africa needs more infrastructure and we have challenges with high operating costs, regulatory barriers, and limited access to financing.

According to recent IATA data, Africa accounts for only a tiny fraction of global air traffic, with intra-African travel representing a mere 20% of total air traffic on the continent.

So, as the rest of the world is poised to make travel more accessible, and essential source markets like China and India are set to increase, we must partner to make it easier to travel to and in Africa.

Now is the time to:

- Rethink development strategies in the tourism sector.
- Encourage strategic public-private partnerships;
- Promote investment in the tourism sector regionally;
- Strengthen regional integration and cooperation;
- and Refocus efforts to implement impactful projects.

Practical examples like the Public-Private Partnership at Skukuza Airport in the Kruger National Park are praised by the World Bank for their innovation.

The management of the airport brings thousands of visitors through Airlink into the national park. Similarly, cooperation in infrastructure at Hoedspruit Airport brings visitors to the northern part of Kruger.

Tourism Departments and Marketing agencies also play a critical role in creating demand for airlines by marketing destinations and routes.

We must be clear what is the role of the Department of Tourism in terms Air Access. It is simply that we want more tourists to travel and to make it easier for tourists to travel on the African continent. The Department of Transport is responsible for regulation and compliance.

South Africa's Department of Tourism is developing plans to better coordinate Air Access marketing from a tourism perspective. The aim is to create a single air access strategy for South Africa.

Currently, provinces like Gauteng Air Access, Cape Town Air Access, and Durban Direct, along with Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), are doing excellent jobs promoting air access to their cities and provinces.

We hope to see a more coordinated approach with organisations like the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) and the Board of Airline Representatives of South Africa (BARSA) and present that to the Cabinet.

Under the International Air Services Act of 1993 of South Africa, the Minister of Transport, with the approval of the State President, enters into bilateral air transport service agreements with other countries.

However, tourism plays an activist role in developing air connectivity for economic benefit and growth. We must constantly ask ourselves what initiatives are in place to improve regional connectivity and foster regional economic growth.

We must also be alive to new international routes and opportunities and adapt quickly to simulate the demand for international routes that will grow our economy.

A good example is Tourist arrivals from the Americas to South Africa, registered at 118,194 from January to March 2024, reflecting a 12.4% growth compared to the same period in 2023.

Recently, BARSA pointed out the urgent need to increase the allowance of flights between South Africa and the United States of America from the current 23 weekly frequencies.

The increase in peak capacity from 17 weekly flights in 2022 to 23 flights in 2023 resulted in a remarkable surge of 220,000 two-way passengers between the two countries, achieving a year-on-year growth rate of 38%.

I am honoured to see Ms Nomveliso Ntanjana, the International Air Services Council Chairperson, here today and look forward to her inputs.

Another success story is how visa waivers between Kenya and South Africa and Ghana and South Africa have provided an ever-growing tourism market with increased air capacity.

I want to hear first-hand from airlines how simplifying visa requirements can have an exponential impact on air connectivity and where the next opportunities are.

Ghana recorded a 249,4% increase in arrivals in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period in 2023, reaching 7,904 from January to March 2024.

I encourage South Africans to also visit Ghana.

Let us honestly discuss the role of government policies in shaping air access in South Africa and Africa. Tell us how government policies can support the growth of the aviation industry while ensuring safety and efficiency.

It is also essential to examine how Africa can leap ahead using technological advances like digital booking platforms, biometric security systems, and sustainable aviation fuels.

It is also essential for the Airline industry to explain the emerging trends of the shift towards less capacity and higher load factors. This is yielding positive outcomes, particularly in terms of higher yields, which bodes well for the financial health of the industry.

But how what is the impact on sustainable tourism growth? I would like to hear about the experiences of airlines and ministers.

I want to share an open secret with the airline industry in the room: Your biggest advocates are sitting in the front row today. Tourism Ministers want to see more flights and more seats filled because that means tourism growth.

So, let's write Africa's next success story through proactive partnerships that are alive to any market changes.

Gather around and start a Pan-African dialogue on air access and sustainable tourism growth.

I thank you.

**ENDS**

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