

Business Events Sector Critical for Tourism Sector Recovery



SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

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“The future for our African continent is bright. It is now time for our country, South Africa, to reclaim our place as an attractive tourism and business events destination,” these are the sentiments of the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela at his post-budget vote industry engagement.

Held at the Century City Convention Centre in Cape Town, the engagement brought together captains of the business events industry to continue collaborations which will see this sector once again contribute fully to not only the economy but to showcase the work that is being done by the business events sector. The COVID-19 pandemic had an adverse impact on tourism, with the African business events industry declining from 13,6 billion US dollars in 2019 and contracted to 3.1 billion US dollars in 2020. It is anticipated that the region will reach pre-pandemic figures by 2024.

“The move by our President to lift the National State of Disaster in April this year, allows the tourism sector to once again contribute fully and meaningfully towards the South African economy and towards job creation. The easing of restrictions on gatherings has already shown to have a positive impact our business events and will provide great reprieve for the South African tourism sector and in turn, the economy,” says Mahlalela.

South African Tourism’s Chief Convention Bureau Officer, Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo emphasised the role of collaborating as a sector as she believes that the business events industry will be the one to reignite the real recovery - and be able to fill up the conference rooms again and bring people to our shores.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made it increasingly important for us as a sector to work together, we will continue to work with the industry to actively seek to develop leads for future business events to ensure that South Africa develops and maintains a bid pipeline for continued growth of the event sector,” says Kotze-Nhlapo.

This stakeholder engagement also showcased some of the work that is being done by the business events industry to ensure a sector recovery which is inclusive. One such project is the RISE project, which is championed by the South African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI) aimed at providing practical events, hospitality, and tourism-related skills training for members of the community who have been placed into a position where they are unable to further their education. The programme allows the participants to gainfully participate in the tourism sector.

“This is a project aimed at utilising the business events industry as a catalyst for social upliftment and in turn providing capacity building and skills transfer for community growth within the identified rural areas,” says SAACI CEO, Glenton de Kock.

Deputy Minister Mahlalela concluded by pledging the government’s continuous commitment to growing the business events industry and is steadfast in its efforts and investment to this sector.

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