



Speaker notes for Deputy Minister of Tourism: Mr. Fish Mahlalela

Occasion: ITB 2023 networking welcome event

Date: Monday 6th of March 2023

Time: 18h00

Venue: South African High Commission – Tiergartenstraße 18 10785 Berlin, Germany

Thank you for the wonderful introduction Ambassador, Ambassador Stone Sizani

- I am delighted that you could all be here and of course, we look forward to a successful and productive few days at ITB.
- I am thrilled to be here in Germany, which is a key source market for us.
- I am delighted with the growth in our international arrivals following the last few difficult years.
- Cumulative arrivals for the January to December 2022 period increased by 152/6.9% to reach close to 5.7 million arrivals when compared to the same period in 2021.
- The total number of arrivals from Europe in this period of 2022 was 900 703.
- Year to date, the sector recovered at 37% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels. Overall forward bookings to South Africa between January and December 2022 are up by 45,5% compared to the same period of last year. The top forward bookings are from Europe and the Americas
- Judging from these numbers, the ground is fertile for us to accelerate growth and win with all our partners in this important market for South African
- To all trade partners, stakeholders and exhibitors, thank you for your support. You work extremely hard to showcase and market our wonderful destination to the world.
- We truly value your contribution in helping to grow our economy and to create employment opportunities for the people of South Africa.
- I am thrilled by the fact that this year we are joined by an even more diverse group of South Africa's product offering including some small businesses. This speaks to our government's commitment of supporting SMMEs.
- This is even more important as more and more; we are seeing a shift in consumer behaviour patterns and in fact what they are looking for.
- We know that travellers are looking for new products and experiences and that they now prefer destinations that practice sustainable and responsible tourism
- In this regard, as South Africa we are so lucky to be home to a diverse spectrum of wildlife and floral species in our country and it's our responsibility to guard and protect these species for future generations to come.
- It is pleasing that we are seeing the 'revenge travel' phenomenon showing that not only South Africans but international leisure and business events delegates are travelling to compensate for the lost time during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- No doubt our country is currently facing some challenges, especially on the perceptions around issues of Safety and Security.

- Of course, many of you, have raised great concerns about safety affecting both citizens and tourists. Without a doubt, the challenges around safety have negatively affected us and in the process undermined our marketing efforts.
- The safety of all citizens and visitors alike is of paramount importance to South Africa and as such is receiving the highest priority from the government.
- The protection of all tourists, the prevention of organised crime and the promotion of sustainable tourism development is immensely important.
- As a government we concede that the impact of crime and violence in any country has adverse effects on the tourism industry.
- Indeed, one incident on any tourist or any South African citizen is one incident too many. Such incidents also perpetuate negative sentiments towards South Africa as a tourism destination.
- Perceptions about safety, security and crime in South Africa present a serious challenge when it comes to promoting our country to attract tourism, trade, and investment.
- It is however encouraging that according to the latest study on South Africa's Brand Performance Trends by South African Tourism's Insights and Analytics team - the perception of South Africa on 'Welcoming people' and 'Safety & Security' has improved significantly, while ratings on 'Suitability' have also improved noticeably.
- We also know that Germans in particular are keenly motivated by 'Scenic beauty' when they choose to travel to South Africa and of course 'Safari experience' still garner much interest from this market and globally as well.
- I would like to reassure you that as government we are fully committed to removing barriers that hinder the growth of our sector.
- We come to ITB 2023 as a powerful team armed with a wide variety of products and experiences and these will certainly go a long way in improving our Brand Appeal and of course contribute to getting more travellers to book to come visit South Africa
- We are a country filled with rich, authentic, unfiltered experiences – from breath-taking beauty, to sun-soaked coasts; from wildlife to active adventure; from vibrant urban energy to the incredible warmth and cultural diversity of our people!
- As we go out there to do business let us embrace the spirit of our GLOBAL LIVE AGAIN campaign and demonstrate to the world that South Africa is the ultimate destination to visit and be re-energised.
- I thank you for your continued input on how as the Ministry of Tourism, we can help better our sector.
- Together we are here as team South Africa, and we must use ITB to tell and to show the world that South Africa is simple the best destination in the world. And we cannot wait to welcome visitors from the Central Europe region.
- I thank you for your continued support and I wish you all a productive and successful ITB 2023.
- Let me thank the team here in Germany for all the hard work they put in, marketing and promoting South Africa to travellers in this region.