

Media Release



SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

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Meetings Africa Advances Africa's business events sector

Johannesburg, South Africa: In the build-up to the 17th edition of Meetings Africa, South African Tourism (SA Tourism) today revealed this strategic show's new look.

Meetings Africa, a gathering of Africa's various stakeholders in the Meeting Incentives Conferences/Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) sector of the burgeoning tourism industry will be held at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa, from 27 February to 01 March 2023. It is set to buzz with conversations while business deals are being clinched.

Speaking at the Meetings Africa 2023 media launch, South African Tourism Acting Chief Executive Officer, Themba Khumalo said: "The entire global tourism sector has been through a really rough time in the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic but we are back with a renewed energy and we are motivated to build and grow our sector to pre-pandemic levels and beyond. Meetings Africa aims to contribute to helping African business events players restart and grow. We want to create opportunities for Africa's business events sector so that we can all grow back more vital than ever before. "Our new look represents this new injection of energy and is an emphasis on the importance that we place on connections."

Stressing that Meetings Africa's single objective is to contribute to Africa's economic success and be part of continent's growth story, Khumalo said South Africa seeks to use Meetings Africa as "a tool to forge even more partnerships by offering various opportunities to meet face-to-face with the most influential buyers in the world."

Meetings Africa has a global, hosted buyer programme that for optimal interaction between buyers and exhibitors. In addition to this, South African Tourism has partnered with all nine provinces to host Meetings Africa familiarization pre and post tours for hosted buyers and media to experience South Africa's business events facilities and establishments.

In keeping with the spirit of renewed energy, this year's Meetings Africa will, for the first time, host the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC) Summit. This Africa chapter of the AIPC Summit was born out of a partnership between the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), a business unit of South African Tourism and the AIPC.

Khumalo said the Summit is critical for the continent, to ensure that Africa's conferencing facilities are on par with those from the rest of the world.

"This Summit will help African venues to benchmark themselves against the global standards, to brand and position themselves based on what people are looking for in an internationally recognized venue," added Khumalo.

To date 275 buyers representing 45 countries have been approved to participate at Meetings Africa 2023, with almost 450 applications being vetted. A total of 305 exhibitors representing 15 African countries are currently registered to showcase their wares this year. Various Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) will also be at Meetings Africa in the development zone.

"Transformation, inclusive economic growth and accelerating job creation are all central to all the work we do at South African Tourism. Providing our small businesses and entrepreneurs an opportunity to also



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interact and engage with hosted buyers is very important because we are serious about harnessing business opportunities both within the African continent and globally,” added Khumalo.

Some favourite events that have, over the years, contributed to the hallmark of this Pan African business events trade show will also return this year. Meetings Africa will be preceded by the Business Opportunity Networking Day (BONDAy) on the 27th of February with the official opening of the trade show taking place on the 28th of February. There will also be a variety of business-driven talks and discussions. This year’s Meetings Africa will also convey the African spirit through music, arts and crafts stalls; a variety of culinary offerings and will be a showcase of various cultures from all the African countries exhibiting at the trade show.

In addition to the launch of the trade show, Khumalo also announced the latest tourism performance numbers highlighting that tourism is a critical contributor to the economy. Cumulative arrivals for the January to November 2022 period increased by 151.9% to reach 5.0 million of arrivals over the same period in 2021. Arrivals in November 2022 were 565 758 arrivals.

The biggest region in terms of real numbers was African Land with a 126.1% increase in arrivals when compared with January to November 2021. The total number of arrivals from Europe in this period of 2022 was 778 222. Arrivals from the Americas increased by 227.0% and represented 285,446 arrivals. Over these eleven months, 2022 has performed better than 2021 but it is still not at the 2019 levels.

On the domestic front, overnight trips from January to November 2022 reached 29.8 million trips, 139.4% over the same period in 2021. Holiday and MICE trips increased in share whilst trips for VFR purposes fell in share.

Total domestic expenditure was R84.2 billion, a 172.4% increase over 2021, and was driven by holiday trips having accounted for 44.3% of total expenditure. Domestic day trips recorded a 173.0% increase or 160.6 million. Day trips spend also showed a phenomenal increase of 174.8% to reach 148.6 billion.

“We remain optimistic for the year ahead both from a business events and leisure tourism perspective and we will continue to use our strategic platforms such as Meetings Africa and Africa’s Travel Indaba in May to promote our country and in so doing contribute to business success and growth” concluded Khumalo

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For further information, contact:

Thandiwe Mathibela

Tel: +2711 895 3177

Email: mediaq@southafrica.net

Email: thandiwe@southafrica.net

Website: www.southafrica.net

Note to editors

South African Tourism is the national tourism agency responsible for the marketing of South Africa as a preferred tourist destination, headed by Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr Themba Khumalo.