



MINISTRY  
TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## **OPENING ADDRESS BY TOURISM MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE AT THE TOURISM BUSINESS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (TBCSA) LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

**7 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi  
Acting Premier of the North West, Nono Maloyi  
Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) Chairperson, Blacky Komani  
TBCSA board members  
TBCSA CEO, Tshifhiwa Tshivhenga  
SA Tourism Interim Board Chairperson, Tim Harris  
Director Generals from the department of Tourism, Transport and Home Affairs  
Statistician-General of South Africa, Risenga Maluleka  
United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Africa Director, Elcia Grandcourt  
Special Advisor to the UNWTO Secretary General, Ms Anita Mendiratta  
CEOs and representatives of Tourism bodies and authorities and government departments  
CEOs and private sector representatives  
Members of the media

Good morning, goeie more, molweni, dumela, sawubona

It is my great pleasure to be with you all at the 2023 TBCSA Leadership Conference under the theme: "Tourism: the engine of growth for South Africa".

I have long since believed in the power of the tourism sector as a key part of our economy and enabler of growth and job creation.

It has been exciting for me to be in this portfolio in the year of the tourism sector rising back from the ashes after the COVID 19 pandemic crippled the industry in 2020 and 2021.

Last year saw the re-emergence of the sector and it has been wonderful to see the growth through statistics and feeling the world of travel come to life and bounce back in 2023.

And I want to take this moment to thank StatsSA for the reliable statistics.

The growth and performance of this sector is thanks to all of you here today and the many other women and men out there right now at our airports, hotels, guest houses, tour companies, tourist attractions, restaurants and at all the many other special offerings our beautiful country has on offer.

I have been blessed and mesmerized to see more of our beautiful country in all provinces, there is always something to admire and revel in.

We are here today, to take hands and act on our collective mission and that is to look forward and break through the barriers that inhibit the growth and potential of tourism in South Africa.

Tourism can indeed be an engine of growth of our economy and it is in fact a key part of our country's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

I would like to share a few key updates on the progress we have made in the Department since March 2023 to do our part as government and that is to create the conditions conducive for investment and job creation by the private sector.

Since day 1 in this portfolio, I have been inundated with requests and I have held engagements with many sector bodies.

I have learnt so much as I am as committed and as excited as ever to work with you all to grow tourism to reach its full potential.

## **DEPARTMENT UPDATES:**

### **THE TOURISM SECTOR RECOVERY PLAN**

This plan was adopted by Cabinet in March 2021 following a collective effort by the Department and many of the private sector stakeholders here today.

When I took office, the President gave me a list of priorities and one of them is to convert the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan into the Tourism Master Plan.

I am pleased to report that following the processes within the Department and further engagement with the private sector, we are taking the Master Plan to Cabinet next Wednesday, 13 September, to seek concurrence from Cabinet to gazette the Master Plan for public comment.

A few days ago, Cabinet also concurred with the gazetting of the Green Paper on Tourism which was published for public comment this past Friday, 1 September.

### **TOURISM EQUITY FUND**

Another important update I can provide is on the Tourism Equity Fund which was stuck as a result of court litigation.

This matter has now been settled and we are taking the TEF framework to Cabinet for approval next Wednesday, 13 September, to unblock this R1.2billion fund to support transformation and growth in the sector in line with existing legislation.

### **NATIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT REGULATOR**

TBCSA's, Blacky and Tshifhiwa met with me on my 4<sup>th</sup> day in office on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March and we tackled this issue immediately.

I met with Minister of Transport, Minister Chikunga, in May to address this issue and she agreed on placing a moratorium on the harassment by law enforcement for tour operators awaiting their license renewals.

I'm happy to report to you that in July this year, Minister Chikunga sent a letter to all MECs for Transport to stop unduly penalising tour operators who have applied for license renewals and are still awaiting their renewed licenses from the department.

There are now around 400 licences that are still waiting to be uplifted.

I want to appeal to tour operator companies, we have not yet uplifted or collected their license to do so and get back to business and I know that SATSA is assisting with this process.

The Department of Tourism will continue to work with the Department of Transport and Operation Vulindlela and all role players to reduce red tape and create a conducive environment for ease of doing business for the sector.

## **VISAS**

The issue of easing the barriers of entry and streamlining the visa process was also a key area that many stakeholders brought to my attention immediately and one of the first meetings I had when I came to this portfolio was with Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Motsoaledi and his team together with TBCSA.

Dr Motsoaledi also shared with me in that meeting a map of the world which demonstrated a vast amount of countries that do not need a visa for periods of between 30 and 90 days to visit South Africa.

We are committed to continuing to work together with Home Affairs on the visa applications process and Minister Motsoaledi will also speak to this later.

## **NATIONAL TOURISM SAFETY**

Criminality and acts of violence perpetrated against local and international tourists is doing untold damage to the tourism industry.

Between 2022 and 2023, we had 2 incidents of tourists that were killed and reported worldwide.

I met with Michael Tollman from TBCSA soon after I came to this portfolio to discuss how we can work together to improve safety concerns.

We assessed what was not implemented as part of the 2018 Tourism Safety Strategy and convened the National Tourism Safety Forum meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May and produced an action plan on how we will enhance tourism safety.

We agreed to meet quarterly and had the second National Tourism Safety meeting on 29 August and reported on the progress made since the meeting in May.

Our next Tourism Safety Forum Meeting will be held in November. The continuous dialogue to track and implement actions on this matter is critical.

We are resolute that collaboration with various stakeholders including the Ministry of Police, will help us forge a comprehensive review of the country's National Tourism Safety Strategy.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS ON TOURISM SAFETY**

Under the auspices of the private sector, last week on 31 August, we launched the tourist safety App called SECURA, which is solely dedicated to tourists' safety nationally.

The Department of Tourism has also awarded the tender for the deployment of 2 200 Tourism Monitors to key tourist areas in all nine provinces in the coming weeks.

The Department has allocated R174.5 million for this financial year for the deployment of the Tourism Monitors.

We have worked with the private sector to revise and improve the training curriculum for tourism monitors which also includes training by the South African Police.

The Department of Tourism also now has a representative on the Stability Priority Committee at NatJoints.

In terms of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the NPA informed the Safety Forum that the President has accented to the legislation on the use of of audio and visual link to present evidence in court.

This entails instituting Virtual Court proceedings, which would allow tourists to be part of the proceedings even if they had left the country before the conclusion of a case, and alternatively tourists could connect through audio-visual link at the South African Missions in their countries of origin.

Amendments have been made to the Criminal Procedure Act.

The Act has been amended to include Section 51 C, which incorporates a provision for witnesses to testify virtually. This section came into effect on 5 August 2022.

Last week, we also received an update from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on the C-More tracking device and how best this technology can be incorporated into the Secura app that has been set up by the TBCSA along with a Tourism Operations Centre to manage all services tourists may need.

The Department of Tourism has also been working with SAPS and has developed tourist safety tips which have a QR-code that allows tourists to scan the tips and have them electronically.

The safety tips have also been incorporated into the MY-SAPS APP for easy access. SAPS indicated that they intend enhancing the features of its APP and are also looking at ways of creating more awareness about the APP.

## **TOURISM ARRIVAL NUMBERS**

Ladies and gentlemen, the latest figures released by StatsSA last week shows continued growth for the sector and we are very grateful for these improvements and the work of StatsSA in this regard.

The arrival figures for January to July this year demonstrate South Africa's rising momentum in the global travel industry is indisputably affirmed.

The numbers speak for themselves. South Africa remains an attractive destination, for both domestic and international travellers. The country draws travelers with its unique blend of nature, culture, and history.

Our goal is to surpass pre-COVID arrival numbers and exceed 10 million arrivals by the end of March 2024 and the numbers thus far are encouraging as we gear up for a bumper summer season.

Spend from international arrivals was R 48 Billion for the period January to June 2023. This is a notable increase from the foreign arrivals spend for January - June 2022 of R21.5billion.

We have also seen an increase in the number of direct flights returning from America, Brazil and China.

## **DOMESTIC TOURISM**

Ladies and gentlemen, domestic tourism is the bedrock of this sector and we must do all we can to continue growing domestic tourism and get locals to explore their own beautiful country.

Domestic tourism has already surpassed pre-Covid levels and we thank South Africans for exploring our country and for their economic contribution to the sector.

This week 4 – 10 September is Travel Week, otherwise known as Sho't Left Week where the industry has come together to offer discounted travel deals to encourage locals to travel.

We have 860 deals or establishments signed up on the Sho't Left platform offering discounts of up to 50% for what we also call the Black Friday of Tourism.

I am so pleased with this is an increase from the number of establishments who offered Sho't Left deals in last year's campaign.

## **SUMMER CAMPAIGN**

To gear up for our busiest season and to get ready to welcome more tourists, on 19 September we will be in the Eastern Cape at the Pabala Nature Reserve to launch the Summer Campaign.

My mission has been clear to go out there and showcase the many amazing hidden gems in the lesser visited provinces.

We launched Tourism Month in the North West at the amazing, black women-owned Thaba Legae Lodge.

I have always believed and now I have seen that there is beauty everywhere and we are blessed to live in the world's most beautiful country.

I don't say that with bias because we have once again been voted as the Best Country by the UK Telegraph Travel publication.

South Africa has long featured in these and other awards as part of top travel destination lists.

I engaged the editor of the Telegraph Travel last week and he was full of praise and said that accolade was all thanks to you, the tourism sector.

The editor agreed with me that I will share important information from the Department about tourism in South Africa for this publication to cover to inform tourists about all the work this sector is doing to enhance their experience in South Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, the warm, funny and welcoming nature of South Africans is our biggest asset. This is one remark I hear by almost every visitor. "The people are so wonderful".

I also experienced this same warmth on my recent visits to the Kruger National Park in Limpopo and Mpumalanaga and in the Northern Cape.

At the Kruger I stayed in a tent in a glamping accommodation at the Nkhambeni Safari Lodge.

At dinner one night, it was so heartwarming to see all the staff in the restaurant go to a table to serenade someone who was celebrating their birthday in true South African style with singing and dancing.

My experience in the Kruger was so special as all I wanted to see was a baby elephant and that was the first animal we saw along with lions, a leopard, hippos and many other beautiful wildlife.

In the Northern Cape, I was in awe of the beauty of the Kalahari as we launched the new Komani San Interpretative Centre, an investment by the Department of Tourism.

This amazing centre, tells a powerful story of the local Komani San people and the centre and exhibition was curated in consultation with the local San community.

I went on a tracking walk one evening with a with an insightful and entertaining local San tracker, Elvis.

Elvis didn't realise it was me and I loved that because he was such a natural delight, kind and warm.

When he saw who I was, then we had more fun as we had dinner under the stars with stargazing, fire dancing and storytelling.

In the Northern Cape, a quaint and beautiful area in Riemvasmaak just drew me in with natural water springs and a local restaurant preparing the best green beans stew, with freshly baked roosterbrood and yummy veggies.

We have a unique offering, we have beauty, luxury, adventure, amazing culinary offerings, deep and interesting history and culture and it's all in the packaging and marketing.

Ladies and gentlemen, times are tough for all sectors and industries but despite the periodic darkness that comes with our current load-shedding status, there's a bright light on the horizon if our latest arrival numbers are anything to go by.

Speaking about loadshedding, as the Department we are proud of the immense benefits our Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP) has brought in recent years.

Through the GTIP, the Department has been able to help tourism establishments across the country to keep the lights on and keep operating despite loadshedding.

Through the GTIP, the Department provides partial funding to tourism establishments to retrofit their facilities with energy and water efficiency technologies to help them to operate optimally despite water and energy constraints and loadshedding.

So far, the department has approved 130 applications for GTIP funding to a total grant value of R76.1million.

The solutions installed or being installed at these approved GTIP applicants' businesses is projected to substantially reduce energy consumption and result in electricity cost savings of between 65% and 80% on the electricity bills of these enterprises.

Those installing water efficiency systems will typically see a reduction of between 30% and 50% in their water consumption.

The support from government for these installations has enabled many businesses to provide an uninterrupted visitor experience.

Ladies and gentlemen, rebuilding the country's economy requires partnerships and collaboration.

Last week, I also signed a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding with global short term rental platform, Airbnb, to collaborate on areas of work to grow the tourism sector.

In a few weeks' time, I will also be signing an MOU with Google to collaborate with them to help promote and market South Africa even more.

I always say that we live in a global village and the world owes us nothing so we must sell ourselves and go out there and make connections that will translate into growth.

In October, I will be hosting the BRICS Tourism Ministers meeting in Cape Town where I look forward to engaging these ministers on how we can strengthen connections and tourism between our countries.

In closing, the participation of the public sector at this TBCSA leadership conference is a living example of the interventions we often talk about, when we say we need bridges between government and the private sector.

Boosting the level of engagement between us to drive a more ambitious vision for the economy, is exactly what we need to enable job creation and fostering the ease of doing business, by building better synergies.

We must do more to aggressively market and promote our destination with one clear message and voice.

We held our first tourism marketing workshop in July and we will be meeting again in October to refine our marketing strategy for the sector as a whole to address the fragmentation of marketing South Africa as a destination.

We need to create one annual calendar of all major events across the country so that we can help tour companies to create packages around these events.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me thank you all for your work and contribution to tourism.

Let's walk the talk together and work as partners to see this sector truly take its place as a key economic sector and job creator.

Thank you all and God Bless

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