



REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM, MR FISH MAHLALELA AT THE NATIONAL TOURISM CAREERS EXPO 2023 GALA DINNER AT NASREC

30 SEPTEMBER 2023.

Programme Director, let me express my honour and privilege to be part of this auspicious gala dinner tonight for the National Tourism Careers Expo (NTCE) 2023.

The theme for this NTCE 2023 is “Tourism Investment for People, Planet and Prosperity,” which acknowledges the overall disruption in the tourism sector brought about by COVID-19 pandemic to provide an opportunity to redefine and recalibrate the direction and narratives of tourism investments for a more sustainable future for the People, the Planet, and prosperity.

This UNWTO, theme highlights the need for more and better-targeted investments for the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN roadmap for a better world by 2030.

There is clearly a need for new and innovative solutions, not just traditional investments that promote and underpin economic growth and productivity.

We are investing in People through education and upskilling, noting that the global tourism workforce will require millions of hospitality graduates annually between now and 2030 and a further 800,000 jobs a year will require specific vocational training.

As a result, we need to invest in people, as they are the foundation of tourism so that all those who wish to be part of the sector have the same opportunities to access quality tourism training, anywhere in the world.

We must also invest in sustainable infrastructure and accelerating green transformation for the sake of our planet. Reducing emissions provides an investment opportunity of \$24.7 trillion in the green buildings sector of emerging market cities by 2030, in which hotels, resorts, and restaurants account for \$1.5 trillion.

In addition, tourism faces a lot more investment opportunities related to new solutions and technologies to decarbonize the sector as well as to ensure climate-resilient infrastructure through adaptation solutions.

Furthermore, we invest in prosperity through innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship. Digitalization and innovation programs are a strategic priority to support particularly young people and women, which are critical to upskill the tourism sector's workforce.

Moreover, the global need to increase investments in programs that support and incentivize entrepreneurship and generate opportunities for innovations are highly needed in the tourism sector.

It therefore becomes imperative that we acknowledge the role of sustainable investments in forging a resilient and inclusive future for tourism.

In the light of the UN Roadmap for a better world by 2030, the urgency for innovative solutions that transcend traditional investments has never been so greater. Tourism extends beyond simply powering economies and creating jobs, it is a formidable force in building cohesive societies.

It facilitates the breaking down of barriers of race, gender and class, thus fostering understanding and nurturing the rich tapestry of our shared humanity.

Our contribution has been invaluable in implementing the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, setting us on a trajectory of accelerated economic growth.

To this end, as we venture further, we must steer our vessel with a compass calibrated towards sustainability.

I must emphasise that green investments play a cardinal role in nurturing a tourism sector that is both economically vibrant and environmentally responsible.

Our vision is clear: to foster a tourism ecosystem where every investment is green, every endeavour nurtures our environment, and every step brings us closer to the Sustainable Development Goals outlined for 2030.

Now is the time to innovate, to think beyond the beaten path, to envision tourist facilities powered by renewable energies, accommodations that are a haven of green architecture, and experiences that enable our guests to leave a green footprint behind.

By investing in green technologies and infrastructures, we not only preserve our exquisite landscapes for generations to come but also spawn new avenues for economic growth and job creation.

As I conclude, this prestigious event provides a platform to interact with our future leaders, game changers, risk takers, future policy makers and nation builders. These are young people with a penchant appetite for learning and growth.

As government, we believe that without education, efforts to provide jobs, better health facilities, water, electricity and other needs, will not be sustained. Indeed, our economy needs relevant skills to be stimulated.

I thank you all.