

**SPEECH BY LN SISULU, MP, MINISTER OF TOURISM ON THE
OCCASION OF THE TOURISM MONTH LAUNCH
4 SEPTEMBER 2022, !KHWATU, WESTERN CAPE**

“Rethinking Tourism: Opportunities Await”

MEC of Finance and Economic Opportunities, Ms Mireille Wenger;

Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee and Select Committee for Tourism;

Westcoast District Mayor, Cllr Roelof Strydom;

Executive Mayor of Swartland Local Municipality, Cllr Harold Cleophas;

Chief Executive Officer of Wesgro, Ms Wrenelle Stander;

Members of the Interim Board of SA Tourism;

Director General, Mr Victor Tharage;

Director General of the Western Cape Government, Dr Harry Malila

Head of Department for Economic Development and Tourism of Western Cape, Mr Velile Dube and Heads of Provincial Departments;

Acting Chief Executive Officer Mr T Khumalo and Executive Management of South African Tourism;

Country Tourism Authorities;

Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) Members;

Industry Associations and the Entire Supply Value Chain for Tourism;

Members of the media, ladies and gentlemen.

TOURISM MONTH

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the launch of Tourism Month, 2022. As a country, we celebrate Tourism Month annually in September, to highlight and bring to the fore the importance of the tourism sector, its contribution to the South African economy and the potential it has to transform the trajectory of our country.

On 27 September, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) celebrates World Tourism Day. This year, World Tourism day is being celebrated under the theme “Rethinking Tourism”. This theme is fitting, as the world over, the tourism sector is being reimagined, following the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This theme is also symbolic because as a sector, the pandemic required us to step back, relook the industry as we know it, and ultimately, see how we rebuild it.

This is also the month that we host our annual domestic campaign, Sho’t Left Travel Week, to encourage South Africans to travel and explore their country at discounted rates. We do this by partnering with tourism trade, to negotiate the best rates for South Africans, making tourism accessible to them.

We are encouraging South Africans to travel domestically to get a better understanding of the affordable, exciting and world class attractions that are available on their own doorstep. It also serves as an opportunity to promote domestic tourism and create a culture of travel amongst South Africans.

Tourism Month is in line with our country’s vision to ignite inclusive economic growth, sustainable job creation, and transformation, which are all critical for our industry and we need to aim to continue with our collective efforts in driving this. This is part of the National Development Plan, which recognises tourism as one of the main drivers of the economy.

Tourism Month aims to generate awareness of the enormous contribution that the tourism industry makes to provincial and national economic growth and job creation.

Framework for Community Participation in Tourism (FCPT)

My Department recently put out the Draft Framework for Community Participation in Tourism (FCPT) for public comments and are in the process of finalising. The FCPT in line with the Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, emphasises the importance of developing and reinforcing domestic, regional, and local tourism that is inclusive and prioritises community well-being. The objective is to ensure that tourism provides maximum benefit to communities where tourism serves as a catalyst. The FCPT's implementation should benefit underdeveloped regions, both urban and rural, as well as previously disadvantaged groups.

The goal of this FCPT is to guide the Department, provincial tourism departments, and other key tourism stakeholders in their efforts to encourage community participation in the tourism sector and, as a result, to increase the positive impact tourism can have on local economic development and community quality of life.

The Framework aims to address the following:

- To increase local economic development linked to Tourism.
- To increase the number of sustainable tourism jobs.
- To increase the percentage of local people employed by tourist activities.
- To increase community or rural resident ownership of tourism related products.
- To increase understanding of the tourism sector and related opportunities.

TOURISM IS RECOVERING

Our international and domestic numbers are increasing gradually, signalling that the sector is well on its way to recovery. It is predicted by the UNWTO that the tourism sector will return to 2019 levels of activity in 2024.

Domestic

South Africans have supported and sustained the tourism sector when the world wasn't coming. Domestic tourism has been leading the sector's recovery and continues to be the cornerstone of our industry. This is as a result of the concerted effort by the tourism sector to place a bigger focus on domestic tourism and the Revenge Tourism I talked about on Thursday when we released the international and domestic tourism statistics for the first six months of 2022.

This recovery is evident in the domestic tourism performance figures for the first half of 2022, with holiday trips increasing tremendously. Domestic travel figures have exceeded 2019 which is really fantastic and in the first half of the year, South Africa recorded over a 100% increase in domestic trips compared to the same period in 2021.

Looking specifically at where we are in the Western Cape, according to Wesgro in its Tourism Research Overview July 2022, the top 5 highest year-on-year growth rates in July 2022 for the Western Cape were recorded for Robben Island, Cango Caves just outside Oudtshoorn, Table Mountain National Park: Boulders, Viljoensdrift River Cruise and Table Mountain Aerial Cableway.

We are also seeing a significant increase in domestic spend. Local demand for travel has surged following the easing of Covid-19 travel restrictions and removal of travel bans. Many of our small tourism businesses that struggled during the travel restrictions benefitted from the spend we are seeing now.

We can all be proud of the domestic tourism performance to date, which is a result of various factors including our marketing efforts and meaningful collaborations with the trade.

I would like to thank all South Africans who continue to heed the call and choose to explore their country. Thank you for contributing meaningfully to sustaining the sector during the most difficult period.

Equally as important as our tourists is each and every destination that forms part of the greater tourism value chain. Our immense gratitude to all those in the tourism and greater hospitality sector who kept their doors open and to ordinary South Africans who came out to support local tourism.

International

Vacation deprivation has led to an upsurge in local, regional and global travel. Following the easing of travel restrictions from our key source markets, we are seeing steady growth in our international arrivals. US and European carriers are also upping their frequencies to Johannesburg and Cape Town as demand to come to South Africa increases.

In the first half of the year, South Africa recorded year-to-date international arrivals of 2.3 million. This is an increase of 147% when compared to the same period in 2021. Africa land markets are still the key driver of arrivals into South Africa, having contributed close to 1.7 million tourist arrivals between January and June 2022. During the same period, January and May 2022, tourist arrivals from the European market increased by 563%, to over 356 000, when compared to the same period in 2021.

Moving Forward

The numbers we are presented on Thursday show unequivocally that there is renewed hope on the horizon. Our visitors are responding positively to our call to come to South Africa and “Live Again”.

During our working visit to Dubai EXPO in December 2021 we held bilateral engagements with potential investors, members of the trade that sell South Africa to the world as well as airline executives. We held a very successful Travel Indaba in May and we are confident that a lot of mutually beneficial business deals will be borne out of Africa’s Travel Indaba.

Through SA Tourism we have since signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Emirates to grow the tourism market in South Africa. We expect this will promote tourism and inbound traffic to South Africa from key markets across the Emirates network.

We are also working on a Memorandum of Understanding with Qatar which will be hosting the World Cup this year as we have been chosen as a hub for the World Cup. The Middle East is a critical market for South Africa so these collaborations will provide ease of access to and from South Africa for travellers from this region and will boost our trade efforts.

South Africa’s experienced aviation industry is flourishing and we are pleased that our national carrier South African Airways is back in the sky.

However the aviation industry is battling headwinds caused by risks including economic downturn, labour shortages and rising cost of jet fuel. We are concerned that this may hamper the rejuvenation of our tourism sector and a few weeks ago

we met with the Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA) to understand the potential risks and how we could assist.

GROWING LOCAL INTEREST IN LOCAL TRAVEL

We can all agree that South Africa is a world in one country – just consider where you were when you woke up this morning and just look around where we are now.

Among the reasons we are here today is to celebrate our own local travel treasures as we pay tribute to the rich heritage that makes us South African. Increasing interest in local travel also brings renewed hope to the tourist industry. Since the travel restrictions were lifted new and seasoned travel enthusiasts are wanting to find out where they can indulge their wanderlust closer to home and looking on-line for ‘things to do’ in cities and small dorpiess across the country.

South Africans are discovering what many international tourists already know - the abundance of rich travel and tour opportunities right on their doorsteps. On Thursday we welcomed in Spring – what better time is there to explore the country. Many decades ago Nelson Mandela disguised himself as a chauffeur, a gardener or a chef, which allowed him to move around the country unnoticed by the apartheid security police, and he went under the name, David Motsamayi and Motsamayi means ‘one who travels’ in Sesotho. Now we are all free to be a David Motsamayi in our newly found freedom following the lifting of travel restrictions. Explore those wide open spaces that South Africa has in rich abundance or visit our villages and small dorpiess throughout the countryside or enjoy a lifestyle event in the crisp clean air.

There are many sporting events coming up which offer the perfect opportunity for a day out or weekend away. The recent Comrades Marathon saw over 13,000 runners who took on the ultimate human race and families, friends and people from

all over the world actually went to attend and support the athletes. Not only does this boost our tourism it is wonderful for the camaraderie and feeling good about our great country.

SHO'T LEFT TRAVEL WEEK

SA Tourism together with the national and provincial tourism departments is working very hard to encourage South Africans to travel domestically to get a better understanding of the affordable, exciting, and world-class attractions that are available on their own doorstep. This is why South African Tourism is running the Sho't Left Travel Week campaign, which encourages South Africans to travel and explore their own backyard through discounted deals.

Most of you would know that 'Sho't left' comes right out of the taxi industry lingo and symbolises that entrepreneurial spirit and let's-do-it culture our tourism and hospitality sector is known for.

Sho't Left Travel Week, dubbed "the Big SA Sale" starts tomorrow, 5 September, and goes all the way to 11 September. The week is packed with great travel deals, with airlines, hotel groups, tour operators and tourist attractions offering discounts of up to 50%. Travel Week deals must be bought during this week but can be redeemed at any other time though this does depend on the partner's terms and conditions.

Sho't Left Travel Week is a robust response to the lack of access and affordability to travel for many South Africans. This initiative was designed to give South Africans access, in a bigger better way, by addressing the affordability challenge they face. This becomes a wonderful incentive especially for first-time travellers looking for new destinations and adventures.

For our trade partners, Sho't Left Travel Week is one of the most significant tourism marketing opportunities in the country. We would like to thank each and every single member of the trade and the various product owners for putting together the incredible packages that have made Sho't Left Travel Week possible once again. Your continued support means that many more South Africans can access their country and they can go out and enjoy it.

Members of the public can access deals through Waze, the Sho't Left map, or by using the price, location, budget, and type filters on the Sho't Left website – and watch the media for more great let's-do-now travel opportunities.

I would like to encourage all South Africans to use this Tourism Month to go out, have fun and explore their surroundings but also to join in the festivities in all nine provinces as we not only celebrate tourism month but Heritage month as well.

To quote the famous author and South African-born, JRR Tolkien,

“May the wind under your wings bear you where the sun sails and the moon walks.”

Let's revive that spirit of adventure and launch those dreams we all have – you will discover something wonderful - that I can guarantee!

I thank you