



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SAACI CONGRESS 2023

DATE: 01ST AUGUST 2023

VENUE: ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK

TIME: 09H00

National Chairperson, Kim Roberts

SAACI CEO, Mr Glenton De Kock

South African Tourism Acting Chief Convention Bureau Officer

Most importantly, Delegates to this Congress

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my pleasure to address you on this occasion of your 36th year of existence. Your Congress provides us as government with fresh determination to renew and strengthen our collaboration with you, for the benefit of our tourism sector as whole and MICE industry in particular.

The theme for this Congress is **“Telling a Fresh Story”**, which focuses on SAACI strategic focus areas of Learning, Growth and Collaboration. We are here to tell and hear exciting fresh stories, recommit ourselves to a new collaboration that will bring growth to the tourism sector.

As a business events industry membership association that is dedicated to the professionalism of the Business Events Industry in Southern Africa, this Congress provides

both members and non-members with the opportunity to engage, share experiences and learn about priority areas such as innovation, design and professional learning opportunities.

The South African business events sector is still recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is so because it was the most hardest hit by lockdowns and restrictions. Even when the movements of people was unlocked, meetings could not take place on full physical scale.

Today, cooperate business and leisure still consider convening meetings through connectivity, leaving the industry with more losses and making the recovery slow. I am however happy that in your Congress, you resolved to work with government to turn around this situation through package offers, meetings incentives and inspiring messaging.

Through research done by our Analytics and Insights team at South African Tourism, we know that the African business events industry went from 13,6 billion US dollars in 2019 and contracted to 3.1 billion US dollars in 2020. Looking ahead, the region is anticipated to reach pre-pandemic figures by 2024.

Looking at our country, Projections show a considerable uptake with figures set to surpass 2019 pre-pandemic values by 2024 at an impressive 7.4 billion US dollars to ultimately reach 10.2 billion US dollars by 2028.

In this spirit, 2022/23 financial year saw South Africa's business event industry since the pandemic host full scale regular business events, and the whole value chain of the industry working again.

It is now time for our country to reclaim our place as an attractive tourism and business events destination.

I am here today to reassure you that government remains fully committed to growing South Africa's business events sector.

But I am also here to say to you that government cannot do it alone. Your partnership is immensely important to us as government.

Let me also thank you for your unwavering support even during the last tough two years when we all had to deal with the recovery of the sector. Your CEO is the most accessible man to work with.

While our government navigated the pandemic and tried to find the best way of protecting not only South African citizens but our visitors too, there were decisions that adversely affected the sector.

Even in your lobbying against these decisions by government you exhibited a common interest for the wellbeing of our people and indeed the livelihood of the sector's businesses.

Air Access is important for South Africa, we need to continue to work together to encourage Airlift investment in Cities outside the Big Metros, to ensure that they benefit from the opportunities of hosting mega events.

It is therefore, so heart-warming that we are seeing more signs of Airline competition as a result of SAA revival and expansion. This brings confidence to the markets.

Seeing Airlines from Africa and across the world resuming travel to South Africa means that we have the means to seamlessly connect people to our destination.

To this end, our plans for the business events sector going forward, are inspired by such significant developments with key airline strategic partnerships in the pipeline and of course collaboration with you, our partners.

We have already heard about some really exciting projects that you are executing and I am quite excited by the prospects and of course impressed by the efforts to using business events in contributing to the economy of the lesser-visited provinces.

Of course we have a Tourism Sector Recovery plan of which the business events industry is a key part of.

As part of the recovery plan, South African Tourism, through its National Association Project drives the development of secondary meetings destination by encouraging local-based associations, federations, and societies to:

- 1) Rotate their national meetings/conferences across South Africa – spreading the economic impact of local meetings and conferences to villages, towns and small dorpiess (VTSD).
- 2) Create bidding opportunities for small dorpiess with the assistance of the provincial and city convention bureaus.
- 3) Assist small dorpiess across South Africa to develop their meeting and conferencing infrastructure by bidding for National Association meetings and conferences.
- 4) Promote tourism experiences (pre- and post-tour packages for delegates and accompanying persons programme) in small dorpiess that can be marketed to delegates by local SMMEs, contributing to domestic tourism.
- 5) Incentivize the procurement of conferencing goods and services from local service providers.

- 6) Create opportunities for communities based in small dorpiess to attend and participate in National Association meetings and conferences as delegates to export earnings for South Africa.

We know that one of the key drivers of economic growth is through a rapid increase in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and this is why we remain truly committed to empowering the smaller businesses and supporting them through providing them with market access through all the business events that we either own or support.

Over and above this, one of the key strategies to maintaining South Africa's position as the number one business events destination in Africa and the Middle East, and to be truly competitive on the international stage, is to focus on business development activities.

Going forward, the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), working with you, will actively seek to develop leads for future business events to ensure that South Africa develops and maintains a bid pipeline for continued growth of the event sector.

For the medium to longer term, the SANCB will continue its focus on demand creation and bid support globally, as it focuses on bids for future MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Trade Exhibitions) within the six focus sectors of the SANCB.

The Netball World Cup is a case in point. We are truly excited to have participated in the packaging of the Bid to Cabinet, which ultimately won against bids of powerful countries such as Germany. We sincerely wish the Protea Girls to bring the trophy home.

We are aware that there are some barriers that South Africa is still contending with and these include safety & security. As government we are working hard to address this problem. The Minister has recently met with Industry stakeholders, you included, to practically operationalize the National Tourism Safety Strategy

But as a country, we have a lot going for us. South Africa prides itself on its countless wonders and experiences. South Africa also offers both delegates and tourists –

affordability, wildlife, beaches, scenic beauty, friendliness, good weather, adventure, history, first world infrastructure and responsible tourism. As we together and individually pitch for hosting of events in our country we should always remember that we have everything that business events delegates are looking for.

Earlier this year, we hosted Meetings Africa which took place from 28th February 2023 to 1st March 2023, at the Sandton Convention Centre. Meetings Africa plays a critical part in South Africa's tourism sector's recovery by focusing on regional buyers aligned with South Africa's Tourism Industry Recovery Plan, which focuses on domestic and regional recovery first.

The show also focused on reintroducing international buyers to our country post pandemic. The business conducted between the buyers and exhibitors will contribute directly to the country's recovery initiatives.

At the beginning of May, Africa's Travel Indaba was hosted at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in KwaZulu-Natal Province.

The show instilled confidence in the City of Durban as a great destination and fantastic host. The City of Durban experienced hotel occupancy rates of over 90 percent, and short term jobs were created during the period.

None of these shows would have been successful without the collective effort of you the people in this room.

As we cast our eyes to the future, I have no doubt our business events sector will grow even bigger and better.

We have a beautiful country and we are destination that offers an extensive variety of breath-taking experiences throughout the year. We have world class and state of the art infrastructure and of course we have great weather all year round and warm welcoming

people. WE have ALL it takes to attract and host big events in a safe manner. I look forward to working with you in implementing the decisions of this Congress, attracting more events, so that we can together contribute to inclusive economic growth and contributing meaningfully to the lives of many South Africans.

I thank you.