

## **Department of Tourism Budget Vote Speech by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Tokozile Xasa, MP**

22 Jul 2014

South Africa is one of the only countries that can boast the diversity of the whole world in one country. Each province has varied and diverse tourism offerings – unique to that place and complementing the other. And like our rainbow nation, we celebrate our unity in diversity! Indeed, we have come a long way since the birth of our democracy.

Twenty years ago, tourism was the eco-tourism playground of the elite. Our destination was known mainly as a safari destination. Visitors only visited the provinces of these destinations. But that soon changed with the birth of our democracy 20 years ago when we opened up South Africa to the world.

And what a debut this has been!

But in order to craft a path forward we can learn much from our experience over the last two decades. We have seen the significant emergence of tourism as a fundamental pillar of the economy, a source of foreign exchange earnings, a job creator, a builder of social cohesion – a sector of hope and opportunity.

We have evolved from desk at a directorate to a stand-alone National Department of Tourism and SA Tourism with a combined budget in excess of R1.6 billion – which should be compared to national government's meagre investment of R81 million in tourism in 1994. Over the two decades, South African Tourism has been transformed from a country - promotion and publicity organisation into a dynamic global destination - marketing organisation with a carefully targeted approach informed by the best available market research.

An area of strength is our successful partnerships with stakeholders including the provinces and municipalities that have improved brand awareness and has enhanced growth in foreign tourist arrivals. Provinces began to market themselves individually and have become synonymous with certain events; Cape Town in the Western Cape is known for the Argus cycle tour and Jazz festival. Durban in KwaZulu-Natal is known for Indaba, Durban July and the Comrades Marathon, Kimberley in the Northern Cape is known for the Kimberly Diamond Cup – formerly known as the Maloof Skateboarding Cup, Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape for the Arts Festival, Bloemfontein in the Free State for the Macufe, Cultural Festival and so on.

The department will host the conference in February 2015, under the theme, “tourism – a catalyst for economic growth, job creation and transformation”. This will allow us to take stock of the progress made since the last gathering in 2013. It will also facilitate dialogue on the role of local government in creating a conducive environment for effective destination development and promotion. The department has worked with provinces and the University of Pretoria to facilitate tourism capacity development for Municipalities. Thus far a total of 46 municipalities from all provinces have undergone the training, both officials and councillors.

We have since interrogated the state of tourism in the nine provinces. Strategic and critical areas for tourism development were identified for support. The support ranges from tourism infrastructure development and nodal and spatial development zones to skills development programmes, service excellence awareness and training, tourism routes development, rural tourism programmes, and strategic niche tourism market development. This includes the development of the rural tourism, cultural tourism and the current development tourism strategies. Successful devolution of these strategies rests

with the provincial and local government structures and we are pleased to boast healthy working relationships.

But the heart of this vibrant industry is its human capital. We have shown that we are not just a destination of note with amazing eco-tourism products, landscape, beaches and wildlife, but we pride ourselves on the warm human experience and rich cultural diversity that makes a visit to South Africa so unforgettable.

With the rapid growth of tourism in a new democratic South Africa, the demand for skilled and a well trained workforce increased. In the mid-1990s tourism was introduced as a subject in the school curriculum and more tertiary institutions introduced diploma and degree courses in tourism and hospitality management. The formation of a tourism sectoral training organisation also led to the development of the Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training Authority (THETA) in 2000, which was subsequently restructured to form the current CATHSSETA (Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority).

The apparent skills gap in the sector as highlighted in the Global Competitiveness Project study led to a partnership with the THETA and the TBCSA, to host a conference on tourism skills development in 2006/7. The conference led to a National Tourism Skills Audit being conducted in 2007, which in turn informed the development of the Tourism Human Resource Development (HRD) strategy. Some of the notable initiatives that flowed from the Tourism HRD strategy include the annual National Tourism Careers Expo (NTCE).

The Eastern Cape will host its last leg of the three years in October and the department together with its partners should review the program to enhance provincial participation and impact. The more recent one is a Tourism and Hospitality Curriculum Evaluation process in partnership with UMALUSI and CATHSSETA towards improving the programmes offered at school level. An opportunity now to invest more on development skills in South Africa – with emphasis on accredited training for employees within the industry.

Domestic Tourism still remains the backbone of our tourism sector and we are determined to promote and enhance domestic tourism and implement strategies to grow this sector. At any given time, three quarters of all tourists in South Africa are South Africans. We are working hard to ensure that travel and tourism becomes attainable for ordinary South Africans and we are thinking innovatively of new ways to ensure that more South African families have access to the places that we have inherited as a nation. Not only should we reap the economic benefits of tourism, we should also be tourists in our own country.

We have risen to our challenges and embraced our opportunities. There will be further opportunities for SMMEs as part of our transformation program through the Social Responsibilities initiative (SRI) and the soon to finalised NDT Incentive Programme. Creating opportunities for development of women is foremost on our agenda. The NDT in partnership with TBCSA will this year host an inaugural conference that will help craft a strategy of moving SA forward through the development and growth of women in this sector. We have positioned this sector as a catalyst that can and is able to create multiplier effects.

We have written a chapter in the good story that is South Africa while we continue to tackle the challenges that face the country. Special appreciation goes to the Honourable Minister, for leadership and guidance, the Chairperson of the Select Committee and Members, the department, SAT as well as the Industry and members of provincial and local government. I would like to conclude by calling on all to continue to grow this industry and work together to move South Africa forward – province by province.

I thank you.

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