



**MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**TOURISM MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE'S SPEECH FOR AFRICA'S
TRAVEL INDABA OPENING CEREMONY**

Theme: UNLIMITED AFRICA:

GROWING AFRICA'S TOURISM ECONOMY"

DATE: 12 MAY 2026

VENUE: DURBAN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

PROTOCOL:

**The President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Cyril
Matamela Ramaphosa**

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Maggie Sotyu;

**All Ministers and Deputy Ministers from the various countries
across Africa and beyond**

**Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Tourism,
Members of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Tourism**

Members of the Select Committee of the NCOP

Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Thami Ntuli

**MEC of Economic Development in the KwaZulu-Natal Province,
Reverend Musa Zondi**

Mayor of Ethekwini, Councillor Cyril Xaba

South African Tourism Board Chair and Board Members;

**Director General at the Department of Tourism, Victor Vele and all
government officials;**

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I stand on the protocol that has already been observed.

Sanibonani, Good Morning, Bon Jour, Assalamu alaykum

- 1. It is in this building, here at the Durban International Convention Centre, that the OAU successor, the African Union, would in July 2002 launch the AU and have its inaugural summit.**
- 2. Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it is because of this history, that Africa's Travel Indaba held every year during Africa Month.**
- 3. In keeping to the ideals of the OAU and the AU, I encourage everyone to co-sign the Africa Travel Indaba pledge which reads as follow "TODAY, WE PLEDGE TO GROW AFRICA'S TOURISM ECONOMY, TO TELL OUR STORIES AND TOGETHER BUILD A BETTER AFRICA AND A BETTER WORLD."**

- 4. Tourism is an economic catalyst, and its impact is life changing.**
- 5. According to the recently released Statistics South Africa Satellite Account, by 2024 the Tourism sector accounted for 954 000 direct jobs and contributed 4,9% to the country's GDP.**
- 6. And with a record breaking 10.5 million international arrivals in 2025, we are no longer speaking recovery we are speaking "growth"**
- 7. It's only through deliberate action, including partnerships that our industry will continue to soar.**
- 8. In 2025, South Africa's cabinet approved the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, which was co-created with private sector, which includes diversifying our tourism offerings.**
- 9. We are already seeing investment in tourism products, including the R24 billion expansion of the V&A Waterfront, R10,5 billion is being injected into Winelands Airport, while here in Kwa Zulu Natal, the R2.1 billion Club Med Beach & Safari resort which opens in July, stands as a bastion of successful Public Private Partnership.**
- 10. These are demonstrations of confidence in South Africa's tourism growth prospects.**

- 11. Mr President, in your state of the Nation Address in February, you instructed us to promote the country's unique cultural, historical and natural attractions.**
- 12. To this end, last month at Africa's southernmost tip Cape Agulhas where the two oceans meet, we handed over the R82 million Cape Agulhas Lighthouse precinct, which among others boasts a 60-seater restaurant, an interpretation centre and visitors' facilities.**
- 13. Meanwhile, in the Free State's Golden Gate Highlands National Park, together with the European Union, more than R120 million was invested to build the Kgodumodumo Dinosaur Interpretation Centre.**
- 14. This is where the world's oldest dinosaur embryo, 200 million years old, was discovered, and since the launch last year in June close to 90 000 people visited the centre.**
- 15. We are not only the cradle of humankind, we are also the cradle of culture.**
- 16. Here in northern KwaZulu Natal, the Department of Tourism invested over R23 million into the rehabilitation and refurbishment of the Bhanga Nek Campsite in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.**

- 17. As the Department of Tourism, we continue to facilitate investments in tourism sector through the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit.**
- 18. During the inaugural summit last year we unveiled 8 projects from both the public and private sectors valued at around R1 billion.**
- 19. In October we will convene the second investment summit and we call on stakeholders in tourism to submit their projects.**
- 20. Delegates, we have also identified MICE, Meetings Incentives Conference Events, a critical job creator.**
- 21. In the 2025/6 financial year, the South African Conventions Bureau put in 100 international MICE bids and secured 52.**
- 22. This is yet another vote of confidence in our world class MICE infrastructure.**
- 23. And after a successful G20 summit, we look forward to hosting the SADC heads of state summit right here in Durban, in August 2026.**
- 24. Then in 2027, we will host the World Economic Forum special meeting as well the Cricket World Cup, together with our neighbours Zimbabwe and Namibia.**

- 25. Once again, together we can grow Africa's Tourism Economy.**
- 26. With the change in traveler trends, this would require a re-evaluation of how we sell our tourism products and what we say about ourselves in Africa.**
- 27. In response, Africa's Travel Indaba will go through a revamp.**
- 28. We are looking for sponsors and partners to journey with us in 2027.**
- 29. To the creatives and stakeholders on the tourism sector, we are calling on you to send your ideas to proposals@southafrica.net.**
- 30. Ladies and gentlemen, let's continue to grow the sector and change our people's lives**
- 31. With over 1 200 exhibitors and 1000 buyers, I wish everyone turbulent free negotiations as we invite the world to Africa.**

THE END