



Media Release

FIRST 100 DAYS BEARS FRUIT FOR TOURISM

Although the newly elected government has been in office for only three months, there are already good indications that the Travel and Tourism industry is getting its fair share of the attention.

In recognition of the changing political landscape in the country and well before the elections, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) hosted Jacob Zuma for lunch with industry leaders earlier this year on 3rd March, with a view of highlighting the economic value of the industry to the ANC. The engagement was also about strengthening the partnership between the Tourism private sector and government while at the same time flagging serious challenges facing the industry which needs to be jointly addressed with government.

Issues raised during the engagement included the need to improve South Africa's air connectivity with the rest of the world, concern around adequate safety and security of tourists, the importance of the role of local government in tourism, infrastructure and tourism signage development, addressing land claims affecting tourism products and attractions as well as transformation within the industry. The private sector used the meeting to also raise the issue of the need to have a dedicated Ministry of Tourism.

"Mmatšatši Marobe, Chief Executive Officer of the TBCSA explains, "The industry felt that the previous structure of the department including environmental affairs was too broad and issues specifically relating to Tourism were often not adequately addressed. With the contribution of tourism to GDP continuing to grow, the latest statistics putting its contribution at 8% - this was surely an industry with great potential to drive economic growth, foreign investment and job creation, hence the requirement for a singularly focused Ministry."

Issued by: Tourism Business Council of South Africa.
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The industry was therefore pleased when President Zuma announced the establishment of the National Department of Tourism after the elections. The first 100 days of the new team at the Tourism Department has been proactive and outward looking. “Sentiment in the industry is very positive and welcoming of the new dedicated ministry, more so that Marthinus van Schalkwyk was retained as the Minister, as he is already familiar with all the issues and role players within the sector and is knowledgeable and experienced in tourism”, Marobe continued.

In keeping with the general outward looking approach from the Presidency, the first 100 days have seen the national department of tourism actively engaging with the tourism industry through a series of road shows and events, and the industry is keen to see this new enthusiasm continue. “We have had excellent open engagements with the Tourism Department and there has been a great deal of input from the private sector on how we would like to see government assist us in supporting the growth of the industry. We would like to see the next 100 days bear some fruit in terms of a workable Booster Plan for the industry and some core pressing issues resolved, particularly around the SETAs and more specifically the Tourism SETA (THETA) and Transport, both from normal tourism transport and Soccer World Cup specific transport issues,” says Marobe.

In keeping with sentiments expressed at the recent Annual General Meeting of the TBCSA, there is also an urgent need for the new government to address the status of SAA – whether it’s a profit making entity “operating without protection or financial support from government” or that it’s “a national carrier that receives monetary and legislative support and in turn invests in routes that support the growth of tourism. We welcome some of the developments within the country’s policing sphere which we hope will bear fruits in addressing the country’s security challenges, and then the announcement of plans to recruit unemployed youths into SAPS - we hope that some of these recruits will be deployed as Tourist Police.

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The overall sentiment within the travel and tourism industry of the government under President Zuma is a positive one with all the indications pointing to a leadership that is committed to improve the lives of South Africans from all walks of life.

This is evidenced in the expanded cabinet with portfolios such as human settlement, rural development and broadened economic portfolios on the one hand while keeping a “sharp eye” on coordinating government planning and monitoring. There is a clear sign that the new leadership is moving forward with a firm understanding of South Africa being a “developmental state” which is in line with the ruling party’s policies.

As one of the leading economic sectors in the country’s developmental agenda, we hope that President Zuma will do like his counterparts in Brazil and Rwanda to lead from the front and continue to support the travel and tourism sector throughout his term in office.

Ends

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Date: 18 August 2009

Editors Note:

The Tourism Business Council of South Africa is the umbrella body for the private sector players in the tourism industry. The council strives to work together with all role-players to create an enabling environment for growth and development of the tourism industry. As ‘the voice’ of the industry, the TBCSA commits itself to ongoing transparent communication and knowledge sharing and encourages and promotes the same in all member representatives.