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Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
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MOOSA OFFICIALLY OPENS BIGGER AND BETTER TOURISM INDABA

The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa, officially opened a bigger and better Tourism Indaba.

Addressing delegates at the International Convention Centre (ICC) this evening, Minister Moosa praised the Indaba as being one of the biggest and greatest tourism exhibitions, with over 1 300 exhibitors and 70 countries participating.

He said Indaba was one of the projects that are contributing towards the realization of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) goals. At the heart of Nepad is a vision for sustainable development of the continent.

This year's Indaba also happens as South Africa celebrates its country's pride in having been chosen to host the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) being held in Johannesburg from August 26 to September 4 this year.

This event - the largest-ever global conference gathering - will provide a privileged platform for South Africa to showcase itself to the world on an unprecedented scale, and Indaba marks the start of this process.

Minister Moosa said the summit, indaba and a whole range of other events have placed South Africa as an emerging "Preferred Destination" to host international conferences.

"It is our view that Tourism Indaba can now aim to become one of the three biggest markets in the world," he said.

The Minister further praised KwaZulu-Natal and Durban for "remarkable work" in promoting the province and the city as a tourism destination, saying that in a short space of time the brand "Kingdom of the Zulu" has become known both domestically and internationally.

The Minister also praised the work done by the South African Tourism management and board in promoting the country: "They are truly making us proud of being South African".

He said South African Tourism continues to play a creative role in growing tourism, one of which will be the launch of e-business tomorrow (Sunday, 12 May), which will be a state-of-the-art database for tourism.

He said tourism is also an important contributor to the growth of the economy, one of which is through the promotion of the growth of small, medium and macro enterprises (SMMEs), as well as the promotion of emerging entrepreneurs and black-owned businesses.

The Minister praised development initiatives such as ETEYA (Emerging Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year Award), whose future has been embraced by the industry, embodied by the vision of the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (FEDHASA).

He also used the occasion to announce a new tourism award that will be established, the Enterprise of the Year award, to be awarded to an enterprise that has done most work in the development of SMMEs.

An impressive 193 small, medium and macro enterprises (SMMEs) are participating in this year's Indaba. A total of 34 SMMEs participated in 2000.

He said while the past six months had seen most of the world's tourism destinations being negatively affected

by the post September 11 terrorist attack in New York, South Africa came out unscathed.

"I am proud to announce that South Africa has defied gravity. The post-September 11 period has seen tourism in South Africa grow".

For instance, there was a 14.5% growth in the number of visitors from Europe and Germany in January this year, compared to the same period last year.

"We are no longer working at becoming world players in tourism, we are world players in tourism," said Minister Moosa.

Minister Moosa urged the international community to support tourism in South Africa and the African continent as a whole.

"I call on the international partners to know that when you promote South Africa and Africa, you are not just doing business.

"You are a partner in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000 which recognised that the biggest developmental challenge facing the world is the development of Africa. You and I and the rest of us are part of making that history," he said.

On Monday, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) will hold a press briefing to outline progress in the preparations for WSSD, launch a handbook on tourism funding for SMMEs, release guidelines on Responsible Tourism and unveil a poster campaign against illegal tour guiding.

For more information on this briefing, please contact the Ministerial spokesperson, Phindile Makwakwa, on 072 216 7062.

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