

SA's business events sector set to surge with Meetings Africa 2024

Meetings Africa 2024 is poised to bring renewed vitality to the business events industry across Africa, simultaneously providing a substantial boost to South Africa's economy. This was the sentiment expressed by Patricia De Lille, South Africa's Tourism Minister, during the media launch of the South African Tourism-owned strategic business event trade show. The launch took place at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg.



Source: Supplied

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Meetings Africa brings hundreds of exhibitors, buyers, and key global business events sector decision-makers under one roof and has become a sought-after platform by exhibitors and buyers alike. With the show attracting thousands of attendees, it is expected to propel the tourism sector's growth forward, capitalising on its robust recovery momentum.

Minister De Lille expressed confidence that this year's show, to be held at the Sandton Convention Centre from 26 to 28 February, will bring even more value to all delegates and the global business events sector.

Propelling tourism growth

"Building from the successes recorded in previous years, Meetings Africa 2024 will no doubt enhance the already upward trajectory of our business events and tourism sector's performance. At this year's event, we anticipate the attendance and participation of more than 350 exhibitors, 350 local and international buyers, over 20 international media and more than 3,000 delegates," said Minister De Lille.

Last year's edition of Meetings Africa contributed a staggering R388,5m to the South African economy, creating and sustaining 753 jobs while also generating significant business deals worth millions of rands for exhibitors.

Emphasising Meetings Africa as a pan-African trade show, Minister De Lille highlighted its critical role in telling the African story and promoting the continent as a premier destination for business events and tourism.

No less than 19 African countries are expected to participate in this year's show as exhibitors will look to showcase their various destinations and products to the strong contingent of international buyers drawn from 52 countries.

De Lille said: "Meetings Africa offers a perfect platform to tell the African story. This is an essential platform for us as Africans to collaborate and present the continent's compelling narrative to global buyers and audiences. Themed *Africa's success built on quality connections*, the event serves as a rallying call for us to champion the African continent as a coveted destination for business events. We must leverage this platform to narrate our compelling story as Africans."



Meetings Africa's BONDay to provide educational sessions for attendees

21 Feb 2020



The Minister emphasised that the economic advantages stemming from hosting the event will extend beyond the host province, Gauteng, and will be felt even in some of the small towns and villages outside the host province. In pursuit of this goal, pre and post-tours have been organised for media and buyers.

These tours showcase lesser-visited destinations in small towns and villages within Gauteng and other provinces. Fostering inclusivity within the sector remains a paramount objective for Meetings Africa. Consequently, a robust emphasis will be placed on enhancing market access for SMMEs, coupled with dedicated efforts in skills development and capacity-building initiatives.

Several activities likely to benefit emerging entrepreneurs and SMMEs have been planned in this regard. These include educational sessions, speed marketing sessions, and a marketplace.

On BONDay, scheduled for the 26 February, participants can engage in educational sessions to foster thought leadership and knowledge sharing and provide insights into global trends and local perspectives.

A speed marketing session will also be featured on the same day, highlighting a diverse range of products for global buyers and media.

Another initiative to enhance market access is the Sustainability Village - a vibrant mini marketplace showcasing products by local craftspeople and entrepreneurs.

As part of the media launch, tourism sector leaders took part in a panel discussion which explored the economic impact of hosting business events. Panellists included Glenton De Kock, the CEO of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI); Sthembiso Dlamini, the CEO of the Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA); Frank Murangwa, the Director of Destination Marketing at the Rwanda Convention Bureau and Septi Bukula, founder of Rendzonetwork.

Harnessing opportunities

During the launch, Minister De Lille underscored the significance of collaboration among African nations to harness opportunities from the fast-growing business events industry. Additionally, the Minister highlighted the tourism sector's potential as an engine for growth and socio-economic development on the continent, emphasising its capacity for job creation.

Between 1 April 2023 to date, the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB), in conjunction with South Africa's business event industry, has sourced and submitted 63 bids to host international meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions in South Africa between 2024 and 2029.

These 63 bids have a combined estimated economic value of R1,205,248,000 and the potential to attract 46,470 international and regional delegates to South Africa during the same period. Of these, South Africa has successfully secured 16 bids (meetings, incentives, and conferences) for the 2023/24 financial year, which is excellent news for the economy.

The successful bids will bring in a total of R71m between 2024 and 2025, as well as attract 2 505 international and regional delegates. The SANCB invested R5,7m for these bid submissions through its bid support programme to attract business events that align with the National Government's development priorities.

The conferences will also help to spread business events across the region, and they will take place in various locations, including Johannesburg, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Cape Town, Sun City, Parys, Skukuza and Potchefstroom.

Murangwa contributed insights into Rwanda's efforts to establish itself as a leading MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination, showcasing the strides the country is making in this direction.

In a closing address Councillor Nomoya Mnisi, MMC for Economic Development at the City of Johannesburg said: "The Joburg Tourism Convention Bureau Team is exploring new horizons and forging partnerships that will redefine our presence in global tourism markets. Our support for local enterprises is unwavering, ensuring that they not only participate but thrive in the dynamic MICE sector. I invite you to be part of this resurgence. Together, let's not just rebuild; let's reimagine, reinvent, and reignite the flame of Joburg's success in the world of business events."

"Gauteng is poised to serve as the stage and place that reinforces better African connections through quality and meaningful meetings. This is not only our strategic intent but an integral part of Growing Gauteng Together through social compacting in our 10 high growth sectors." explained Sthembiso Dlamini, GTA CEO.

The consensus among all participants was clear: the business events industry carries numerous economic benefits, and there was an unanimous agreement on the need for heightened effort and determination in fostering its growth.

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