

Durban joins Future Convention Cities Initiative alliance

By [Suren Naidoo](#)

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Durban has joined an elite group of some of the world's leading convention destinations - including Abu Dhabi, London, San Francisco, Seoul, Sydney and Toronto - under a newly launched alliance dubbed the Future Convention Cities Initiative (FCCI).

The initiative was officially launched at the FCCI First Action Forum in the South Korean capital of Seoul on 21 March 2011, with representatives from all seven member cities present. Durban was represented by James Seymour, CEO of the [Durban KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau](#).



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The FCCI alliance, led by the Seoul Tourism Organisation, was started last July together with three other founding member city tourism bodies, Visit London, Sydney Convention Bureau and Tourism Toronto. It came in the wake of Seoul not being allowed into the [Best Cities Alliance](#) of international convention cities that includes Melbourne and Cape Town.

At the FCCI's recent launch ceremony, Abu Dhabi, Durban and San Francisco's applications to join the new alliance was approved.

Powerful marketing alliance

Seymour said that Durban becoming a member of the powerful marketing alliance of global convention cities was a major business tourism coup. "There is no doubt that destinations of the likes of London, Seoul, Sydney, San Francisco, Abu Dhabi and Toronto have achieved significantly in the realm of business tourism destination management.

"Business tourism is also undoubtedly one of the most extreme forms of relationship marketing that requires alliances such as the FCCI to provide a pool of experience relating to meetings that have already been hosted by its members. This can serve as useful leads and support for the future bids of its members," he said.

"As a new conventions body, the Durban KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau is keen to learn from other leading convention cities... What we learnt about how Seoul goes out of its way to make you feel welcome has really inspired me," added Seymour.

"This membership of FCCI will provide the province with critical insights to improve the current operations of its convention bureau and the broader business tourism community in greater Durban and KwaZulu-Natal," he said.

Inspired

Rohit Talwar, executive director of FCCI and CEO of London-based research house Fast Future, said the launch event highlighted how much could be achieved by major convention cities working together.

"Our First Action Forum brought all of the FCCI members together for the first time, agreeing on a programme of strategic research, exchanging knowledge around key priorities for member cities and sharing expertise with leaders in meetings industry," he said.

"FCCI is a global strategic research and knowledge exchange partnership of the convention bureaux of seven leading cities in the global conventions industry - Abu Dhabi, Durban, London, San Francisco, Seoul, Sydney and Toronto. The alliance is co-ordinated by Fast Future Research - authors of the Convention 2020 study on the future of the meetings industry,"

said Talwar.

"The founding goal of the alliance is to bring together leading future focused cities that want to secure or establish their positioning as leading destinations for key knowledge economy meetings and events," he said.

Positive outcomes had surpassed expectations

Seoul Tourism Organisation CEO Samuel Koo said the positive outcomes from the [of the FCCI](#) had surpassed expectations. "The FCCI cities represent a wonderful cross-section of major players in the world convention industry. Their collective wisdom and teamwork will be vital in further development of the global industry," he said.

KZN Tourism MEC Michael Mabuyakhulu said he was delighted that the Durban KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau's application to join the FCCI alliance was successful. "This will provide us with exposure to the activities of the convention bureaus and possible joint marketing ventures with the cities of Sydney, London, San Francisco, Toronto, Seoul and Abu Dhabi," he said.

"Business tourism has been identified as a major pillar of sustaining tourism, particularly during the low seasons as well as in the current economic climate. As a result, the dedicated Durban KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau was established in July last year. The bureau is a partnership between the provincial government, eThekweni Municipality, Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre and the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry," he said.

Mabuyakhulu said that Durban's membership of FCCI came at an opportune time with the city set to host two of the most high profile international meetings - the International Olympics Committee Congress in July and the huge United Nations COP17 climate change talks in November/December.

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