

SAACI conference opens with good tidings

On Monday, 30 July 2012, Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk announced that South Africa has so far secured more than 200 international conferences over the next five years, when he officially opened the 2012 Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI) congress in Johannesburg.



Van Schalkwyk said this will attract an estimated 300 000 delegates and provide an economic boost of more than R1.6 billion for the economy.

"South Africa is the premier business events destination in Africa and we remain in the top 15 long-haul business event destinations in the world. However, we are striving to compete with the biggest and best business events destinations in the world.

"The global potential is immense. In 2011, 10 000 association meetings rotated worldwide, 6 500 of those were regional - European, American, Asian and African - association meetings and 3 500 international associations meetings. Africa hosted only 304 meetings - mostly international association meetings - and South Africa hosted only 86, still ranking us at number 37 globally.

"Committed to building a competitive destination"

"In 2011, South Africa had 392 000 business travellers, of which 140 000 were pure meetings, incentive, conference and events delegates. According to international trends, up to 40% of business travellers to any destination are such delegates and this figure is one we are aggressively looking to grow. We are committed to building a competitive destination to grow our global market share."

The minister said the newly established South African National Convention Bureau is targeting 81 500 convention delegates and 130 association meetings by 2020, a 5.3% annual growth rate.

"To achieve this, the bureau aims to increase the size of South Africa's business events industry by 57%. It also plans to double the contribution of business events to tourism yield and enhance the role of the business events industry as a major driver of job creation, skills development and transformation.

"The bureau's targets are to support at least 30 bids this year for international meetings, with a potential of 18 000

delegates, which will contribute R162 million in direct economic spend to the economy. It also plans to grow the average number of delegates attending international conventions in South Africa from an estimated 54 000 in 2012 to 78 000 by 2017. Furthermore, it plans to increase the average number of delegates attending business events in South Africa from 145 600 in 2012 to 210 000 by 2017.

"South Africa has proven its credentials"

"By confidently staging major events like the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the United Nations' COP 17 Climate Change Conference, South Africa has proven its credentials to host events of any magnitude. We are well-placed to play host to any local or international meetings, incentive, conference and exhibition event, with world-class business and conference facilities complemented by excellent leisure tourism attractions and hospitable, welcoming, skilled and competent people."

Van Schalkwyk said achieving coordination and cooperation among city and provincial convention bureaus to combine resources for the marketing of South Africa as a premier business events destination is paramount.

"Government is also creating conditions that will help bids to succeed, such as building and enhancing the public infrastructure, enhancing airlift, especially from Africa, streamlining visas, growing our telecommunications capacity and continuing our global leadership in meeting greening requirements that is fast becoming a license to operate if you want to host mega-events, conferences and conventions," he concluded.

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