

Address by Ambassador Xasa at the networking lunch with Tour operators

Venue : Embassy

Date: 24 September 2021

Acknowledgements

Mr Cuthbert Ncube- The Executive Chairman Of Africa Tourism Board (coming from Africa Tourism Summit to share insights beyond SA)

CEOs and Tour Operator Companies Representatives

Mr Moodley and SA Embassy Colleagues

Good Afternoon ! Sanibonani! Bonjour!

South Africa celebrates September as Heritage as well as Tourism Month. As a nation with rich cultural diversity, we celebrate our wealth and endowment, we remember our cultural heritage. I welcome you to South Africa House to celebrate with us and in our conversation , you also share the warmth of South Africa's people and hospitality.

I take this opportunity to make a brief introduction that I joined the Embassy in December 2020. I presented my letters Of Credence to His Majesty King Phillippe in February 2021. South Africa and Belgium share cordial relations based on values of freedom, democracy, and a similar approach to a broad range of international issues, specifically Peace and Security ,the respect for human rights and international law. I was excited when His Majesty ,The King Of the Belgians,at the

Ceremony highlighted among others the importance of Culture, which is part of the mandate of the Mission to promote Cultural Diplomacy, Economic and Political Diplomacy. I hope this will add another product in selling destination South Africa / Africa. South Africa Extended an invitation to His Majesty, King Phillippe, the State Visit is indicated for the second half of 2022. SA will host SA- Belgium Joint Commission, talks are ongoing for the 2nd Diamond Conference that was to be in Durban South Africa- first time in Africa, the 6th SA-Flanders Joint Commission will take in Belgium these high level visits will further solidify the existing relations, strengthen and discuss political, economic, trade and investment, as well as Tourism and cultural matters.

South Africa, like the rest of the world , continue to be affected by the pandemic. We continue to drive efforts in the fight against the pandemic not only in South Africa, but that Our President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa is the AFRICAN Union Champion on the fight against this pandemic.

Vaccination progress- we have administered more than 16.500 (30.12% as at 22September) Country has adjusted many of the regulations so the economy is running- South Africa is open for business.

Vaccination access in Africa continues to be a concern - still about 4% of the total President Ramaphosa ,while addressing the UNGA on 23/09 had this to say “ we urge all member states to support the proposal for a temporary waiver of certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade- Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights to allow more countries, to produce Covid-19 vaccines , further that” in this interconnected world, no country is safe until every country is safe.”

Tourism has been the hardest hit, I'm sure you will share your practical experiences. UNWTO July 2021 report attests to this, with investment and job creation declining significantly. Figures show that international arrivals in 2020 dropped by 73% from the previous year, precipitating an estimated \$1.3 trillion loss in export revenues and threatening up to 120 million direct jobs. It indicates we have a long journey to revive the industry, and only through collaboration we will achieve this. Our statistics indicate 57,232 Belgian tourists to SA in 2019. In 2020- 54,233 further declining to 43,862 by the end of February 2021. These numbers may differ from yours because there are no direct flights. Lockdown restrictions are another concern and have a negative impact. Belgium has a different set of restrictions among its own regions.

SA developed an economic reconstruction and recovery plan (ERRP) in its efforts to rebuild and transform the economy so as to create jobs, reduce inequality and poverty. We want to build an inclusive economic growth. Some of the priority intervention pillars are in infrastructure investment, energy security, tourism recovery growth, the green economy, the Presidential Employment Stimulus, food security, strategic localization and industrialization and export promotion, gender equality and inclusive growth.

TOURISM SECTOR RECOVERY PLAN

Tourism sector has moved ahead , the continued uncertainty about the virus continue to be a threat.

The plan is not just internally looking but incorporates the opening up of Africa as a whole.

Key pillars of the planned interventions are;- To implement norms and standards for safe operation across the tourism value chain; Stimulate domestic demand through targeted initiatives and campaigns; Strengthening the supply-side through resource mobilization and investment facilitation; Support for the protection of core tourism infrastructure and assets; Execute a global marketing program to ignite international demand. Experts like you will help us in this regard.

Tourism Regional integration, and Review the Tourism policy to provide support for sector growth and development. (e-visas, air and transport, skills ,)

SA Africa is a long haul destination. The unique,authentic experiences, the natural endowments, quality, people,and service excellence is what we give to our travelers. All tailored for the travellers choice .

We would wish to work with you and connect you with companies in SA so that we can also ensure two way traffic.

Together we can do more!

I thank you

