

Tourism Minister highlights growth and diversity at Meetings Africa 2024

Minister of Tourism, Patricia de Lille, kicked off the 17th edition of Meetings Africa 2024, on 27 February at the Sandton Convention Centre, emphasising the importance of partnerships and underscoring South Africa's role in the continent's business events industry.



Source: [South Africa National Convention Bureau](#)

In her opening speech, Minister de Lille expressed gratitude to partners such as Gauteng Tourism Authority, the City of Johannesburg, and the Sandton Convention Centre for their support in showcasing South Africa's ability to host major events. She welcomed exhibitors from 21 African countries, including 19 debutants like The Galaxia Group from Egypt, the Mangalis Hotel Group from Cote d'Ivoire, MICE Solutions DMC from Tanzania, and Willch Travel and Tours from Zambia.

"This is a crucial time for South Africa's business events sector. The partnerships formed with various countries, both on and off the African continent, have been instrumental in the successes of the past years."

Minister de Lille highlighted the growth of Meetings Africa, transforming from primarily South African representation to a truly Pan-African show. This year, the event boasts 380 exhibiting companies from 21 African countries, representing a diverse array of products and experiences in the continent's business events industry.

Minister de Lille: "I am delighted to highlight the presence of 380 Exhibiting Companies from 21 African countries at this year's Meetings Africa. I am very proud of that representation of Africa. These exhibitors collectively represent our continent's business events industry echo and showcase our diverse array of products and experiences, offering our unique and abundant choices."

Global industry statistics and African contributions

She shared statistics stating that the global business events industry was valued at \$345.8bn in 2021, projected to reach \$2.1t by 2031. Africa's Business Events for 2023 are estimated at \$12.7bn, with South Africa contributing \$6.4bn.

The Minister continued saying: "According to global economic research, the global business events industry forecast 2017–2028 market was valued at \$345.8bn in 2021 and is projected to reach \$2.1t by 2031. Africa's Business Events for 2023 is estimated at \$12,7bn or R240bn while South Africa's Business Events for 2023 is estimated at \$6,4bn or R121bn."

The Minister assured international buyers that Meetings Africa offers the best business events products and services in Africa, with 63 countries represented among the buyers, fostering collaboration and partnerships beyond the continent.

Minister de Lille added: "To all our buyers from various parts of the world, we guarantee you that here at Meetings Africa you will get to meet and collaborate with the best business events products and services that Africa has to offer."

On the arrivals front, she noted a 48.9% increase in international tourist arrivals in South Africa, totalling 8.5 million in 2023, with 75.6% coming from the rest of the African continent.



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

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The Minister continued: "The recent official release of international arrival figures by Statistics South Africa for the period January to December 2023 underscores the rising momentum of South Africa's tourism sector.

"International tourist arrivals totalled 8.5 million from January to December 2023 representing a remarkable 48.9% increase when compared with the same period in 2022. The Lion's share of this number is made up of the 6.4 million visitors from the rest of the African continent that South Africa welcomed during this period, marking a significant 75.6% of all arrivals."

Highlighting the success of securing bids for MICE events, Minister de Lille announced that South Africa secured 40 bids for the 2022/23 financial year, contributing R338m between 2023 and 2025. For the 2023/24 financial year, 95 bids were submitted with an estimated economic value of R1.5bn, winning 19 bids so far.

Minister de Lille: "On the business events front – over the past year, the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), together with its partners, has worked extensively to secure international and local bids to our shores. South Africa successfully secured 40 bids for the 2022/23 financial year. This is excellent news for the economy as it will contribute R338m between 2023 and 2025 and attract more than 16,000 international and regional delegates."

Reflecting on Meetings Africa 2023, Minister de Lille stated that it contributed a staggering R388.5m to South Africa's economy, creating and sustaining 753 jobs. She praised the success of the 2024 Future Leaders Forum, won by Hloholo Zwane, emphasising the importance of the business events industry for young people.

"Talking about successes, let us briefly reflect on last year's Meetings Africa as we look to grow and surpass last year's standards. Meetings Africa 2023 contributed a staggering R388.5m to the economy of South Africa, creating and

sustaining 753 jobs and generating significant business deals," the Minister continued.

Economic support and sustainability

Minister de Lille concluded by underlining the economic support and sustainability focus on Meetings Africa, encouraging attendees to visit the Sustainability Village and support local businesses. She announced an upcoming global campaign to revolutionise the marketing of MICE tourism, emphasising that South Africa is open for business and ready to collaborate.

Minister de Lille said: "Ladies and gentlemen, let me say: as South Africa: we are open for tourism, and we are open for business events. Our challenges do not define our potential, our ability to lead in key business sectors, or our capacity to innovate and host global MICE events."

The Minister thanked all participants and invited them to make the most of the collaboration, learning, networking, and business opportunities over the next two days at Meetings Africa 2024.

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