

Meetings Africa: A collaborative affair

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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It is imperative for the continent's countries to work together to secure business events. Yet in 2014 out of the 124 meetings hosted as a country only 13 were association meetings from Africa, yet there are 200 associations throughout the continent.



This is problematic says Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, chief convention bureau officer at the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), the unit of South African Tourism that hosts Meetings Africa. "African associations need to rotate their meetings across the continent."

She was addressing the media and stakeholders at the launch of the 11th edition of Meetings Africa. With less than 24 days go, Meetings Africa 2016 is scheduled to take place later this month, from 22 to 24 February in Sandton. The event, which brings together business leaders of the continent with international buyers from across the globe, is a great platform to showcase the continent, with South Africa recognised as a big player in the business events sector.

According to acting chief executive officer at South African Tourism, Sthembiso Dlamini, last year the event hosted 178 buyers and 200 media with 270 exhibitors from 30 countries with over 1500 visitors. "We have no doubt that we will surpass these numbers this year."

She added they have been very pleased with the growth of the event over the years. "The business events industry is a great driver of economic development and going forward our goal is to foster collaboration so the event grows Africa as a key destination for business meetings, events and conferences. Hence our theme this year is Advancing Africa Together."

Kotze-Nhlapo added to this saying that the theme could not be more fitting. "We want the continent to help itself. As the SANCB we want to encourage investment on the continent."

One such initiative is the African Society of Association Executives (AfSAE), which will officially open its doors in Johannesburg office on 21 February. She explains that the Association was launched at Meetings Africa last year to encourage meetings to be held and rotated across the continent and thus benefitting the African economy.

She says that when we think of Africa, we think of someone is innovative. "I hope that this will be reflected in the exciting programme we have lined up for the event this year."

The first of these, and a first for South Africa and Africa is the hosting of the European Cities Market (ECM) Summer School just prior to Meetings Africa, in Cape Town, from 19 to 21 February. This is the first ECM Summer School to take place outside of Europe. It will cover topics and subjects aimed at improving South Africa's global competitiveness and will showcase the most up-to-date trends in the meetings industry.

It is a worldwide trend that trade shows are so much more than just the business happening; today it is also about education, skills transfer and economic development says Kotze-Nhlapo.

At the launch Dlamini also announced that SA tourism is looking to work with a strategic partner. "We are a government organisation, not an exhibitor. An announcement will be made in May around this," says Dlamini.

Events at Meetings Africa 2016

Monday, 22 February

The first official day of the actual trade show, known as BONDday (Business Opportunities Networking Day), designed to equip the industry, providing educational sessions for them to learn news trends and therefore further their business. BONDday is also about networking.

Other events on BONDday include:

- IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leader Forum Africa
- AIPC Africa Summit
- The Business Events Associations Joint Conference
- Event Greening Forum AGM
- Corporate Business to Business Speed Marketing Sessions

- Local Corporate Buyer Event

Tuesday, 23 February

The official opening of the event by Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom, followed by his address and a panel discussion where the impact of a country's image on its business events industry

The final day of Meetings Africa features the Green stand Awards ceremony for the top green stands.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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