

# SA propels MICE industry, adopts bidding support programme

IBTM World, which took place between 28 - 30 November 2017 in Barcelona, saw South Africa's deputy minister of tourism, Elizabeth Thabethe announce a delegate-boosting plan that seeks to broaden the variety of tourism products on the market, to propel the country's business events industry forward.



Image via [IBTMWorld](#)

During the event, the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCb), a business unit of South African Tourism emphasised that South Africa – and Africa – is “open for business and on an accelerated drive to increase our share of the global business events pie.”

Thabethe explained that this drive entails bringing more high-value business events delegates to South Africa, aiding economic growth and sustaining much-needed jobs throughout the broader tourism economy – this excludes the contribution that such events make to the local knowledge economy.

## Aiding South Africa’s economic growth

Announcing the results of a three-year study into South Africa’s business events industry, Thabethe said South Africa hosts about a million business delegates every year and that the local events industry sustains more than 250,000 jobs, directly and indirectly.

She revealed that the business events industry contributes R115bn to South Africa's gross domestic product every year.

"This research proves what our industry has always suspected – that South Africa's business events industry contributes significantly to our broader tourism economy," said Thabethe.

More importantly, she added, the study shows that delegates have an appetite to experience South Africa's leisure attractions and that most have the disposable income to enjoy an extended holiday add-on to their business trip.

"Armed with this research, we want to entice business events delegates to come to South Africa, stay for longer and bring people with them.

"To help achieve this tourism growth, the South African government has allocated R90m for a bidding support programme to enable South Africa to bid more aggressively for international association conferences, meetings, incentives and exhibitions over the next three years. This grant will give South Africa "extra muscle" to lobby for and attract big-ticket events," added Thabethe.

## **MICE and growing destination travel**

The country is already widely regarded as a "go-to" destination for hosting international conferences, particularly in the medical and scientific field – last year's International Aids Conference being a case in point.

"Such high-profile events are putting South Africa on the map as an exciting and cost-effective option for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions. We have all the infrastructure, technical capacity, expertise and experience that's needed, not to mention extremely welcome, service-oriented and capable people. But more needs to be done for the country's business events sector to reach its full potential," said Thabethe.

As part of the programme, the SANCB is spearheading a global delegate-boosting campaign, targeting members of the association conferences that are already confirmed to take place in South Africa over the next five years.

"We have already started reaping the rewards of this fund," said Thabethe, revealing that since April, the SANCB had submitted 54 bids that could potentially contribute R1.6bn to the economy, attract 57,660 delegates and generate more than 214 combined conference days."

She noted that each time a blue-chip international event was hosted in South Africa, it not only added to the country's prestige, "It also delivers important socio-economic benefits to our people, which is why Africa is the best place to bring your next business event, meeting or conference."

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