

# Government places tourism high on its agenda

Tourism Deputy Minister Fish Mahlalela says government places tourism high on its agenda for sustainable growth and job creation.



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"The South African government to date, signed a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreements with 27 countries across the globe, and continue to negotiate others with the aim to strengthen bilateral relations in the field of tourism," Mahlalela said.

Speaking at the official opening of the three-day Tourism Best Practice workshop currently underway in Kempton Park, near Johannesburg, attended by international delegates, Mahlalela said the potential of economic growth and development related to the tourism sector are fully recognised at both the continental and international levels.

"In the African context, the tourism sector is confronted with a number of issues, not only in its long-term development and prosperity, but also in the strategic orientation including dealing with issues such as safety and security, as well as health challenges.

"It is important to develop a tourism action plan with the view to optimize the role of tourism as an engine and catalyst for economic development and growth in Africa, through the establishment of a conducive environment, regional cooperation advocacy and stakeholder participation," Mahlalela said.

Mahlalela told delegates attending the workshop that as experts in the sector, they need to respond to the needs and be innovative and strategic in ways to develop Africa as a destination tapping into various attractions across the continent without creating unfair competition.

He said in South Africa, the Tourism Grading Council is the only officially recognised quality assurance body for tourism products, in terms of the Tourism Act 3 of 2014.

"The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) operates as a business unit of South African Tourism (SAT) and is the only recognised and globally credible quality assurance body for tourism in our country," he said.

The TGCSA recently announced that the new and revised grading standards for South Africa were approved by the Minister of Tourism and implemented as of 1 April 2019.

The new grading criteria include the introduction of three new categories in the form of apartment hotels and small hotels, in which the luxury form (boutique hotels) would be incorporated.

Held under the theme *Quality Assurance-the integrated approach*, the workshop will facilitate dialogue and an exchange of best practices in the area of grading and classification.

The objective of the workshop is to encourage countries to utilise grading and classification systems to give consistency to the quality image of a sub-region, to meet the demand of the market and to facilitate exchanges and rapprochement between sub-regional systems.

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