



an agency of the  
Department of Arts and Culture



## **SPEECH FOR THE CEO AT INTERNATIONAL TOUR GUIDE DAY**

### Salutation

1. The Honourable Deputy Minister of National Department of Tourism
2. National Department of Tourism officials here present
3. Tour Guides, our important Guests
4. Conference facilitators, media, the,
5. Partners for the event
6. Ladies and Gentlemen

Honourable Deputy Minister I wish to welcome you to the International Tour Guide Conference, more importantly to Robben Island Museum. This conference, Honourable Deputy Minister, would not have come at a better time than now. This conference has come at a time RIM is celebrating 20 years of existence as a Museum.

Honourable Deputy Minister, Robben Island Museum is a national museum and World Heritage site. It symbolizes a society which after centuries of Banishment; Forced labour; Imprisonment; Isolation and Discrimination, freed itself to realize the dream of a democratic and just society.

It's cultural and natural aspects, vistas and the memories it holds, bear eloquent testimony to the physical and psychological hardships endured by those held on the island during centuries of colonialism and apartheid. Yet it is the resilience, struggle and fighting spirit of the people of South Africa interwoven with those of Africa and the world, and the triumph of liberation and democracy that constitute Robben Island's Universal significance as a World Heritage site

For the last twenty years, Honourable Deputy Minister, RIM has made tremendous achievements in the area of research, conservation, governance and sustainable tourism. One of the consistent element of tourism is our tour guiding services which blends the Ex Political Prisoners (who serve as Prison Guides) and General Guides.

There's no denying the important role that the tour guiding services play in informing society and communities about the history of the heritage sites around the world. Specific to Robben Island is the immeasurable sacrifice of EPP who were willing to come back to the place of their incarceration to tell their experiences. In life when you go through such a difficult experience, you would want to quickly forget about and move on with your life. The EPP who serve as Prison Guides are living testimonies of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace building in our nation.

Honourable Deputy Minister, forgiveness and reconciliation are pinnacles of peace and development for a nation ravaged by Apartheid. As such the Prison Guides have become inseparable from their ambassadorial role in uniting a nation once racially divided according to the colour of skin. Their life stories, are inseparable from the history of this nation.

As we celebrate the International Tour Guide Day during these two days; we acknowledge and appreciate the role that the tour guides play in keeping our history alive at Robben Island World heritage site. We also acknowledge the inevitable fact that we may not have the EPP as Tour Guides due to natural attrition. It is important that their individual and collective social memories are passed on to young generations who must carry the baton of reconciliation and social cohesion in our country. This process requires working together with EPP in transferring their life history to new Guides. As of 2016, RIM started introducing a young generation of guides shadowing our EPPs and in some instances throwing them into the deep end to ascertain whether they have mastered the social memory of the island.

Honourable, we have also ensured our Tour Guiding team receives training to standardise our narrative and presentation approach, but without killing the individual creativity in interfacing with Tourists. It is in this context that a relationship with

National Department of Tourism developed across our programmes as informed by the Intergrated Conservation Management Plans. Allow me at this point in time Honourable Deputy Minister to thank NDT for their generous support aimed at improving visitor experience at Robben Island. We have recently introduced intensive monitoring of tour guides through both internal mechanism and independent players. The idea is not to punish any Tour Guide but to find areas where they need up streaming in terms of content and skills.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Robben Island is not unique from other heritage sites in South Africa in the sense that research is needed to enhance the narrative offered to the public. RIM has prioritised documenting individual stories of EPP who served their sentences at Robben Island. The EPPs, who are Prison Guides, will be central in this process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme of the Conference “Peace and Development through Guiding” is a current and relevant topic. Africa at large, South Africa included, has a dream of sustainable socio-economic development driven by people of Africa. Guiding should become a catalyst for influencing positive thinking and mentality on African being a recognised force from a global scale. Lets use Guiding as a mouthpiece for peace and development in our country. Guiding has the power to influence generations and generations.

I hope that all activities to be undertaken in the two days will build capacity and celebrate the work done in Tour Guiding, including chatting the way in which Tour Guides will become ambassadors of Peace and Development on a continent ravaged by colonialism. We can longer live in the past and if we choose to do so, we must be full aware that we will miss opportunities that come with promoting peace and development

All we need to do is to equip ourselves with the right skills through these sessions and to continuously ensure Peace and Development through Guiding.

Once more welcome to Robben Island Ladies and Gentlemen, and thank you.