

**Address by Tourism Deputy Minister Tokozile Xasa at the International
Tourist Guides' Day celebrations on Robben Island, Cape Town.**

3 March 2017

Programme Director,

Minister Derek Hanekom,

Senior Government Officials present here today,

Stakeholders of the Hospitality and Tourism industry,

Members of the media present,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I swell with pride every time I have an opportunity to address the tour guiding fraternity as tourist guides are among those who are at the coalface of where services are delivered in the tourism industry.

The International Tourist Guiding Day celebrations thus seek to honour and celebrate the work that you do and also share experiences as well as challenges.

Since the 2010 Soccer World Cup took place in South Africa, there has been a noted increase in the number of people registering as tourist guides and this can only spell good news for the sector as it says more people are interested in the industry. There have however been challenges as well. One of the biggest challenges has been the alarming number of illegal guides that are also operating in the sector. At such gatherings, one of the issues that always comes up as a topic is the professionalization of the guiding sector.

To address this, Provincial registrars have developed and put in place a number of initiatives aimed at training individuals as tourist guides. This is done to create opportunities particularly for the previously disadvantaged to also gain a footing in the sector.

Another challenge has been the relatively weak or lack of enforcement when it comes to legislation that applies to the sector. This issues is receiving attention from the Department. The good news is that between 2010 and 2016, there has been a 26, 42% growth in the number of people registered as guides with the numbers swelling from 8 657 individuals to 11 767 by the end of the 2015/16 financial year.

The challenge has however been the lack of geographic spread in terms of tourist guide registrations with the Western Cape, Gauteng and Mpumalanga making up the lion's share of registered tourist guides in the country as they account for over 70% of the total registered guides in the country.

At the end of the previous financial year, the Western Cape had 3 501 registered tourist guides followed by Gauteng with 3 330 and Mpumalanga with 2 140 respectively. It should however be noted that these figures are not necessarily indicative of the actual concentration of guiding activities in the country because tourist guiding activities are determined by qualifications and not the province where they are registered as guides.

Talking about qualifications and knowledge, we also have a situation where there is no transferring of skills from older tourist guides to the younger generation. The Department has come up with three skills development programmes to better capacitate tourist guides. These programmes are aimed at improving the services currently rendered by tourist guides throughout South Africa.

The focus of these programmes is upskilling and improving the services of tourist guides at all 8 World Heritage Sites in the country as these are among South Africa's biggest drawcards and upskilling them will ensure that the knowledge and quality of tourist guides at the World Heritage Sites is of a very high standard as this will in turn attract more visitors to the country.

At Maropeng 13 tourist guides have been trained and upskilled from NQF 2 site guides to NQF 4 provincial guides while an additional 9 individuals are undergoing training as NQF 2 site guides. At iSimangaliso Wetland Park, 50 tourist guides are being upskilled with some upskilled from NQF 2 site guides to NQF 4 provincial guides while others will be upskilled on the content and interpretation of the park. Another programme the department is focused on is the identification of suitable candidates to be trained in the field of tourist guiding and it is here that a number of disparities were identified with regards to the competency levels of guides as well as race, gender and age.

We are also in the process of developing a framework to guide the implementation of the Continuous Professional Development programme for tourist guides. The CPD programme is aimed at assisting tourist guides to maintain and acquire new and updated levels of knowledge and skills. This will obviously further enhance their service levels. Section 49 of the Tourism Act which relates to the appointment of provincial registrars, is important as it provides the basis for all guiding functions to be implemented at the provinces. These registrars must be appointed by the respective Tourism MEC's. It is these provincial registrars that deal with complaints, disciplinary hearings and disqualifications on matters pertaining to non-compliance.

We are excited that as the South African government we have excellent relations with our neighbours in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as tourists to the region sometimes cross borders into neighbouring countries. On this front, the National Department of Tourism participates in a number of multilateral tourism forums which seek to strengthen the tourism economy across the region.

Lastly I want to talk about the tourist guiding app which, in terms of the Tourism Act, will also be used as a central database of tourist guides registered by the provincial registrars. This will essentially be used to publish and disseminate information about tourist guides, associations of guides and

important information to promote and develop the tourist guiding sector nationally. The App will also help the user to verify the status of their guide while one can also book tourist guides based on their needs. As a Department we are working hard to ensure that we attract the right people as tourist guides and also improve the quality of existing tourist guides and that we have seen a steady increase in registrations is already a step in the right direction

I thank you