

SPEECH BY MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK , MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM, AT THE TFCA INVESTMENT CONFERENCE, SANDTON SUN HOTEL, JOHANNESBURG, TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2008

INTRODUCTION

As we gather here today, recent news events such as the worldwide financial crisis have reminded us of our fragility and emphasised the interconnected nature of the world we live in and the inextricable bonds between people, systems and environments. We have again seen that no country, industry or market can consider itself insulated from the financial tides that sweep the globe. But even as we contemplate our vulnerability, new opportunities are arising.

OPPORTUNITIES

One such a case in point is the initiative to create Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) across southern Africa. It connects countries and ecosystems and unites us in our vision of achieving conservation goals and promoting biodiversity whilst also sharing tourism benefits.

Significant progress has therefore been made, but unfortunately tourism growth in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region is not yet near the levels that I believe it has the potential to achieve.

Two factors in particular have hindered tourism growth, namely a shortage of well-packaged and bankable projects and limited awareness in the investment community about existing tourism opportunities in the region.

The aim of this conference is therefore to raise awareness of the region's significant investment potential and market a portfolio of unique, packaged tourism investment opportunities in the seven existing TFCAs, which are /Ai-/Ais/Richtersveld, Kgalagadi, Kavango Zambezi, Limpopo-Shashe, Great Limpopo, Lubombo and Maloti Drakensberg.

The nine (SADC) countries which are part of the initiative have therefore been working together to build a pipeline of bankable projects and embark on joint investment promotion efforts.

I am pleased to announce today that this has culminated in a portfolio of projects we are extremely proud of. You will at this conference be presented with a catalogue featuring a total of 51 investment opportunities which offers over 5 000 beds. The estimated value of the investment opportunities is R785 million.

These opportunities range from rustic to five star luxury accommodation facilities. They include conference facilities, ski-resorts and a golf estate in Royal Jozini. The bulk of the products are in the mid-range category of accommodation and opportunities include three and four star lodges, house boats and hotels. The opportunities on offer feature a mix of new facilities and existing ones that need to be refurbished and upgraded.

The investment promotion programme is aimed at unlocking investment potential in our region. The catalogue features ten opportunities in Botswana, ten in Lesotho, eleven in Mozambique, two in Namibia, seven in Swaziland, four in Zambia, four in Zimbabwe, two in Angola and two in South

Africa. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the respective Ministers from the region for their exceptional cooperation and inputs to make this project a resounding success, as well as all the senior officials who took up this challenge.

2010 & ACHIEVEMENTS

We believe that investment in tourism facilities and services will unlock the tremendous potential of the industry to address current regional development needs. One of the aims of the TFCA strategy is to use the 2010 Soccer World Cup as a launching pad to brand and develop the region as a preferred tourism and investment destination.

This led to the launch earlier this year of the Boundless Southern Africa brand, which will consolidate the marketing efforts of the TFCAs. Boundless Southern Africa as a brand will strategically unite the region through a passion for nature, culture and community and package our exceptional tourism offerings. After all, many of the region's most exhilarating and famous attractions, such as the Victoria Falls, Okavango Delta and Fish River Canyon, are located in TFCAs.

Over the past two years we have also worked hard to provide tourists with better and more convenient tourist access facilities in some of our TFCAs. These include:

1. The Giryondo Tourist Access Facility in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which has seen approximately 54 700 tourists passing through the facility since its opening in August 2006;
2. Mata Mata, which opens up access to Namibia through the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, and through which about 6 000 tourists have already passed since October 2007; and
3. Sendelingsdrift in the !Ai-!Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, which since its opening in October 2007 has had about 5 000 visitors passing through the facility.

I believe these efforts will not only maximise the tourism potential of our amazing region, but also help to stimulating economic growth. As such, we are therefore gathered here today to embark on an exciting investment promotion journey of which the long-term benefits will echo through the region far beyond 2010.

CONCLUSION

I trust that investors gathered here today share our philosophy that emphasises the importance of a healthy relationship between nature, commerce, culture and community. I trust that your participation in this conference will be rewarding and would like to thank you for your attendance.

Without partnerships and investment, conservation cannot benefit those whose survival is dependent on it. Let us therefore work together to create new opportunities that utilise the unique offerings in our region. Let us take delight in the connections between us and focus our collective creativity, ingenuity and passion on sharing the treasures of our beautiful region with the rest of the world. Let us remember that in the face of change and uncertainty, the ties that bind us make us stronger than we could ever hope to be on our own.

I thank you.

Media Enquiries: Leonore Beukes - 082 921 1126
Ronel Bester - 083 242 7763