

MEDIA STATEMENT

ATTENTION: EDITORS/REPORTERS

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PREMIER NTULI AND MEC ZONDI LEAD A SUCCESSFUL 2025 PROVINCIAL TOURISM CONFERENCE

The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Honourable Thamsanqa Ntuli, together with the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi, today, 07 November 2025, led the 2025 Provincial Tourism Conference, a landmark gathering of government leaders, tourism stakeholders and business representatives aimed at repositioning KwaZulu-Natal as South Africa's leading tourism destination.

Hosted under the theme "Tourism in Transition: Confronting Challenges, Cultivating Tomorrow, Connecting Through Collaboration," the conference took place at Coastlands Umhlanga Hotel, marking the first integrated provincial tourism engagement of the 7th Administration.

In his keynote address, Premier Ntuli underscored tourism's central role in KwaZulu-Natal's economic transformation, job creation and community empowerment. He described tourism as "the living expression of our economic geography" connecting rural landscapes to global markets and transforming natural and cultural assets into livelihoods.

The Premier highlighted that KwaZulu-Natal recorded 2.4 million overnight trips in the second quarter of 2025, a 134% increase from the previous year, reflecting renewed confidence and hope in the province's tourism brand. He further called for sustainable Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to drive infrastructure renewal, safety, service excellence and air route development, noting that "tourism must be government-led, private-sector-driven, and community-based."

Premier Ntuli also proposed the establishment of Municipal Tourism Development Funds to empower local government to actively support tourism initiatives, enhance service delivery, and integrate tourism into Local Economic Development (LED) and Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). He further urged municipalities to strengthen partnerships with Community Tourism Organisations (CTOs), ensuring that community-based tourism becomes a pillar of inclusive economic growth.

In his remarks, MEC Zondi reaffirmed government's commitment to collaboration across all levels of the tourism value chain. He emphasised that tourism cannot thrive in isolation but depends on coordinated action between departments, municipalities, the private sector, and communities.

“This conference is not about speeches, it is about solutions,” said MEC Zondi. “We are building a tourism sector that is resilient, inclusive, and future-ready. Through collaboration, we can turn challenges into opportunities and cultivate a tomorrow that benefits every corner of our province.”

The MEC also announced that the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs will reconvene the conference in 2027 to assess progress and implementation of the resolutions adopted today.

He welcomed the recent declaration of two new World Heritage Sites in KwaZulu-Natal the Isibhudu Caves and the John Langalibalele House, which he described as milestones for cultural and heritage tourism in the province.

The conference brought together representatives from Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, FEDHASA, SATSA, VOASA, and community-based tourism enterprises, as well as local and international investors. Discussions focused on sustainable growth, destination marketing, access to finance, safety and security, and building a unified tourism brand for KwaZulu-Natal.

Amongst the key resolutions taken at the 2025 KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Tourism Conference were commitments to:

- Strengthen collaboration between government, the private sector, and communities through well-structured public–private partnerships.
- Position Community Tourism Organisations (CTOs) as strategic partners and provide them with greater institutional and financial support.
- Encourage municipalities to establish dedicated tourism funds and integrate tourism development into their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).
- Enhance coordination across departments to improve infrastructure, safety, and service delivery in key tourism nodes.
- Promote heritage and cultural tourism, leveraging newly declared World Heritage Sites and historical landmarks across the province.
- Improve access to finance for tourism SMMEs and support pre-development feasibility studies to unlock viable tourism investments.

As the province strengthens partnerships and institutional capacity, both Premier Ntuli and MEC Zondi reiterated that tourism remains a cornerstone of KwaZulu-Natal’s economic renewal, an industry capable of unlocking investment, creating jobs, and celebrating the province’s rich cultural and natural heritage.

ENDS

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