

**REMARKS BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR MICHAEL MABUYAKHULU, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE TRAVEL AGENTS
FEDERATION OF INDIA (TAFI) CONVENTION HELD IN DURBAN**

25 FEBRUARY 2013

Programme Director;

The Minister of Tourism, Honourable Marthinus van Schakwyk;

Honourable TAFI President- Mr Zakkir Ahmed;

High Commissioner of India – Mr Virendra Gupta;

Consul General of South Africa –India, Mr Rahul Bhatia;

His Worship, EThekweni Municipality Mayor, Cllr James Nxumalo;

Chairperson and Board Members of Tourism Entities;

CEOs of Tourism Entities;

Stakeholders in the tourism industry;

HODs present;

Distinguished Guests and TAFI Delegates;

Members of the Media Present;

Ladies and gentlemen;

All protocols observed

On behalf of the provincial government of the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the people of our beautiful province, we wish to extend a warm welcome to all the delegates and participants at this year's TAFI Convention being held in the city of Durban.

We pass our sincere gratitude to TAFI, our own Southern African Tourism Service Association (SATSA); Tourism KwaZulu-Natal; the national and provincial tourism departments for ensuring that our province plays host to this, the 2013 TAFI Convention.

In our view, the beginning of this convention marks another milestone in the further cementing of a long-standing relationship between South Africa and India. Even occasional followers of history and politics are aware of the ties that bind our two countries, forged in the crucible of our struggle for emancipation and global stability. As the province of KwaZulu-Natal, which is home to the highest number of Indians outside of India, we share a special bond with our sisters and brothers from India because we can, without any fear of contradiction, rightfully claim that our province, among other things, was the political school for a barrister then known as Mohandas Gandhi who became a Mahatma in India.

From our solidarity in multilateral fora fighting for the end of oppression in South Africa to our collaboration in various sectors of society, ours is a relationship that has stood the test of time. As a result of the current objective reality of our relationship based on our shared history, we can safely welcome all the TAFI delegates to their second home, which is South Africa, because we are one.

Having touched on our shared history and being acutely aware of the current ties that we share in platforms such as the BRICS and IBSA formations, we must, however, admit that the goodwill that exists between our two countries has not yet found practical expression in the tourism sector. As such, the primary question that should preoccupy the delegates to this convention is how, starting from today, our efforts and programmes contribute to growing the tourism trade between South Africa and India to its rightful place.

This task, we believe, is not insurmountable but its fulfilment depends on the new approaches that will emanate from this meeting and how conscientious we are in implementing them.

As India's first Prime Minister, His Excellency Jehwarlal Nehru, said:

"We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures that we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open".

We contend, esteemed delegates and stakeholders, that South Africa, in general, and the province of KwaZulu-Natal, in particular, is a treasure-well that promises unequalled adventures to those who seek it with their eyes open as Prime Minister Nehru said.

Programme director, the province of KwaZulu-Natal is like no other, offering a wide range of activities and places of interest to visitors. With its wealth of extraordinary mountains, glorious coastline and melting pot of cultures, you'll find KwaZulu-Natal

really a unique slice of paradise. We want our visitors to go home with the best possible experience and to spread by word of mouth, the most powerful marketing medium, the message that KwaZulu-Natal is the best tourism and investment destination in South Africa.

By the time this Convention ends, we have no doubt that all of you, dear delegates, would have had an opportunity to explore and sample tourism products and attractions of KwaZulu-Natal with an intention to package and recommend the destination to the clients in India.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) projects that in the next 10 years an estimated 70 % of the world's travels will come from the East. We believe that this Convention will provide a great platform to educate the travel trade on the KwaZulu-Natal tourism products that will be on demand with the Indian market and to create new packages and itineraries featuring KZN. We see this as a great opportunity for the local tourism trade to create business to business partnerships and linkages with the travel trade from India, who will give them access to this high volume tourism growth market.

Programme director, South African Tourism has identified the Indian market as a rapidly growing market for South Africa. India is one of the few markets that have recorded a growth of 26% in arrivals in South Africa year on year since 2010. India provides a great opportunity to grow the Durban–Dubai Emirates Route that flies daily to KwaZulu-Natal, with 185 flights a week landing in Dubai from 10 destinations in India. This, therefore, proves how strategic and important this market is, of course with prospects for developing a route between India and Durban.

At this juncture, allow us, programme director, to share with our colleagues the reason why we think that an investment into KwaZulu-Natal tourism is an opportunity not to be missed. We are a gateway to the 14 countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with a population of just about 260 million. With our world class infrastructure in the form of the King Shaka International Airport; the Durban harbour, state of the art road infrastructure linking us to three countries, we are more than just another destination, but the centre of growth, particularly in the SADC region. Our tourism offerings are incomparable and most of them are yet to be discovered. We are the only destination where you can scuba dive before breakfast, go for a hike or enjoy a game drive before lunch, shop for siesta and go clubbing after dinner, all in one day.

Programme director, this year's convention is themed **"Navigating the Future"** and acknowledges the changes and developments in the travel industry. From promoting sustainable tourism to dealing with the effects of the global economic downturn, the global tourism space will never be the same again. For us, as the emerging world, it presents an opportunity to challenge the global status quo and introduce a tourism sector that is humane, equitable and advances the agenda of the developing world. The province of KwaZulu-Natal wants to be part of an integral

part of this future and the changes that are brought about by developments in the global tourism environment. This Convention, therefore, is about us shaping the future of global tourism and we dare not disappoint.

This Convention is also about further strengthening the relationship already developed between the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and TAFI, to which all parties are committed.

It is indeed a relationship that should continue well into the future as we work in partnership to package Destination KwaZulu-Natal, navigating our way into the hearts and minds of Indian visitors and ensuring that top on the list of their holiday itineraries is the exploration of the Zulu Kingdom!

I thank you!!!!