

# Tourism for development

By **MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK**

MINISTER OF TOURISM, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK** graduated from the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), now the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and holds a Master's degree in political science from the same institution. He began his career as a lecturer at RAU and the University of Stellenbosch before becoming a Member of Parliament in 1990. Prior to assuming his current position in May 2009, Mr van Schalkwyk held the post of Premier of Western Cape Province from June 2002-April 2004 and that of Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism from April 2004-April 2009.

**N**otwithstanding the challenging financial times we are experiencing, opportunities are emerging daily for governments and nations to improve the general well-being of their citizens. In South Africa we have increased the focus on our travel and tourism sector in order to help speed up economic growth. The importance of tourism in South Africa in terms of its potential to drive job creation, growth, investment and development is evidenced by the creation of a dedicated National Department of Tourism in 2009.

The growth of our tourism industry since 1994 has been nothing short of phenomenal, and in 2008 it contributed more than 1 million (mn) jobs and an estimated 8 per cent to our gross domestic product. In 2008 we received more than 9.6 mn foreign arrivals to our shores compared to approximately 3 mn, 15 years earlier and we are well on track to reach our target of 10 mn foreign arrivals in 2010.

The National Department of Tourism is now, in close collaboration with the tourism industry, finalising a National Tourism Strategy, which will set out a vision for a successful world leading industry and an ambitious path to achieve this. It is envisaged that the strategy will address the government and the tourism industry's objectives in terms of economic growth, investment, transformation within the travel and tourism sector, people development, rural development, job creation, domestic and foreign arrivals and the delivery of a world class visitor experience.

South Africa was recently elected to the Executive Council of the UNWTO as an African representative and will use its position to advance Africa's development agenda and the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

We will also actively work towards the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), because as an African country we regard tourism as pivotal to unlocking greater economic growth, infrastructure development, trade promotion and job creation on our continent. This is underpinned by recent statistics from the UNWTO which show that Africa was the only continent which in 2009 bucked the worldwide decline in international arrivals and showed growth of 5 per cent.

As a country we were furthermore privileged to host, from 22nd-24th February 2010, the first T.20 meeting for tourism ministers from the world's major economies. The primary aim of the meeting was to

explore the synergies between strengthened global economic cooperation, and the tourism sector's efforts to build resilience, and stimulate new sources of sustainable, responsible and inclusive growth.

As a country, we have always maintained that our hosting of the 2010 World Cup was not an end in itself. When the first soccer match of the World Cup kicks off, it will be the culmination of years of dedicated effort, planning, commitment and hard work. We are confident that long after the final whistle has blown, South Africa and Africa will continue to reap the rewards of the investment in this tournament and the pride and confidence it has helped foster.

We believe the World Cup will leave a tangible and lasting legacy both physically – through major infrastructure upgrades and an up-skilled society – and perceptually – through the estimated 450,000 visitors who will return 'home' as ambassadors and advocates for South Africa as an extraordinary tourism destination. In terms of the tourism industry, the World Cup will demonstrate capacity; infrastructural excellence, the welcoming warmth and friendliness of our nation and the global competitiveness of our travel and tourism industry.

We know that sport and mega-events play a powerful role in stimulating the tourism economy and it is in this context that we hosted the first ever UNWTO/South Africa Summit on Tourism, Sport and Mega-Events in Johannesburg from 24th-26th February 2010. The summit created a first-of-its-kind platform for best practice and knowledge sharing towards mega-events excellence and it is with pride that South Africa contributed to the strengthening of the international tourism and travel sector.

Our vision for the future of tourism in South Africa is threefold: Firstly, that it is valued as one of the leading economic contributors to a sustainable South African economy; Secondly that it is a dynamic, innovative and highly respected sector that offers a positive and memorable experience exceeding consumer expectations; and thirdly that tourism dynamically contributes to the improvement of the quality of life of every South African.

The National Department of Tourism wants to invite the world to come and join us in South Africa for the experience of a lifetime during the World Cup 2010. South Africa is ready to host you and will present a truly exhilarating African sporting and tourism spectacular. **E**