

PARLIAMENTARY MEDIA BRIEFING BY THE MINISTER
OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM,
MOHAMMED VALLI MOOSA: HUMAN RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY
CLUSTER, 18 February 2003

1. TOURISM

SA TOURISM HEADED FOR FURTHER GROWTH IN 2003

Government is optimistic that South African tourism will experience a further boom in 2003 following the latest tourism statistics showing that foreign tourist arrivals to South Africa increased by 10.1% for the first ten months of 2002 - 478 580 tourists - compared to the same period the previous year.

October 2002 recorded the highest monthly foreign tourist arrivals in 2002. A total of 579,355 foreign tourists visited the country in October last year against 480,464 in October 2001, recording a 20.6% (98,891) growth - the highest since 1998.

This is great news not only for the tourism industry, but for South Africa as a whole - the more tourists visit our shores, the more job opportunities are created for the country's poor and the bigger contribution tourism makes to the local economy.

The statistics prove, once again, that South Africa is among the best performing tourist destinations in the world.

2. LEGISLATION

A. PROTECTED AREAS BILL

The National Environment Management: Protected Areas Bill, which is expected to come before Parliament in the first quarter of

this year, seeks to establish a representative system of protected areas as part of a national strategy to protect South Africa's biodiversity, and to ensure that biodiversity is able to bring sustainable benefits to future generations.

The Bill repeals the National Parks Act of 1976 and provides for the continued existence of the of the SA National Parks, which will continue to administer the National Parks Land Acquisition Fund. Furthermore, it makes it possible for the Minister to acquire private land by purchasing land rights for the creation of protected areas.

Four types of protected areas that can be declared in terms of the Bill include nature reserves, national parks and protected environments. It is intended that all terrestrial protected areas in South Africa, other than those established in terms of the National Forest Act, will be catered for in this Bill. (For more on the Bill, please visit www.environment.gov.za.)

B. BIODIVERSITY BILL

The Bill aims to ensure the management and conservation of the biological diversity of South Africa; the sustainable use of our biological resources; and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use and application of genetic resources and materials.

The formation of the National Biodiversity Institute, to replace the current National Botanic Institute, is an important part of the Bill. This Institute will regulate and manage botanical gardens and will further act as an advisory and consultative body on matters relating to biodiversity to organs of state and biodiversity stakeholders. The public consultation process on the Bill is currently taking place. (For the full contents of the Bill, please visit www.environment.gov.za.)

C. AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT BILL

The department is in the process of repealing the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act of 1965 that is currently used to monitor air quality management in South Africa.

The process to repeal the Act is at its final stages and the Air Quality Management Bill will be tabled before cabinet this year. The Bill seeks to give effect to the integrated pollution and waste management policy to ensure that all South Africans have access to clean air.

Parallel to the new Bill being promulgated, the department is engaged in a number of initiatives that seek to ensure better air quality:

- * Vehicle Emission Strategy - designed to ensure that emissions from motor vehicles do not lead to unacceptably poor air quality.
- * Ambient Air Standards - the standards are set to give guidelines in terms of acceptable emissions in the atmosphere as well as the monitoring and enforcement of transgressors.

D. COASTAL MANAGEMENT BILL

The Coastal Management Bill sets out a new approach to managing the nation's coastal resources to promote social equity and make best economic use of coastal resources, while protecting the natural environment. It aims to provide a legal and administrative framework that will promote cooperative, coordinated and integrated coastal development; preserve, protect and enhance the status of the coastal environment as the heritage of all; ensure coastal resources are managed in the interests of the whole community; and ensure there is equitable access to the opportunities and benefits derived from the coast.

The Bill is currently in a final draft form and is expected to be presented to Cabinet in the course of the year, whereupon a public participation process will be initiated to ensure that all South Africans have an opportunity to comment on the Bill before it is again presented to Cabinet for approval.

3. BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

A. WORLD PARKS CONGRESS

South Africa will have the honour to host the fifth World Parks Congress in Durban from 8 - 17 September. An event held every 10 years under the auspices of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature, the congress is the first one to be held in Africa.

The purpose of this congress - which will be attended by about 2 500 delegates- is to chart the way forward for conservation in the 21st century. Participants will include experts from protected areas, organisations such as South African National Parks (SANParks), Parks officials and other conservation specialists.

The theme of this congress is "Benefits Beyond Boundaries", highlighting the fact that conservation should not just benefit animals, the grass and vegetation within the parks, but should also ensure the sustainable development of communities.

The congress is expected to greatly benefit the tourism industry, creating economic opportunities for people in the host city.

B. TFCAs

i) Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP)

As part of the development of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) whose treaty was signed in December last year, a joint management committee has been established consisting of mainly park officials in the three countries, and they will work out a plan for the entire transfrontier park which will spell out zonations that define areas for tourism. They will also look at measures to facilitate transit by people from one park into another for tourism as well as look after the welfare of the wildlife.

ii) Ai/Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (TFP)

The department will continue with the establishment of a national and international system of managing biodiversity and conservation. Ai/Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (TFP) between Namibia and South Africa will be established this year, with the signing of the treaty and implementation of the Joint Management and Integrated Tourism Plans.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND PROTECTION

PROSECUTION OF DEFAULTING COMPANIES

It has come to the attention of the department that there are companies that do not comply with their operating permits. It is, therefore, the department's intention to follow up with all of these companies to ensure they comply, failing which we will not hesitate to take very firm action against them.

DURBAN SOUTH

In 2001 the department launched the Multi Point Plan as a response to the Durban Basin air quality problem. The objective of this initiative is to engage all stakeholders in the basin to address the air quality problem in their area.

To date much progress has been made:

- * A project manager has been appointed;
- * The Department has contributed R4.4 million and the Norwegian government has contributed R 5.5 million towards the establishment of a new Air Quality Management System in Durban South Basin; and
- * The process to source more funding for the project is ongoing.

CLEANEST TOWN CAMPAIGN

In 2001 the department launched the Cleanest Town Competition, which was well received across South Africa. The campaign for 2003/2004 is ongoing. Provinces and municipalities have begun in earnest to ensure that they participate in the campaign. The department believes that the campaign has got some positive impact in the communities, evident from attitudes of different municipalities towards waste management - especially in the previously black areas - where waste collection and management has significantly improved.

The main objective of this campaign is to change the attitude of people towards waste management and environmental management in general, and to highlight the socio-economic benefits of a clean environment.

The department will announce the names of the winning towns in the metro, local and district municipality levels on 5 June - World Environment Day.

PLASTIC BAG REGULATIONS

In 2002 my department, organised labour and business signed a Memorandum of Agreement on the management of plastic bags. In order to successfully implement the agreement it was agreed that a

Section 21 company be established to oversee the implementation process. Such a company will soon be established. The work of the section 21 company will offer employment opportunities.

5. MARINES AND COASTAL MANAGEMENT

A. ENVIRONMENTAL COURTS

Together with the Department of Justice, the Prosecuting Authority, the Asset Forfeiture Unit, and the Department of Public Works, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has established a pilot environmental court at the Hermanus Magistrate's Court.

The factors that have led to the need for environmental courts were, amongst others, the dramatic increase in the illegal exploitation of South Africa's marine living resources, particularly abalone along the southwestern coastline.

The first court was established early this month, with all the necessary infrastructure and human resources, including the magistrate and the prosecutors in place. The first matter was heard on Wednesday, 5 February.

The establishment of the court is a major breakthrough in the battle against the illegal exploitation of abalone. It will function on the level of a regional court with a wider jurisdiction as to area and a higher penalty jurisdiction. The court will further ensure that henceforth suitably qualified prosecutors and regional magistrates with the necessary expertise will deal with abalone cases. It will also ensure a much quicker disposal of cases and hopefully lead to more convictions and stringent sentences. The imposition of sentences of direct imprisonment will also be a more effective deterrent and the forfeiture of vehicles, vessels and equipment will receive greater attention.

It is my Ministry's intention to formally launch the court together with the Ministry of Justice in a few weeks.

Government's fight against abalone poachers is fast gaining speed, with the total number of abalone confiscated per year having doubled in just a year - 400 000 in 2001 and 800 000 in 2002.

B. NEW FISHERIES

The development and diversification of existing fisheries and the establishment of new fisheries is a government priority in terms of several of its key objectives:

- * Job creation
- * Human resource development
- * Social sector service delivery: expanding the commercially exploitable resource base, broadening access and prioritising the poor and disadvantaged.
- * Rural development programmes - focusing particularly on previously neglected areas such as the Eastern Cape
- * Transformation

Three new fisheries will be established this year i.e. octopus, Eastern Cape abalone as well as east coast rock lobster.

A new fishery is defined as a regulated fishery that exploits a resource or part of a resource that has not previously been managed by the state as a commercial fishery. It includes previously unexploited resource, an under-exploited resource, which has hitherto been a by-catch of another fishery, or a fully exploited or even over-exploited resource, which has hitherto not been subject to any management controls.

6. POVERTY RELIEF PROGRAMME

DEAT has been involved in the selection and implementation of projects funded by the national poverty relief programme since the 1999/2000 financial year. Projects funded by my department have gone a long way in enhancing government's anti-poverty programme by providing job opportunities to hundreds of poor South Africans.

In April 2003 we move into the 5th year of operation and the following deliverables have been achieved so far:

- * Temporary Job Days created = 1 624 799
- * Permanent Jobs created = 1885
- * Training Days carried out = 166 848
- * SMME's created = 369
- * SMME's used = 851
- * Total Number of Projects implemented = 425
- * Total Value of Funding Approved to Date = R 934 655 547
- * Total Value allocated to Tourism Infrastructure = R 365 156 860
- * Total Value allocated to Tourism Product Development = R 63 765 080
- * Total Value allocated to Waste Management = R 84 244 907
- * Total Value spent on Community Based Natural Resource Management = R 15 704 946
- * Total Value allocated to Coastal Development = R 83 031 674
- * Total Value allocated to Biodiversity projects = R 263 632 000
- * Total Value allocated to Working for water type projects = R 59 120 080

All of the projects have an element of training that is given to the participants/beneficiaries. This training has been particularly successful in equipping the participants to improve their skills and becoming more marketable in the employment arena. A special curriculum has been developed within the Department to deliver

this training to adults with greatly varying educational levels. This course has been applied in the national Coast Care programme.

The training programme has six main components: safety and security/ law enforcement; environmental and waste management; promotion of tourism; minor maintenance; life orientation and promotion of SMMEs.

11th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

South Africa has been appointed by the United Nations to chair the 11th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), to be held in New York from 28 April to 9 May, and which will play a crucial role in giving sound political direction to the practical implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) outcomes.

The session will be the Commission's first global meeting devoted to sustainable development since the Summit, and will lay grounds for future work on sustainable development at all levels and shape the Commission's work programme over the coming years.

A series of inter-active ministerial roundtables will be held, focusing on priority actions and commitments to implement goals and targets reached at the summit.

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