

Tourism Breaking News

SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

February 12, 2013

Record number of quality buyers on board for Meetings Africa 2013

WITH JUST DAYS to go to Meetings Africa 2013, interest from high-quality buyers is exceptional, with the number of buyers already confirmed to attend the show having eclipsed last year's number of buyer delegates by 67 per cent.

There are almost 350 international, regional and local qualified hosted buyers who have booked their place at Meetings Africa 2013. This is a good indication that this year's event will deliver outstanding business and networking opportunities to all delegates and will establish the African region as one of the world's premier business events destinations.

For the first time at Meetings Africa, an internationally renowned buyer qualification process was put in place, with exhibitors therefore assured that only buyers with a serious intention to do business with Africa will be in attendance at the show. The buyer qualification system has been organised by exhibition hosts, the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB), which was officially launched at Meetings Africa 2012.

South African Tourism Chief Executive Officer, Mr Thulani Nzima, says the numbers are impressive. "They show that global interest in South Africa as a business event host destination is growing and that the industry can optimistically look forward to reaching the delegate and tourist arrivals targets we have set."

Pivotal to achieving this growth is the SANCB's strategy to advance the African continent's international business events standing in the global business events market. It is also the SANCB's objective to forge more inclusive continental partnerships to realise the industry's potential.

Taking place at the Sandton Convention Centre from February 18-20, Meetings Africa is a global platform showcasing South Africa and regional Africa's burgeoning standing as a major international business events destination.

Hosted by the SANCB, in partnership with the Gauteng province and the City of Johannesburg, Meetings Africa brings together under one roof, the very best of the

continent's business events products, services, experts and facilities needed to stage an international meeting and business event of any size and stature.

The show programme is a packed one, kicking off on February 18 with an aptly titled 'BOND Day' (Business Opportunity Networking Day) where delegates can share knowledge and strategise for business events industry growth at a number of workshops, seminars and networking events attended by the industry's leading local and global experts.

The opening 'BOND Day' features:

- An Event Greening Forum that will convene key industry players to discuss sustainable, responsible and fair practices in business events. All Meetings Africa delegates are welcome at the Forum that commences at 08h30.
- An all-day African Association meeting (to muscle-up the national and pan-African Association communities to help them work even more effectively in partnership to grow the continent's share of the lucrative global business event market). This is the first time at Meetings Africa that the Africa Associations are formally represented and have a distinct, formal platform for engagement. Fifty-four African Associations will be in attendance.
- The IMEX-MCI-MPI Future Leaders Forum (to encourage the best-performing students in travel and tourism to make a career in business events, find mentors and untap their innovation, enthusiasm and passion for the benefit of the larger industry); and
- A number of other meetings, events and workshops whose full details may be found on the Meetings Africa 2013 website: www.meetingsafrica.co.za

On Tuesday, February 19, Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk will officially open the show. In his address he will set the stage for what Meetings Africa 2013 hopes to achieve. On Wednesday, February 20, there will be a BRICS panel discussion that will feature high-profile speakers debating the value of the BRICS global partnership for its member states, and how Africa can (and should) unite to unlock the rich potential of business events for what are currently the world's fastest growing economies and most exciting emerging business events destinations.

It's an event that anybody who is invested in the future of the continent's business events industry should not miss. The fact that this event takes place at Meetings Africa 2013 just days ahead of the important and strategic BRICS Summit in Durban gives the event additional strategic impetus and relevance.

Meetings Africa 2013 takes the first in a series of steps this year to include other destinations on the continent to eventually make Meetings Africa the single most influential and biggest pan-African business event trade exhibition on the continent.

The plan to create a pan-African Meetings Africa platform is timeous and strategic, as Africa's economy is growing at more than four per cent a year, with growth in Sub-Saharan Africa forecast by the World Bank to rise to six per cent.

"This year we want to amplify our strength as an African continent united in growing business event arrivals. The goal is to attract more regional and global business events to this continent and in so doing increase our overall tourist arrivals. We're very excited by the work of the National Convention Bureau in aligning our country's business events efforts, an area with considerable growth potential which we are taking very seriously. To this end we're looking forward to another exciting, successful Meetings Africa," says Nzima.

South Africa enjoys a position as one of the top 15 long haul destinations on the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) ranking list, and at Meetings Africa 2013 the goal is to improve on this ranking.

For more information on Meetings Africa, please visit www.meetingsafrica.co.za. It's quick and easy to register as a media delegate for Meetings Africa 2013. Go to: <http://www.meetingsafrica.co.za/media/register/default.aspx?id=f518eb7c-03e3-4fd1-a693-36a846f713c7>

ENDS

For further information contact

Thandiwe Mathibela at South African Tourism
Tel: +27 82 552 0979
thandiwe@southafrica.net
davenport.co.za

Allison MacDonald at Ireland/Davenport
Tel: +27 11 243 1364
allison.macdonald@ireland-davenport.co.za

Website www.southafrica.net

Register on our media extranet to browse the latest news releases (from SA Tourism as well as the tourism industry in general), access the news archive and get details of all upcoming tourism industry events (both locally and internationally). <http://www.southafrica.net/media>

South African Tourism is the national tourism agency responsible for the marketing of South Africa as a preferred tourist destination. It is headed up by Chief Executive Officer, Mr Thulani Nzima; Chief Operating Officer, Mr Timothy Scholtz and Chief Marketing Officer, Ms Janine Hutton.
