

# Message from NSTF Executive Director

## Spreading the message of sustainable tourism

**Focusing on science and sustainable tourism:** The NSTF has been discussing [Science and Sustainable Tourism](#) in August – a vibrant and interesting discussion. Besides the potential for developing science tourism destinations, it was highlighted (as is usual in a variety of fields) that there is a lack of systematic and reliable data. Furthermore, there is a need for Government Departments to collaborate in the common interest of promoting tourism and sustainable tourism.

**Local experience of tourism:** I did some touring of my own recently. My husband and I visited Sodwana Bay where his daughter, Emilia Murcott, is working at Work Travel SA. We were privileged to have her as our very knowledgeable tour guide and hear her personal perceptions and insights. We went snorkelling above the coral reef, studied marine life in the rock pools for hours, saw humpback whales, and visited Lake Sibaya – one of the largest freshwater lakes, right next to the sea.

**Lack of local community involvement at Sodwana Bay:** What struck me was that the local community, which lives in obvious poverty, is not involved in this attractive tourist industry. They harvest firewood from the trees in the Isimangaliso Nature Reserve. Some of them poach hippos in Lake Sibaya (a fenced off and supposedly protected KZN wildlife reserve). We saw the skulls of about 10 hippos that had been poached for their meat – displayed by the small provincial anti-poaching unit. A small number of local craftspeople carve small souvenirs for the tourists – this has obvious potential for expansion. Few locals know how to swim, let alone dive. They are not taught about the impressive marine life next to where they live (apart from Work Travel SA's efforts to reach out to children in local schools).

**Illustration of unsustainable tourism:** Sodwana Bay is a sad illustration of unsustainable tourism. All the issues raised at the NSTF discussion forum apply here – from how climate change will affect tourist destinations to the lack of awareness among the general public.

**Other examples of areas that need to develop sustainable tourism:** We returned to Joburg, on the way witnessing a similar phenomenon in Vryburg. It had a small and beautiful KZN nature reserve (Vryburg Hill) towering above one side of the town. None of the local townspeople we chatted to even knew about it! What a beautiful but neglected country we have.

## SA Tourism's briefing to the Portfolio Committee on Tourism on its Quarter 4 Performance for 2016/17 (on 25 August 2017) – extracts from the briefing summary

The Portfolio Committee's Chairperson is Ms B Ngcobo (ANC).

- **About domestic holidays:** "On the key performance indicator about the number of holiday trips achieved, the entity recorded 974 291 trips achieved versus a target of 1 152 521. The main deterrent for people not taking domestic holiday trips was affordability. On total revenue achieved in tourism, the target was R28bn, actual performance was R26bn. This decline was attributed to a decline in spend per arrival in 2016 compared to 2015."
- **Number of business events and business delegates:** "On the number of business events hosted in SA the annual target was 138, but actual achievement was 117 conferences registered on the International Congress and Conventions Association (ICCA). The annual target for the number of business delegates hosted in SA was 77

567, actual figures were that 68 498 delegates attended the 117 ICCA registered events.”

- **Challenges and solutions to domestic tourism:** “The Committee observed that SA Tourism’s performance for the 4th Quarter was quite poor. Members were concerned that SA Tourism seemed to be struggling with domestic tourism. SA Tourism was asked to look into dual pricing as an option to make domestic tourism more affordable to local South Africans. Government parks and resorts should be made more affordable... Discussions had to take place about fixing tourism infrastructure on the ground... Members also suggested that delegate boosting for delegates that attended conferences needed to be done. Packages should be made available with offerings for pre and post conferences... Members appreciated the efforts of SA Tourism but asked how it translated its efforts into delivery on the ground. Members had on a recent oversight visit to the Garden Route observed that municipalities were not taken on board when it came to tourism. This was especially concerning when domestic tourism and township tourism had to be boosted. Was enough being done to assist disadvantaged persons? What was being done to bring people into the tourism space? In the areas that members had visited members felt that there was huge potential for homestays.”
- **Reaching people at grassroots level:** “Mr Ntshona, on how SA Tourism reached people at grassroots level, explained that as part of its roadshows things were being peeled like an onion one layer at a time. Provincial level was tackled first. Layer by layer SA Tourism worked its way downwards. Municipalities were important role players. Proper road signage was needed. There were practical issues that had to be addressed. It was no use having wonderful marketing campaigns if there was nothing on the ground. Conversations were needed and capacity building was key. Local economic development municipal officials did not always understand what their roles should be. If a municipality had to prioritise between building Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) houses or tourism issues, the RDP houses would always win hands down. In George he had spoken to some black operators. The problem was that they were not part of the ecosystem in the area and did not benefit from the oyster festival and other activities. Their offerings were not packaged. The one operator took tourists to local traditional weddings. There was a need to make these small operators visible on SA Tourism’s platforms. Effort was being made to add more experiences for tourists. He stated that SA Tourism had discussions with trade not to be afraid of new players. People at grassroots level complained that they were not visible. SA Tourism was starting to make the necessary linkages.”

(Source: Parliamentary Monitoring Group [www.pmq.org.za](http://www.pmq.org.za) )