

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE OFFICE OF MR MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK, MINISTER OF TOURISM

First quarter of 2012 shows exceptional growth in tourist arrivals *10,5% growth in all tourist arrivals and 17,8% growth in overseas tourist arrivals bode well for destination, country, industry and economy*

Overall tourist arrivals to South Africa grew by an impressive 10,5% in the first quarter of 2012, with strong growth recorded across all regions.

The months of January, February and March 2012 saw a total of 2 267 807 tourist arrivals to South Africa – 216 031 (10.5%) more than in the corresponding period in 2011. In a very strong start to the year, overseas tourist arrivals were up by a combined 17,8%.

According to South Africa's Tourism Minister, Mr Marthinus van Schalkwyk, these are "wonderful results for the destination, the country, the tourism industry and the economy". At the launch of the latest available tourist arrivals data earlier today, the Minister said it was a most encouraging sign that tourist arrivals growth had come from all regions. Emerging markets continued their robust, positive growth of 2011, while traditional markets recovered the lost ground of the period 2008–2011 and bounced back to reach positive growth in the early part of the year.

Tourist arrivals from Europe grew by 11,9% (394 716 tourists) in the first three months of the year. South Africa's biggest overseas source market, the United Kingdom, recovered from an overall decline in 2011 to post positive returns of 9,5% (delivering 133 729 tourists in the first three months of 2012). Tourist arrivals from Germany maintained a strong positive growth trend, and with a 15,2% growth rate (77 768 tourists), the country was among the best-performing markets on the European continent.

Robust sales and marketing partnerships across the region, South Africa's accessibility, and the exceptional value for money that the destination offers to European travellers were significant contributing factors to tourist arrivals growth from Europe, Minister Van Schalkwyk said.

Meanwhile, the United States also returned excellent growth of 16,1% (70 095 tourists) as South Africa maintained its status as a desirable and coveted leisure holiday experience for American travellers.

Strong emerging-market growth continues

South Africa continued to enjoy fantastic growth from the emerging markets during the first quarter of this year. Brazil posted 71,7% growth (19 133 tourists), India grew by 23,1% (21 138 tourists), while tourist arrivals from China increased by 67,7% (30 883 tourists). In total, the regional Asian market returned tourist arrivals growth of more than 43%, delivering 85 189 tourists (against 59 549 tourists for the same three months last year).

Tourist arrivals from regional African tourist markets achieved positive growth rates of 7,9%, with Angola (up 48,5%, or 14 394 tourists), Nigeria (26,7% growth, or 17 066 tourists) and Tanzania (31,4% growth, or 8 247 tourists) standing out as exceptional continental-market achievers in the first three months of the year.

Minister Van Schalkwyk said this overall growth in tourism can be ascribed to significant investments in the South African tourism industry in time, energy and resources. These included a series of trade workshops across key markets, numerous travel, trade and

media familiarisation trips hosted by South Africa, as well as ongoing in-depth research into consumer needs that had provided insight into which global and regional marketing campaigns would deliver the best results and maximum efficiency.

According to the Minister, South Africa's valuable partnerships and determination to defend and grow its traditional tourist markets were now yielding handsome dividends, as the industry had worked extremely hard during difficult times.

"We are extremely lucky to live in South Africa and to enjoy in our own backyard a destination that has grown tremendously in popularity and desirability all over the world. Let's work together and encourage each other to continue to make tourists feel at home, to travel South Africa ourselves – like tourists in our own country – and to continue offering the excellent service, value for money and accessibility that have delivered these exceptional results, which we are optimistic will continue well into the future," said Minister Van Schalkwyk.

Regional and continental growth remains strong

"I would again like to stress the importance of the African market. Regional African visitors are major leisure tourists, attracted by our country's beauty, nightlife and lifestyle and shopping attractions. The 2013 African Cup of Nations early next year offers South Africa a valuable opportunity to drive tourist arrivals growth from Africa even further and to give regional African tourists an exceptional experience while they are here ... the kind of experience that makes them want to return to South Africa as well as recommend our destination, our warm hospitality and our capability to friends, family and colleagues back home," said Minister Van Schalkwyk

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