



REMARKS

BY MS. ANGELE MAKOMBO N`TUMBA

**SADC DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY – REGIONAL
INTERGRATION**

**AT THE EXTRAORDINARY VIRTUAL MEETING
OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF TOURISM**

10TH FEBRUARY 2026

Chairperson of Committee of Ministers responsible for Tourism, Republic of South Africa, Honourable Patricia de Lille, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of South Africa;

Chairperson of Senior Officials, Mr. Nkhumeleni Victor Vele, Director General of National Department of Tourism;

Honorable Ministers of Tourism;

Senior Official responsible for Tourism;

Distinguished Delegates;

Representatives from the SADC Secretariat;

Distinguished delegates;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all.

It is my distinct honour and pleasure to welcome you to this Extraordinary Virtual Meeting convened to deliberate on two matters of critical strategic importance to regional integration and tourism development within the SADC region, namely the Endorsement of the Draft Agreement Establishing the SADC Tourism UNIVISA and the Winding up of the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA).

Honourable Ministers, allow me at the outset to express my sincere appreciation to all Member States for your continued commitment to the tourism regional integration agenda, and for the high-level leadership you bring to this important process. Your presence here today is a clear

demonstration of our collective responsibility to strengthen cooperation, enhance policy coherence, and ensure that our institutional arrangements remain fit for purpose in a rapidly evolving global tourism environment.

Honorable Ministers, Tourism remains one of SADC's significant drivers of inclusive economic growth, employment creation, and socio-cultural exchange. The sector holds immense potential to advance the objectives of the SADC Treaty and the SADC Tourism Protocol of 1998 (revised 2009 & 2022), particularly through facilitating the movement of tourists across the region, promoting cross-border tourism investment, and positioning SADC as a competitive, integrated, and seamless tourism destination. In this regard, the SADC Tourism UNIVISA project constitutes a priority initiative and represents a transformative opportunity for our region through the simplification of travel procedures and the reduction of barriers to entry. The SADC Tourism UNIVISA has the potential to enhance destination competitiveness, stimulate multi-country travel, increase visitor length of stay, and unlock greater economic benefits for our Member States. Its effective implementation is inherently cross-sectoral, requiring close coordination among tourism, immigration, security, and finance authorities.

Its successful implementation further requires sustained political will, strong inter-ministerial coordination, robust technical frameworks, and a shared understanding of both the opportunities and responsibilities it presents. Honourable Ministers are therefore called upon to provide strategic guidance and to consider endorsing and recommending the establishment of the SADC Tourism UNIVISA as set out in the Draft Legal Agreement, which outlines the implementation modalities, institutional coordination, and national awareness arrangements.

Honourable Ministers, equally important on our agenda today is the winding-up process of the Regional Tourism Organisation of the Southern Africa (RETOSA). This is a long-standing matter that requires conclusion, in line with the directive issued by Honourable Ministers at the Joint Environment, Natural Resources and Tourism Ministerial meeting held on 21 May 2025 in Harare, Republic of Zimbabwe, following the establishment of the Tourism Coordinating Unit mandated to implement the SADC Tourism Programme 2020-2030. It is evident that the winding-up process must be undertaken in full compliance with the legal procedures of the Republic of South Africa. In this regard, the SADC Secretariat, through its legal experts, has been fully engaged to facilitate the process and provide the necessary guidance and feedback.

Honourable Ministers, this meeting provides an opportunity for Ministers to review progress made to date, address outstanding issues, and provide clear guidance to the Secretariat on the two agendas for effective implementation and reporting to Council.

I am confident that today's discussions represent a major step towards the realization and entry into force of the SADC Tourism UNIVISA. We share a collective responsibility to ensure that this agreement is successful, delivering tangible, benefits not only our individual Member States but to the entire SADC region as a whole.

Furthermore, the UNIVISA will advance our commitment to the objectives of the SADC Protocol on the Development of Tourism (1998) as revised in 2009 and 2022 and contribute directly to the achievement of one of the strategic goals of the SADC Tourism Programme 2020-2030, namely, is the stimulation of visitor movement and flows to and within the region.

At the same time, this meeting offers an opportunity to forge a clear path forward towards the conclusion and ultimate closure of the RETOSA matter.

I encourage focused, pragmatic and solution-oriented deliberations and look forward to the outcomes of your discussions. Allow me to thank you all for your continued commitment in fostering a more unified, prosperous, and dynamic tourism sector for the benefit of our people and the region at large

I thank you for your attention!

Merci Beaucoup!

Muito Obrigada!

Asante Sana!