

RETOSA reworks strategy to enhance tourism in SADC

The Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA) leadership has spent a day at the Midrand Conference Centre in Johannesburg developing RETOSA's repositioning strategy with the aim of moving the SADC region share of tourism from its current 2% of global tourist arrivals and receipts respectively to 5% within the next decade. In a departure from past practice which saw more preoccupation with governments or public sector, the new vision is founded on strong partnerships with the private sector.



Front from left to right: Desmond Khalid Golding (CEO of RETOSA), Sem Shikongo (Chairman of RETOSA), Digu // Naobeb (CEO of Namibia Tourism Board).

Middle from left to right: Vasco Manhica, (Chairman of the private sector association in Mozambique), Sisa Nishona (CEO of South African Tourism), Albino Mahumana (CEO Mozambique Tourism Authority), Dr Kaseke (CEO of Zimbabwe Tourism Authority)

Back from left to right: Martin Kennedy (Communications Officer of Seychelles Hospitality and Tourism Association) and Paul Matamisa (CEO of the private sector Zimbabwe Tourism Council)

Following a comprehensive transformation process of the 20-year old organisation, RETOSA has been rekindled into a new organisation, with a new value proposition for its key stakeholders, and a new vision which will be achieved through focused marketing and strategic investment. A new management team, led by Desmond Golding as CEO, started in June 2017 and has been instrumental in today's turning-point event which saw both the public sector and private sector stakeholders contribute to a sustainable, action-driven and results-orientated strategy, which will focus on value adding to its partners' bottom line and enhance the region as the destination of choice.

According to Dr Sem Shikongo, chairman of RETOSA and director of Tourism and Gaming, Ministry of Environment and Tourism in Namibia, "After a long adventure of reflection, analysis and critical re-thinking, RETOSA is now emerging as a transformed agency with a new mandate and two key objectives: to increase competitiveness of the region and, increased and improved global tourism market share for the region. This must be achieved through a smart partnership between the Region's private sector players and RETOSA in a game-changing manner through innovation and pragmatism. At the same time, the Region's tourism ministries have committed themselves to creating the enabling policy and legislative environment through the tourism coordination unit to be housed at the SADC Secretariat, a critical development. The road is clear Tourism is everyone's business"

Tourism remains a priority sector of many of the SADC countries' economies.

Championing regional collaboration to drive tourism growth

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, in 2015, international tourist arrivals grew by 4.6% to reach more than one billion, generating \$1.5 trillion in export earnings. Forecasts see continued tourism growth in the region of 4% year-on-year, and that foreign tourists will total 1.8b by 2030. The new RETOSA is tasked with taking advantage of this opportunity to increase tourism in the region in partnership with the private sector."

Paul Matamisa, CEO of the Zimbabwe Tourism Council indicated that "Today was a good positive beginning for the good future of Southern Africa where RETOSA has to engage all stakeholders and hope they bring all to the party, especially the private sector institutions."

"By championing regional collaboration, RETOSA must drive intra-Africa tourism because a robust domestic and regional tourism sector is essential to a thriving tourism economy in Africa," said the CEO of South African Tourism, Sisa Nthshona.

Vasco Manhica, chairman of the private sector association in Mozambique said: "From our perspective, we need RETOSA to add value to tourism in the region. Our expectation is that RETOSA will be the champion advocate for tourism integration for the benefit of the region."

Martin Kennedy, communications officer of SHTA (Seychelles Hospitality and Tourism Association) summarised deliberations as follows: "Potentially an important step towards reducing the credibility gap between words and actions. There was evidence of diverse and creative thinking with a focus on real and pressing industry scenarios."

The CEO of RETOSA, Desmond Golding pointed out that: "The presence of very senior representatives from the private sector from the various countries today truly marks a turning point for RETOSA, and we are particularly encouraged by their contribution towards the development of our strategy. We are confident that we have taken the points they made and have reflected in our strategy, which will enhance the new partnerships, that RETOSA needs to build with the private sector. We will, of course, secure further engagement with the wider private sector representatives from the various Member States to further entrench their support, participation and commitment to the new RETOSA."

Working strategically

For example, the Trans-Frontier and cross-border products with multinational benefits remain strategic with high impact. RETOSA will work strategically to complement the tourism marketing work currently being implemented by the different countries and not duplicate."

The fundamental anchor for RETOSA's vision is an understanding that tourism is an economic and trade imperative. RETOSA sees tourism and its relations to economic growth, employment creation and poverty elimination fundamentally interlinked to stimulation of investment and commerce.

The recently-appointed RETOSA executive management include:

Desmond Khalid Golding, chief executive officer, commands transversal skills in economics, finance, banking, commerce, investment and tourism. He was the director general/permanent secretary for the KwaZulu Natal's Department of Economic Development and Tourism; director: credit and risk governance at Standard Bank; group credit officer at Investec Bank Limited, and senior manager: strategic management at the SA Reserve Bank (Governor's Office).

Golding has served in various boards including SA Broadcasting Corporation, Ithala Development Finance Corporation, Ithala Bank, as well as Chairing the South African Civil Aviation Authority, and the Corporation Bank Development Agency. He has read for Masters of Law (Banking and Finance) from University of London, Master of International Relations (Wits University), Finance for Senior Executives (Harvard University), and Advanced Leadership and Management Programme (Oxford University). Golding is a Mandela Scholar – having been awarded the prestigious Nelson Mandela Leadership Scholarship, and has been Indicted at Oxford Said Business School for having participated and won the Great Oxford Debate.

Thembi Kunene-Msimang, executive: marketing and communications, a communications graduate from the University of Fort-Hare, has over 18 years experience in the tourism sector. Prior to her current position at RETOSA, Kunene-Msimang was responsible for tourism services at Cape Town Tourism. Before that, she was the chief quality assurance officer for the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) and member of Exco at South African Tourism (SAT). She currently serves on the Boards of Stenden South Africa, Gilt-Edge Khula, as well as Brand South Africa.

Kenneth Racombo, executive: resource mobilisation, was previously the director general at the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Seychelles. Racombo has a Masters Degree in Diplomatic Studies with the University of Pretoria, a Masters Degree in Leadership and Strategic Management with the Institute of Public Administration in Ireland and a Degree in Economics with the University of Mauritius. Racombo's career has been primarily focussed in Economic Diplomacy and regional intergration.

Simba Madinyanye, executive: research and information management, has more than 20 years experience in the tourism sector. An expert in research, planning and sustainable tourism development, capacity building and product development. Madinyanye holds a Bsc Hons Degree in Economics, an MSc in Population Studies and a Masters in Business Administration.

Kevin Kenanao Masupe, executive: corporate services, holds a Masters Degree in Business Leadership coupled with several business management and leadership training. A business management specialist, Masupe has 23 years experience in organisational structuring and startups. Masupe brings a wealth of experience that will assist the new RETOSA to build the new organisation.

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