

Van Schalkwyk lauds tourism sector code

TravelHub (www.travelhub.co.za) -

The Minister of Tourism, **Marthinus van Schalkwyk**, has welcomed the gazetting of the tourism sector code as a milestone in the process of achieving Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) in the tourism industry.

He said the code, which was gazetted last week on May 22, would help clarify any uncertainty around BEE targets in tourism and pave the way for real, measurable transformation in the sector.

The gazetting follows a year-long process of alignment between the Tourism BEE Charter and Government's Codes of Good Practice, which had left the industry with a number of questions related to transformation targets and reporting mechanisms.

Van Schalkwyk said the fundamental difference between the sector code and Government's proposed minimum codes was that the sector code made provision, in the first five years of reporting, for a greater focus on human factor elements, namely skills development, strategic representation, employment equity and enterprise development. "This approach was adopted in recognition of the fact that tourism is a people-driven industry," he said.

A second important point is that the Exempt Micro Enterprise threshold for the tourism sector has, after a review of inputs from the comment period in 2008, been set at R2,5m in turnover per annum. This step will ensure that all significant stakeholders participate actively in the process of transformation, according to Van Schalkwyk.

He said the Tourism Empowerment Council of South Africa (TECSA) – formerly the Tourism BEE Charter Council – was now in a position to drive transformation in tourism from a solid foundation and give accurate information that would not be subject to change. "We will now be able to send out clear messages about BEE in tourism, with specific targets for businesses of any size, timeframes as well as reporting mechanisms.

"While TECSA is not a policing body, as a transformation partner and enabler it will now be in a position to work hand-in-hand with the private sector to help grow this industry and maximise its potential for job creation and foreign exchange earnings."

TECSA CEO, **Beulah Mosupye**, pointed out that the organisation already had a number of projects in place that could be implemented without delay. These include the BEE Self-Assessment tool; **Black Talent, a project aimed at finding suitable people for available positions in tourism (designed by THSBS – www.thsbs.com)**; a specific drive to find empowerment partners for companies and awards for BEE achievers in tourism.

"TECSA also looks forward to forging links with reputable, registered BEE verification agencies to facilitate industry transformation. We will strive to make the transformation process smooth and simple for companies that embark on empowerment programmes at all levels," added Mosupye.

The final sector code essentially provides for transformation in seven areas of business, namely ownership, strategic representation, employment equity, skills development, preferential procurement, enterprise development and social development. Each of these indicators will be measured proportionally to a company's compliance in that area.