

Tourism bus leaves transformation behind

Industry continues to leap ahead but benefits are still not trickling down to the majority of SAs's population

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TOURISM growth in SA has far outstripped that of global tourism, but the full benefits are yet to translate into meaningful transformation in the industry, says Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Martinus van Schalkwyk.

Speaking at the opening of the first Tourism Black Economic Empowerment Charter Council Conference in Sandton yesterday, Van Schalkwyk said the tourism industry, which last year saw almost 8.4-million people visiting the country, had set an example in starting to develop an equitable industry. However, although many more black people were partici-

pating in the industry, they were doing so more as employees than as owners, directors or shareholders, he said. "So, you will understand why I say today that we still have a long way to go."

Van Schalkwyk said the large, listed entities had made the most significant strides in ownership, "but as one travels down the chain to large unlisted companies, and down to micro businesses, figures reflecting black ownership, co-ownership and management decline significantly."

Presenting a summary of the findings of a baseline study into transformation by the council, council exco member Frank Kilbourn said the large and listed companies had made progress, large and unlisted companies were struggling on ownership

and strategic management, medium and small enterprises were struggling to implement transformation indicators, and there was a need to further communicate the business case of transformation.

Van Schalkwyk said that in the six provinces measured by the study, on average only 15.6% of 321 bed-and-breakfast operations — the entry point into the industry for many entrepreneurs — were owned by black operators. Of 90 hotels examined, only 4.4% were black owned or controlled. Black professional caterers comprised just over 1% of 23 establishments canvassed.

Given that the tourism floodgates opened in 1994, the "sad fact that cannot be ignored is that the majority of the country's pop-



Martinus van Schalkwyk with Tami Sokutu.

ulation did not benefit from this explosion of interest in the southern tip of Africa. We are known as

the Rainbow Nation, but few across the spectrum of the rainbow saw significant amounts of

foreign spending, pouring into their businesses, the minister said.

The chairman of the council, Tami Sokutu, said it was because of this failure that the council had launched a series of initiatives, which had borne fruit over the past year.

It had also launched a programme of engagement focused on involving players in order to maximise growth opportunities in the sector. The programme aimed to allow for opportunities to be explored in drawing organisations closer to the government and parastatal procurement of specific services.

It also aimed to increase support for enterprises and help them to be part of a growing local economy, Sokutu said.