



Press Release – Sandton Convention Centre – 21/02/2018

Confex Industry Impacts Wider Business Sector

The conference and exhibition industry has an ongoing and significant impact on the greater business and tourism value chain, contributing to growth in a wide variety of sectors, says Shaun Bird, Sandton Convention Centre's GM. "For every person who participates in an exhibition or conference, as an exhibitor, visitor, or delegate, there are positive repercussions for the local economy."

As examples, he cites travel costs – flights, car rentals, taxis, Gautrain – accommodation, food and entertainment during the event, as well as pre- or post-event leisure travel within the country, and notes: "Recent research by the National Convention Bureau shows that up to 60% of international delegates who have come to South Africa, will come back within the next five years with their family – creating a ripple effect in the economy." He adds that the research also found that about half the visiting business delegates are accompanied by one other person on their trips to South Africa, and a significant number are joined by three or more fellow travellers – colleagues or family members.

The National Economic Contribution Study 2014-2016 by the SA National Convention Bureau states that in job creation and economic impact, the international business events industry annually supports on average about 252 000 direct and indirect job equivalents in SA and contributes in total, over R115-billion to SA's annual GDP. The study states: "South Africa is host to approximately one million international business events delegates annually whose primary purpose of visit is to attend meetings, convention, conference or exhibition."

Bird notes that leisure visitors to the country tend to spend their own money when travelling here, whereas business delegates tend to travel on company money and have a larger amount of disposable income as their accommodation, flights, and conference expenses are taken care of. This allows them extra budget for shopping, excursions, and leisure travel within the country.

He believes there is more that can be done by the southern African conference and exhibition industry in terms of developing a rotational strategy for major global business events, both within South Africa, between the major cities, as well as within the SADC countries. "When major events are rotating within a region, it stimulates growth of the size of the pie, rather than growth in the number of slices in the same size pie," says Bird.

The theme of this year's Meetings Africa 2018, 'Shared Economies', echoes this perspective. Meetings Africa, which is Africa's premier business events trade show, takes place at Sandton Convention Centre from 26 to 28 February. Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, Chief Convention Bureau Officer at SA Tourism, reinforces the importance of the business events industry to the continent's

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economy. “The Shared Economies theme is a critical component of the work that our industry does, which is way beyond tourism. The goal this year is to expand the overall conversation and focus on how collaboration can help us find innovative solutions to bettering the lives of our people.”

Meetings Africa is an iconic industry event that showcases Africa’s diverse offering of services and products, and offers a platform for African associations and meetings industry professionals to partner to help transform the continent.

Bird comments: “Meetings Africa is the continent’s largest business tourism event and has been a signature event on the SCC calendar for 12 years. Last year we were proud to win the bid to host Meetings Africa for the next five years, which we believe reflects the growing success of these events.” At Meetings Africa 2017, 18 African countries were represented by 298 exhibitors, 177 international hosted buyers, 57 African association hosted buyers, and 126 local corporate hosted buyers attended.

“We look forward to welcoming every participant to the Tsogo Sun Sandton Mile for Meetings Africa 2018, and wish them all great success in their business endeavours,” he says.

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