

**SANCB sponsored feature for Business Events
Meetings Africa. All about African business**

Rise With Us

An invitation for the world to bring its business events to Africa; and a call to action for the South African sector to work together to realise the great potential of the business events industry

A GROWING GLOBAL market and an almost insatiable hunger for destinations that are capable, that have a great track record, and that bring a profoundly collaborative approach to business events. This makes Africa the world's business event destination of the future.

Couple this to the fact that the continent is home to seven of the fastest growing economies in the world today; that infrastructure development proceeds apace, and that Africa already has a proud track record in big event hosting, and you have a scenario that's ripe with potential: potential the South African National Convention Bureau is working hard to harvest for a continent that has business event ambitions of a global scale, and that's already making a significant mark in the global sector.

The South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) has encapsulated this in *Rise With Us* that calls on the South African business events industry to work together to realise the country's potential as a global and continental business event destination.

"In this very competitive industry where new players enter the market all the time, we need to streamline our efforts, work smarter, and work harder to stay ahead. *Rise With Us* gives us the muscle to do exactly this," says Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, executive manager at the SANCB.

A number of formal partnerships now exist between convention bureaus, between cities and provinces, between provincial tourism bodies and the private sector. These partnerships enable collaboration on many levels of the industry, helping the industry achieve more than before to advance South Africa's business events status.

“South Africa can, and does, deliver professional business events,” Kotze-Nhlapo says. “The destination offers value for money. It is economically and politically stable and has a proven track record. South Africa also offers a safe, secure destination for business tourism delegates as well as an extremely capable and professional infrastructure.”

Meetings Africa, she continues, is the ideal platform for the wider African business events industry to take the *Rise With Us* message to the world.

The exhibition, which will be presented at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, from February 24 to 26 next year, offers the continent one highly visible, well-attended and influential event at which to exhibit.

Kotze-Nhlapo says, “I invite the industry here at home and on the rest of the continent, too, to join us at Meetings Africa and to give the global market evidence of our professionalism, our capability and our united determination to grow in stature as a business event powerhouse destination.”

Meetings Africa, she adds, is now fully committed to an irrevocable path of being a pan-African exhibition and to put substance to the claim that South Africa's offering is professionally managed, streamlined, service orientated and ambitious for growth.

Twenty three African destinations outside of South Africa were represented at Meetings Africa 2013. It's a number that's set to grow, in the coming years.

There were nearly 300 buyers at Meetings Africa 2013. Half of them were international buyers, representing a world keen to do business with Africa. Of the international buyers, 115 were at Meetings Africa for the first time ever in 2013 giving excellent indication that Africa has come of age as a business event destination.

A record number of 115 journalists attended Meetings Africa. It's a number that will grow in 2014 as Africa's newsworthiness takes hold, and as the major trade titles of the world work to satisfy their audience's curiosity about this continent and its business event capability.

"This year, 2 880 delegates attended Meetings Africa, using the platform we created to get down to meetings, networking, talk shops and educational seminars. Meetings Africa gives the world evidence that Africa is capable, professional and organised. It's our track record that gives target markets and professional conference organisers the assurance they need that Africa can, and will, deliver with excellence.

"These are exciting times. It's the very best time to work in business events in Africa. The future is really incredibly ripe with opportunity. There has never been a better time for Africans to advance Africa together. And there has never been a better time for the world to rise with us. This is what drives our planning for Meetings Africa 2014."

Meetings Africa 2014 takes place at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg from February 24 to -26. For more information, please visit www.meetingsafrica.co.za.