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## DIRECTORATE: CORPORATE COMMUNICATION & ICT

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### Media Release

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### **MEC Mohono's working visit to the U.K and Germany proves a major success.**

They came; they saw and they conquered. This sentiment best describes the recent working visit by MEC for Tourism in the North West Province Mrs Desbo Mohono; who just concluded a whirlwind tour of the U.K and Germany.

The strategic thrust of the visit to the two countries by the MEC; was multi-pronged in orientation; first the visit was intended to do the following amongst others; reconnect the North West Province with the tourism market in both countries; create new partnerships with the tourism trade while strengthening old relations; but most importantly; continue to push and profile the North West Province as the preferred tourist destination of choice for hordes of tourists coming out of the two countries.

“As the department, we have taken a conscious decision, that most of our marketing programs will be deliberately tilted towards domestic tourism in the next financial year. However, as government and the department, we still appreciate and recognize the importance and contribution of International tourists towards growing our provincial economy. We will continue to interact an interface with this important segment of the market as a practical expression of our commitment to aggressively use tourism as critical sector in growing our economy and creating the much needed jobs”, opined MEC Mohono.

Leading a very lean and mean team; MEC Mohono first visited the U.K; where she managed to engage in a series of meetings with members of the tourism trade channel and media. Notably; her engagement with the Head of South African Tourism (SAT) in the United Kingdom, Ms Torlene van der Merwe; proved a monumental success; where the two parties agree on a number of things likely to

yield positive result for the province and greatly assist in positioning the destination North West favorably within the U.K market.

Out of that interaction; Ms van der Merwe expressed her commitment to working very closely with the North West province moving forward. Given the fact that they were in the middle of finalizing their marketing and business plans for the coming financial year, they made a binding undertaking to have the province included in their plans; this also meant the office relooking at their current joint marketing agreements model, to see where best to incorporate the province.

It was against this context; that MEC Mohono managed to immediately influence the London based office of SAT to include the North West province in the itinerary of the Irish journalists who recently visited the country (10<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016). The journos were treated to three days of experiences in the North West Province.

What must also rank very high as gains attained on this mission; was that the North West Province will now be one of the pre-Indaba hosting provinces; where a mix of journalists, tour operators and travel agents from the U.K; will visit the province on a familiarization mission just before the commencement of Tourism Indaba; dates had not been yet finalized by the time the MEC was engaging with SAT in London. Armed with the power of persuasion; the Ms Mohono managed to ensure that the Mega-Familiarization trip which is going to have a bigger compliment of trade journalists; tour operators and travel agents from the U.K, earmarked for visiting the country in September; also spends days in the North West Province.

“I must comment and applaud Ms Tolene van der Merwe as the Head of SAT in the U.K for the impeccable manner she handled our discussions. Her willingness to accommodate our province in some of their activities will surely go a long way in placing the province on a winning trajectory”, added Mohono.

Booed by the success registered in the U.K, MEC Mohono took her message of ensuring that the North West province claims its rightful place within the international markets; to Germany. Attending ITB-Berlin, the biggest annual international travel trade show in the world held in Berlin, Germany, MEC Mohono was joined by the Chairperson of the North West Tourism Board, Mr David Mogashoa.

Germany which is being touted as the second biggest core market for South Africa, after the U.K, the North West province was not about to miss an opportunity of presenting its case to thousands of agents and trade buyers who attended the ITB.

As was the case in U.K; MEC followed a simple but an effective strategy of engagement in making a case for the Province. She continued to interface with the strategic members of trade in Germany; together with the Chairperson of the Board; they visited the SA Embassy in Berlin to announce their presence in the German market; but most importantly to solidify the existing good relations that exist between the province and that embassy. This came in the background of other discussions that were held with the Deputy Minister of Tourism Mrs Tokozile Xasa, and the Acting CEO of SA Tourism Ms Sthembiso Dlamini, who were also attending ITB, to see how best to negate the skewed tourism flow patterns; that sees provinces like the North West not getting a fair share of the international market.

This led once more to intense engagement taking place between MEC Mohono; Chairperson of the Board Mr Mogashoa; with the Head of SAT in Germany Ms Therassa Bay-Muller. Discussion gravitated around how best to get the North West Province to be part of the marketing programme that is to be unrolled by the SAT German office for 2016. The discussions proved successful once again; with the German office making an undertaking to also review their plans for 2016 to make sure that the province is accommodated somewhat in their programme.

The icing on the cake was when Ms Miller promised to invite 17 key tour operators and travel agents to visit the North West Province during this year's Indaba.

“We are a province that dreams big; and we quite elated that in the German SAT office, we seem to have found partners that share in our dream and vision of growing the markets share of the province within the German populace. The onus now lies with us as a province to build on the momentum created by our presence here. We must continue to clarify and unpack what our product portfolio entails. Showcasing our scenic beauty; rich heritage and culture not forgetting our un- parallel wild life offering; is going to be instrumental in unlocking the potential of this market”, enthused Mr Mogashoa.

ITB which is regarded as the leading Travel Trade Show ran from the 09<sup>th</sup> till the 13<sup>th</sup> of March. The North West Province like other destinations; made sure that it interacted; communicated and generated interest amongst a hordes of international trade that attended the show.

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