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MEDIA RELEASE

Attention: News Editors/Journalists

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GAUTENG ROLLS OUT THE GOLDEN CARPET AND GROWS BUSINESS EVENTS AS IT PLAYS HOST TO BRICS SUMMIT

Johannesburg, The Gauteng province will be a hive of business, tourism, trade and investment activities this coming week as the golden province welcomes thousands of delegates and support teams for the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg. The formal sessions of this important gathering are expected to be spread across the major economic and business events nodes of the city region with Sandton City, Gallagher Convention Centre, Birchwood and Montecasino amongst others playing host.

This bodes well for the visitor economy and business events sector in the province as these types of high-profile events generates the much needed jobs and tourism revenue into the economy. The excitement, anticipation and buzz around the province is building up with Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi and MEC for Economic Development Tasneem Motara primed to play champion hosts to thousands of delegates, visitors, media, business associations and support teams making the golden province their bleisure destination for the next few days, explained Gauteng Tourism CEO Sthembis Dlamini.

While the BRICS Summit in itself brings together member country's participants, for us as Gauteng, we are looking forward in particular to play champion host with our fellow African countries who represents a strong and untapped market and frontier for sustained growth in tourism, trade, investment and business to business collaboration. Our message is Africa is hosting the BRICS Summit, South Africa is the location and the golden province of Gauteng is the stage in which prosperity, integration and consolidation of Brand Africa approach starts.

The value of hosting the BRICS Summit for the Gauteng economic recovery efforts cannot be underestimated. The Summit comes at a time when the country has shown an impressive 46,5% rise in foreign tourist arrivals when comparing June 2023 to the same period last year, as reported by Statistics SA. A quick glance at these numbers also shows that business travellers tend to stay longer and spend more with African travellers leading the pack.

It is for this reason that the Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA), who is the key driver of tourism business growth initiatives in the province, is pulling out all the stops to ensure that this period showcases the best of Gauteng's attractions to global and local visitors alike.

For the GTA and many businesses in the province that rely on tourism activities and increased visitors into the province, the Summit is not only about the BRICS delegates who will be here, but also potentially future visits from repeat visitors once they have tasted the unique attractions that Gauteng has to offer.

Much has been reported about the politics surrounding BRICS and its formation, one thing is clear though is that this year's Summit takes place against a backdrop of the Forum's growing popularity amongst emerging economies. This has brought the added advantage of attracting African governments and the continent's business leaders who will be attending in support of South Africa as a host and bringing with them much needed currency inflows and solidarity.

There is no doubt that many sectors will be positively impacted from accommodation, transportation, food, security, logistics and hospitality establishments with majority of them already fully booked. We are excited by the prospects of our visitors and delegates immersing themselves in our food and culinary experiences. From Mogodu-Mondays in Soweto to tasty Biryani's in Fordsburg, signature Kota's in Alex, fine dining at Africa's tallest rooftop building in Sandton and refreshing beverages at Mall of Africa and Menlyn Main, we got everyone covered, emphasized Dlamini.

The ongoing efforts to improve airlift in and out of Gauteng will also be on a spotlight during the Summit, as flights into OR Tambo, Lanseria and Waterkloof airports will test the capacity of the golden province. Gauteng is the only province with three international airports and together with its state-of-the-art emergency air services, chopper rides, hot-air-ballooning and skydiving experiences, Gauteng-by-Air will be one of the province's key offerings in-demand leading up to the Summit, during and post.

To gain a better perspective of BRICS Summit in numbers, it is useful to reflect on who is expected to be in South Africa in anticipation of the start of the Summit. South Africa is expected to welcome the BRICS Heads of State, their delegations of ministers, government officials and support staff. In addition, at least 25 other countries represented by their Presidents and ministers will be here to add their weight in support of South Africa's hosting of the Summit. Recent reports have also indicated that more than 40 countries have expressed their interest in joining BRICS, so we can expect many more representatives from countries in the global South to make their way to Johannesburg. Add to this the various observers, business leaders, analysts and civil organizations and members of the media, both local and international makes up the impressive numbers.

All these people will be sleeping in the province, eating at the various venues and establishments, buying local products, interacting with our communities, and immersing themselves in our culture and way of life. These are the direct ripple effects of tourism and a growing visitor economy. It is more than just a conference or meeting room. It is social currency in action.

For an in-depth access into the golden province of Gauteng's tourism, business events, lifestyle and hospitality experience, delegates, visitors and locals are encouraged to download the **#VisitGauteng travel guide APP available on i-store and google play for IOS and Android devices**. The newly launched APP will be your trusted companion during and post your stay in Gauteng.

For more information, visit www.gauteng.net @visitgauteng on Instagram, twitter and tiktok and I love gauteng on facebook and Gauteng Tourism Authority on Linkden.

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