

MEDIA RELEASE - 29 April 2002

Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism - For immediate release

MINISTER MOOSA LAUNCHES A MULTI-COUNTRY TOURISM INITIATIVE

The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa, today launched a multi-country tourism initiative aimed at significantly boosting Africa's global status as a unique tourism continent.

Speaking at the launch of the Coast 2 Coast initiative in the offices of the Gauteng Tourism Authority in Rosebank, Johannesburg, Minister Moosa said that international tourists thirsting for the essence of modern-day Africa would now quench their senses by experiencing 'All of Africa on One Road'.

Coast 2 Coast is a collaborative tourism marketing initiative offered jointly by five countries in the Southern African region. It is an umbrella concept under which a number of different tourism products and experiences have been interlinked.

Similar to Route 66 in US and Explorer Highway in Australia, Coast 2 Coast invites tourists to undertake a 3 000km odyssey across Southern Africa. Their journey of discovery will follow the course of the fully tarred Trans Africa Highway as it traverses Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique - providing the opportunity to experience the diverse offerings of the individual countries while savouring the unique cultures of the sub-continent.

Commenting on the initiative, Mr Moosa said, "Coast 2 Coast is uniquely structured. Nowhere else in the world is there a single tourism product initiated and developed by the governments of five countries. The initiative is unique in that it fosters regional co-operation and synergy rather than competition. Furthermore, the governments of the participating countries are jointly responsible for creating tourism demand and investment opportunities for the route.

"Essentially, the key objective of Coast 2 Coast is to grow tourism in the region and therefore deliver benefits in economic growth, employment, foreign investment and foreign exchange. Ideally, Southern Africa would be positioned as one of the world's major competing tourism destinations.

From a South African perspective, I am confident that the initiative will contribute in a meaningful way to realising local tourism industry objectives. It is anticipated that Coast 2 Coast will be instrumental in increasing the volume of tourist arrivals and spend, while improving seasonally patterns and tourists overall length of stay on a sustainable basis".

The Coast 2 Coast route includes a range of tourist attractions, lodges, cultural experiences, cities and towns within a 150-km corridor extending north and south of the Trans Africa Highway, with the surrounding road infrastructure providing the loops and linkages between the identified sites.

The composite offering embraces a variety of landscapes and environments from beach to bush; desert to deltas; adventure and activities; to people, culture and crafts; and business gateways and cities. These diverse tourism assets and experiences form a chain of themed geographic tourism clusters, each self-standing but collectively forming and contributing to a true African experience overall.

"In the long-term it is intended that Coast 2 Coast will assist in establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with international mega-tourism businesses and tap into their large existing markets, capital and credibility. In turn, they would be able to fulfil their investment requirements in Southern Africa while assisting in boosting visitor numbers to the region," added Minister Moosa.

Growth in international tourist numbers to Southern Africa will also generate revenue for the region; both by way of tourism spend and increased income taxes.

"We believe that Coast 2 Coast is well positioned to address the growing demand for adventure and eco-tourism destinations among both domestic and international tourists, " Minister Moosa concluded. "This,

together with the magical aura of Africa, promises to deliver an unforgettable experience. An experience that will put Southern Africa firmly on the international tourism map."

Additional information can be obtained from the Coast 2 Coast website at <http://www.africacoast2coast.com>

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