**SOUTHERN AFRICA BOOKS TOURISM AS A TOP PRIORITY**

From barely getting a mention a few years ago, tourism was identified as one of four priority sectors for Africa at this year's World Economic Forum Southern Africa summit.

The who's who of business and government leaders in Southern Africa and beyond took tourism to the top of their agendas, alongside telecommunications, energy and mining.

Whereas in the past the summit's workshops on travel and tourism were sparsely attended fringe issues, this year they were over-subscribed. Even government ministers were turned away.

It's not surprising. Tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to solutions for joblessness and poor growth, but we may also be in danger of seeing it as a cure-all.

Campaigns within SA are raising awareness. The message is everywhere: every eight tourists creates one job, but it's clear there is little awareness within the 14 SADC countries of tourism's importance. See linked chart.

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*A:\EMPLOYMENT FIGURES*

The SADC does have a tourism marketing arm, the Johannesburg based Retosa (Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa). But its efforts, with limited funding, are directed at drawing foreign tourists. Its success is debatable - judging by reactions from the summit's foreign participants, Retosa is not well-known in the markets it tries to reach.

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