



CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT 'COULD GROW SA BUSINESS TOURISM TENFOLD'

SA has massive business tourism potential, says Craig Newman, CEO of AAXO sponsor Johannesburg Expo Centre



Craig Newman, CEO of the Johannesburg Expo Centre



AAXO Chairperson Carol Weaving

The public sector could help create this conducive environment by drawing on industry knowledge and expertise.

South Africa, and the entire SADC region, stands to gain from an influx of business tourism – assuming a conducive environment is created. This is according to Craig Newman, CEO of the Johannesburg Expo Centre and incoming president of the international exhibition body UFI.

Announcing the Johannesburg Expo Centre's silver sponsorship of the Association of African Exhibition Organisers (AAXO) in Johannesburg, Newman said industry bodies such as AAXO played a crucial role in bringing the exhibition industry together, and giving it a voice.

"Our sponsorship of AAXO supports efforts to drive business tourism to Southern Africa," Newman said. "By working together through a credible industry association, all industry stakeholders are better positioned to raise awareness and engage with

the public sector on initiatives to grow business tourism to the region."

Business tourism presents significant economic growth opportunities, he said. "Commodities have a limited lifespan, and there is a growing realisation that both business and leisure tourism present new opportunities." Business tourism alone could grow ten-fold in the SADC region, contributing to economic growth and job creation, Newman said.

However, to capitalise on the potential, the region has to overcome issues such as visa challenges and international perceptions around safety and security in the region. Newman believes that industry stakeholders, working closely with the public sector, can change perceptions, overcome the challenges and create an environment conducive to a thriving business tourism industry.

"The public sector could help create

this conducive environment by drawing on industry knowledge and expertise, as well as by working with South Africa's neighbours to present the entire Southern African region as a compelling international destination with a market of up to 300 million people," he said.

Echoing these sentiments, AAXO Chairperson Carol Weaving welcomed the Johannesburg Expo Centre's sponsorship and closer engagement with AAXO. "We are very excited about the enhanced collaboration and support of the Johannesburg Expo Centre and its CEO. We believe that partnerships such as this one stand to benefit AAXO, our associated members, and the exhibition and business tourism ecosystem as a whole," she said.

For more information on AAXO, visit www.aaxo.co.za or contact Llewellyn du Plessis on 011 549 8300 or at llewellyn@aaxo.co.za.