

Durban to host International AIDS Congress in 2016

The 2016 International AIDS Congress will take place at the Durban International Convention Centre from 17-21 July 2016. The Mayor of eThekweni, James Nxumalo and bid partners announced the successful bid granted by the International AIDS Society.

"The congress is one of the most significant global association-related congresses. It is set to be attended by 20,000 delegates and the expected economic impact of this event will be in the region of R700 million," said Tourism Minister, Marthinus van Schalkwyk.

"The congress is one of only 30 international association meetings that have delegate numbers of more than 10,000 and which are officially listed on the International Congress and Convention Association database," stated Michael Mabuyakhu, the MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, KwaZulu-Natal.

"This will be the biggest congress to be hosted in South Africa and the city of Durban and once again emphasises the considerable ability of our country and our city to host mega events of this nature. This will be the second time Durban hosted this event. No other city in the world has had the privilege of doing so," added Nxumalo.

"The prevention of HIV and AIDS is one of the most important challenges of South Africa's national development plan and 2030 vision and is critical to provincial growth and development strategy and the eThekweni integrated and development strategy. This disease is significantly stifling the economic development potential of South Africa, the province and Durban. The congress will be a key tool to assist us to deal with and continue to raise awareness of this key pandemic, which is prevalent in our city and the immediate rural surrounds," said the city manager of eThekweni, Sibusiso Sithole.

Bid strategy blueprint

"This bid and the manner in which the site inspection for the right to host this event was organised, is a clear case study on how such processes should be managed at a national, provincial and city level as 'Team South Africa'. Such processes are clearly articulated in our National Business Events Strategy, led by our National Convention Bureau and this was a clear example of putting strategy into practice," said Thulani Nzima, CEO of South African Tourism.

"I am also pleased to emphasise that we managed to outbid both London and Istanbul, two of the world's leading cutting edge business events destinations, for the right to host this event. This just proves that South Africa has the ability to compete - and win - against the very best business events destinations in the world. We would like to congratulate the province and the city and assure them of our support in the staging of what we are confident will be yet another seamless mega event.

"South Africa is home to the world's foremost AIDS researchers and public health practitioners and this country has in recent years made major strides in the fight against this pandemic. Staging this major Congress in Durban gives more South Africans the opportunity to attend and interact with the world's leaders in the fight against HIV prevention and puts the global spotlight on this critical global issue."

Knock-on effect in tourism

"An enormous amount of team effort has gone into securing this conference and the Durban ICC is proud to once again be hosting this important International Conference," said Julie-May Ellingson, CEO of the convention centre."

"This congress will provide a boost for Durban and KwaZulu-Natal's tourism sector; not only because of the 20,000 delegates but because 20%-40% of international congress delegates return to a destination as leisure tourists. Business event tourists can also be converted into much needed 'word-of-mouth' ambassadors for potential tourists that are making up their minds to visit a particular destination," stated Sadha Naidoo, the chairman of the Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Board.

The International AIDS Society requested James Seymour, the CEO of the Durban KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau, to co-ordinate this bid.

"I would like to thank all of the stakeholders in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa who helped the bureau and convention centre to put together the bid document and to raise the resources that were required to host this event. I would particularly like to thank our city manager, Sibusiso Sithole, who stepped in to provide a significant portion of the support that is needed to host this event and who gave up his valuable time to personally meet with the site inspection team, when they visited at the beginning of this year. The MEC for Economic Development and Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal and chairman of events committee for the provincial government, Michael Mabuyakhulu, also needs to be acknowledged for his commitment to support this project. The South African National Convention Bureau also played a leading role in guiding the bid and committing some of the resources that will be required to host this event. The National Department of Health also needs to be thanked for putting its full weight and support behind the Durban bid," Seymour concluded.

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