

Industry view

AIPC
50 YEARS

This column is contributed by Cape Town International Convention Centre, a member of the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC). AIPC is an international association of more than 155 of the world's leading convention and exhibition centres. Its mission is to support, encourage and recognise excellence in convention centre operation and management. It is based in Brussels, Belgium. www.aipc.org.

Meetings in Africa leave a legacy

When organisations hold meetings in Africa, they not only provide a memorable experience for delegates, but tangible and enriching benefits for their hosts, says Cape Town International Convention Centre managing director, **Dirk Elzinga**.



Until recently, the number of international meetings taking place in Africa was limited; while Africa counts for 14 per cent of the global population, it only hosts two per cent of international meetings. However, there are now signs this is changing.

About half of all international non-government events are so-called world meetings that include all continents as hosts, but in the past – more frequently than not – the African continent was skipped in rotation schedules.

One of the more obvious reasons was because African membership in international organisations was underrepresented; most African countries are part of the developing world and a lack of resources has made it difficult for them to play an active role on the international stage.

Another valid reason was the lack of good meeting facilities in Africa.

Until a few years ago, the continent only counted a few “international” convention centres and these were not always in sought-after locations. Travelling times and international air fare costs created additional obstacles.

At the same time, there was a global perception of risks associated with holding a meeting in Africa,

from primitive healthcare to overall safety and security. However, these arguments against meeting in Africa are steadily disappearing.

The rebirth of South Africa 13 years ago and the construction of new convention centres have been the most important contributors to this phenomenon; the opening of Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) in 2003, in particular, brought Africa much closer to the rest of the world.

Last year, the CTICC hosted no less than 46 international conventions – one third of all international meetings on the continent.

Clearly, there was a pent-up demand from international associations waiting to offer members their first African experience as soon as decent meeting facilities were available.

Africa, and particularly South Africa, has an increasingly professional meeting infrastructure – not only purpose-built state-of-the-art venues, but also a wide range of DMCs, PCOs and accommodation.

Safety and security can be an issue, but with the right precautions this is no more serious than in many other cities.

Access also has become less of a problem given that for many travellers Africa is a mere overnight flight away, without disruptive time differences.

Healthcare in several African countries is on a par with European countries; wild animals disappeared long ago from the streets and tropical diseases are a manageable risk. Most importantly, international organisations enjoy the membership of an increasing number of Africans, proudly representing their countries.

The investment made in hotel accommodation in recent years has lured delegates into extended stays for pre- and post-conference programmes. Rising business levels have also seen PCOs and other convention service providers establishing operations across the whole continent. As a result, managing an event in Africa is no more challenging today than elsewhere.

As well as the financial benefits of an African experience there is a feel-good effect: that of making a real difference to the livelihoods of the people of the host city and country. It is widely known that international convention centres contribute substantially to their local economies. This is even more so in Africa where (business) tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy.

In South Africa today, tourism is even more important than the traditional mining sector. For example, the 46 international conferences that took place last year at the CTICC made it possible for this convention centre to create 3,800 direct and 5,300 indirect jobs in Cape Town and the Western Cape, and the centre contributed no less than 2.4



Cape Town International Convention Centre: opened in 2003, it brought Africa much closer to the rest of the world.

billion rand (US\$0.32 billion) to the South African GDP. Since it opened in 2003, the CTICC has trained more than 1,500 temporary employees and some 79 per cent of these have gone on to find permanent positions elsewhere, benefiting the wider hospitality industry. ■

The rebirth of South Africa 13 years ago and the construction of new convention centres have been the most important contributors to this phenomenon; the opening of Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) in 2003, in particular, brought Africa much closer to the rest of the world.

Do you agree? Send in your views to TTGmice, email: ttgnewsdesk@ttgasia.com

Harvest intelligent news and reports from every issue of TTGmice.



TTGmice – Asia Pacific's longest established and most intelligent MICE magazine.

Keeping MICE professionals tuned-in to the latest developments and hottest trends in the MICE industry since 1994.

TTGmice enjoys an excellent circulation to 13,500 quality MICE professionals.

TTGmice
Asia's No. 1 Magazine for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions & Exhibitions

SINGAPORE
6 Raffles Quay, #16-02, Singapore 048580
Tel: (65) 6395 7575 Fax: (65) 6536 2972

HONG KONG
33rd Floor Citicorp Centre, 18 Whitfield Road Causeway Bay, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2571 9333 Fax: (852) 2806 0646

Email: contact@ttgasia.com
Visit our website at www.ttg-mice.com