



Introduction

by Director General Themba Wakashe

Our continent is justly celebrated for its abundant natural heritage. From the southern beauty of the Cape Floral Kingdom, to the tropical forest of the Congo basin in the West, the glacier-clad summits of Mt Kenya in the East, to the vast expanses of the Sahara desert in the North, Africa boasts a glorious diversity of landscapes and environments. These are home to a fantastic array of wildlife, long recognised as a major draw card for visitors to the continent.

Amidst the beauty of its landscapes, the people of Africa have carved out their own unique and varied paths, developing cultural and knowledge systems that have yet to receive the recognition and celebration that they deserve. Many of the achievements of the people of Africa are slowly, yet surely, being brought to light; the remains of the ancient civilizations of Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe being a case in point. The shadow of the colonial era, and before that, of the slave trade, also form part of the continent's heritage, marked by the trading posts, forts and castles that once saw millions of African people deported to foreign countries. The slave trade brought the Africans in contact with the world, and gave rise to a global explosion of cultural innovation. Thus today, African heritage is not only present in Africa, but in a myriad of forms across the globe.