

NEWS RELEASE

RECORD NUMBER OF ENTRIES RECEIVED IN IMVELO RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AWARDS

A record number of 183 entries have been received in the 2009 Imvelo Responsible Tourism Awards programme, an increase of more than 30 percent over 2008.

Imvelo, running for the eighth year, awards tourism businesses that demonstrate sustained responsible practice in their operations in terms of their natural, social and economic environments.

Organised by the Federated Hospitality Association of Southern Africa (FEDHASA) in conjunction with Absa, the Department of Tourism, the Tourism Empowerment Council of South Africa and the Industrial Development Corporation, Imvelo has become synonymous with responsible tourism in South Africa.

FEDHASA CEO Brett Dungan says Imvelo is now firmly established as a benchmark for responsible tourism practice in South Africa. "We are truly pleased with the impact that Imvelo continues to make in the tourism industry. Environmental issues are becoming vitally important across all sectors and because of its huge employment and social upliftment potential, tourism should be at the forefront."

Imvelo – which means 'nature' in South Africa's Nguni languages - encourages industry members to accept voluntary guidelines promoting responsible tourism. The awards are in line with the responsible tourism guidelines for the South African hospitality industry and the UN World Tourism Organisation's code of ethics, and are supported by the Heritage Environmental Rating Programme.

Entries received will now be judged by a panel of experts – Helen Turnbull of Serendipity Africa, Stewart Lumka of Absa, Dr Johann Kotzé, tourism consultant, Anita Vernes of Thanda Private Game Reserve and Michael Nkosi of the Department of Tourism. Finalists will be announced in October.

Awards will be made in the categories Best social involvement programme, Best practice – economic impact, Best overall environmental management system, Best single resource management programme – for energy, water and waste, Most empowered tourism business and Investor in people. An overall Imvelo winner will be selected.

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A Chairman's Award could be made at the discretion of the FEDHASA chairman to any Imvelo entrant or any other organisation in the tourism industry that made a significant contribution to responsible tourism over the past year.

Winners will receive their awards at an awards ceremony to be held in Johannesburg on World Responsible Tourism Day, 11 November.

For more information contact Lynda Bacon on telephone 011 467 5009 or visit www.imveloawards.co.za.

(Ends)

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