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Johannesburg Wins Bid to Host Africa's Leading Water Symposium in 2027

30 October 2026

In a significant win, Johannesburg has been named host of the 28th WaterNet/WARFSA/GWPSA Symposium in October 2027, welcoming one of Africa's most influential water sector gatherings to the economic heart of the continent.

The successful bid was led by the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in partnership with the Johannesburg Convention Bureau (JCB), a division of the Joburg Tourism Company. This further strengthens Johannesburg's reputation as a leading destination for international association meetings, scientific congresses and knowledge-driven events.

The symposium will bring together researchers, policymakers, water experts, engineers, development agencies, postgraduate students and industry practitioners from across Southern and Eastern Africa to collaborate on some of the region's most pressing water management and sustainability challenges.

For Johannesburg, the achievement represents far more than securing the hosting rights to a conference. "Business events are a strategic tool for economic development and knowledge exchange. When we attract international conferences of this calibre, we're not only bringing delegates to our city, we're creating opportunities for collaboration, research partnerships, investment conversations and skills development that leave a lasting legacy long after the event concludes," said Rendani Khorombi, Executive Head: Tourism Strategic Services at Joburg Tourism and head of the Johannesburg Convention Bureau.

"Water security and sustainable resource management are among the defining challenges of our time, particularly across Africa. Hosting this symposium positions Johannesburg at the centre of these important discussions while showcasing our city's capability to host world-class scientific and academic gatherings. It is precisely the type of high-impact meeting we want to attract as we continue building Johannesburg's reputation as Africa's leading knowledge and business events destination."

The annual WaterNet/WARFSA/GWPSA Symposium is recognised as one of the region's foremost platforms for research collaboration, policy dialogue and knowledge sharing on integrated water resource management. Having been hosted continuously for nearly three decades, the symposium rotates among countries within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as Kenya and Uganda, and plays a critical role in shaping water policy and research agendas across the continent.

The successful bid also highlights the strength of the longstanding partnership between the Johannesburg Convention Bureau and the University of Johannesburg. The collaboration has already delivered notable successes, including support for the Society for the Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) 9th World Congress in 2025, the National Association of African American Studies and Affiliates (NAAAS) Conference and the 48th Annual Alcohol Epidemiological Symposium of the Kettil Bruun Society (KBS), hosted in Sandton in 2023.

Economic and Destination Benefits

The 2027 symposium is expected to generate substantial value for Johannesburg's visitor economy while providing a platform for meaningful engagement on water security, a critical priority on Africa's developmental agenda.

Expected benefits include:

- Increased hotel occupancy and visitor spend across Johannesburg.
- Revenue generation for restaurants, transport operators, attractions and tourism businesses.
- Business opportunities for local suppliers, small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) and event service providers.
- Enhanced international visibility for Johannesburg as a leading destination for scientific and academic conferences.
- Potential future bids for related association meetings and specialised sector events.
- Knowledge exchange and capacity building through engagement with leading regional and international experts.

Based on the outcomes of previous international conferences hosted in partnership with UJ, delegates are also expected to extend their stay in Johannesburg through pre- and post-conference touring programmes. This creates additional economic opportunities for local attractions, cultural experiences, tour operators and hospitality businesses across the city. Delegates attending previous conferences enjoyed curated experiences including Soweto, the Johannesburg Inner City, the Apartheid Museum, and UNESCO World Heritage sites at Constitituion Hill, Liliesleaf Farm, and the Cradle of Humankind, and other tourism attractions that showcase Johannesburg's rich history, culture, and lifestyle offerings.

A Win for Johannesburg's Knowledge Economy

For Joburg Tourism and the Johannesburg Convention Bureau, securing the WaterNet/WARFSA/GWPSA Symposium reflects a broader strategy of attracting meetings that align with the city's academic, scientific and economic strengths.

"Every successful bid strengthens Johannesburg's credentials as a city where ideas meet opportunity," added Khorombi. "Our role as the Convention Bureau is not simply to bring conferences here. It is to attract events that contribute to the city's long-term growth, support our tourism sector, create opportunities for local professionals and position Johannesburg as a hub for innovation and thought leadership on the African continent."

ENDS

**WaterNet/WARFSA/GWPSA*

***WaterNet Trust**, a regional network of universities, research institutes, and water-sector organizations focused on water resources management in Eastern and Southern Africa. [waternetonline.org]*

***WARFSA** = **Water Research Fund for Southern Africa**, a regional research funding and support initiative that promotes water-related research in the SADC region. The annual symposium is jointly organized under the WaterNet/WARFSA banner. [waternetonline.org], [iahs.info]*

***GWP-SA (GWPSA)** = **Global Water Partnership Southern Africa**, the Southern African regional network of the Global Water Partnership, which supports integrated water resources management across the SADC region.*

For more information about Joburg Tourism and upcoming events, visit our website visit.joburg

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Johannesburg is the largest city in South Africa and serves as the economic and cultural hub of the country. With its rich history, diverse population and thriving arts scene, Johannesburg offers a unique and unforgettable experience for visitors of all ages. Johannesburg Tourism Company is a destination management organisation (DMO) of the City of Johannesburg, dedicated to promoting the destination's tourism growth. Its primary function is to promote Joburg as a business, lifestyle, sport and leisure destination, both locally and internationally. Its operations include running a Convention Bureau, a Visitor Services Bureau, as well as co-ordinating city-wide tourism marketing programmes, tourism information gathering and analysis.