



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Media Statement

**Deputy Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa on
African Interaction on Tourism**

11 February 2013

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to this Media briefing, my focus is on **Integrated Tourism in Africa**, a discussion to take place between African Ambassadors represented in South Africa on 19 February 2013. We refer to this discussion as African Interaction on Tourism.

This discussion will be taking place within the broader context of Meetings Africa Exhibition geared to increase the marketing opportunities within the region and to enhance tourism growth and development. Meetings Africa is to showcase Africa's diverse business events product offering. It wants to work with business event partners on the African continent and want more global and African associations to use the great resources Africa has to bolster business event hosting and delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, it is important to firstly explain why it is necessary to have a discussion on integrated tourism in Africa. We looked at the fact that Tourism is a key element in the promotion of growth, socio-economic development and unity of our continent. Africa is now directing more and more of its energies towards enhancing socio-economic development of its peoples and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) whose target date is just around the corner in 2015.

In that context, Tourism is regarded as a fast growing industry that is likely to contribute immensely to the eradication of poverty, achievement of the MDGs and integration of Africa. Hence, the AU Commission wishes to maximise exploitation of this sector in its bid to improve the livelihood of the people of the continent and, at the same time, market what is best of Africa to the world.

As the continent, the time has come for us to embark on activities to support better tourism policies in Africa, as well as to create employment opportunities through increased investment in, and marketing of, African destinations.

We need to find models that can increase the visibility of Africa as a tourism destination and mobilise investment for sustainable tourism projects in Africa. We have quite a number of investors keen to come to our shores because they have realised the huge business opportunities in the African tourism sector.

According to the figures released by the *United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)* in October of 2012, International tourism in Africa has almost doubled since 2000, growing from 26 million international tourist arrivals to 50 million in 2011. International tourism receipts, a vital source of foreign exchange in the region, tripled in just one decade (from US\$ 10 billion in 2000 to US\$ 33 billion in 2010).

Ladies and gentlemen, the discussion we are going to have needs to come up with a framework on how the African Continent brands tourism. We are talking of Africa as a tourism destination. The manner in which we package and market our products needs to improve and be unique to suit the Africa's heart beat.

As Africa, we need to identify opportunities in various regions so that they can be duplicated where they currently are not.

Why is it critical to call upon all African Ambassadors into a discussion forum?

The whole world has realized that integration creates larger economic spaces and allows for economies of scale, which may increase efficiency, competitiveness and faster growth.

As a continent, we regard ourselves as developing nations. Our countries fully regard tourism as an important and integral part of their economic development strategies. This point tallies perfectly with the issue of integration.

Why Integration

There is a general recognition that the real question is not whether there should be co-operation or integration, but rather to identify that combination of co-operation, coordination and integration, that is realistic and feasible under prevailing conditions, and that could thus best advance the goals of contributing to growth and development of Tourism in Africa.

African Hub Strategy Development

Africa's diverse array of regional institutions are already promoting greater political and economic integration among neighboring countries and tackling shared resource management issues. At the continental level, the African Union seeks to unite African countries under a single political union and common market.

At the regional level, Africa's Regional Economic Communities bring together countries to address common development challenges and deepen economic and political integration. Strengthening the capacity of these institutions is critical to accelerating the integration agenda.

The new trend for tourism growth is by establishing regional hubs which would allow marketing and promotion within the identified area of common features. In South Africa, my department, which is the National Department of Tourism would in partnership with South African Tourism (SAT) implement the Africa Hub Strategy.

The opening of a country office in Nigeria, Angola and Kenya by SAT will boost the Departmental hub strategy efforts. Also critical will be partnerships with the departments such as Transport, Public Enterprises on air links and Home Affairs in facilitating the movement of tourists to SA from these regional hubs.

The agenda for discussion centres on Advancing Africa Together. The acceleration of Africa's regional integration is imperative for its future economic competitiveness and its development and prosperity, consistent with the global trend towards regional economic integration. Essential in this regard will be the development of skills, infrastructure and interconnectivity, intra-regional trade, common markets, and the removal of trade barriers.

The integration of SADC remains critical for the economic development of the region and for South Africa's global competitiveness. Regional economic cooperation and integration offers an

opportunity for regional industries to overcome the limits of small national markets and enhance competitiveness as a platform to participate at global economy.

South Africa will continue to place particular focus on cross border infrastructure development. We believe that the integration of SADC, the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) East African community (EAC) will advance political unity and economic strength of Africa.

SA's relations with individual countries remain central to its foreign policy practice as it continue to strengthen bilateral cooperation with African countries by engaging on sustainable partnerships for development, promotion of trade and tourism investment, establishment of joint projects for infrastructure development, provision of technical assistance for institutional and policy development.

South Africa will pursue closer synergy between its bilateral and multilateral engagements in the region in support of the African development agenda.

Why is it necessary for Governments of Africa to be involved in Tourism?

As you might be all aware; the traditional role of government is to formulate policy for the tourism sector. Yes, that is true. However, things have changed and we have to evolve with the emerging trends as a Continent.

Today, the focus has changed because of changing priorities occasioned by development in the international tourism scene (e.g. the emergence of consumer interests). The challenge for national governments is to formulate tourism sector policies that best reflect the new thinking.

Some important areas needing policy re-orientation or refocusing are:-

- consultations with local communities in the planning process;
- forging partnership with the private sector;
- liberal immigration regulations to facilitate free tourist movement;
- tourism infrastructure development policy to facilitate tourism development, and this shall be aimed at not just benefiting the tourism sector but the wider society.

These are some of the issues that our discussion session will have to discuss frankly and very robustly.

We have a responsibility to review the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Tourism Action Plan. It is critical that South Africa, in cooperation with its African partners, continue to support the implementation of NEPAD programmes, particularly those that strengthen cross-border infrastructure development, ICT, agricultural, tourism, capacity building and industrialisation.

On tourism, NEPAD recognized the need for focused actions that will result in dynamic tourism sector such as: - Forging partnership to maximize the benefits of information sharing and cooperation.

It is through the NEPAD Action Plan that we believe that Africa collectively should have programmes that will:

- encourage and assist African countries' efforts to address security, hospitality-management, infrastructure and environmental constraints to tourism development, including through tourism training programs;
- support tourism operators to increase familiarization with African destinations and improve knowledge of the continent and its tourist attractions;
- support long-term tourism promotion through events such as travel fairs.
- strengthen the tourism agencies of Regional Economic Communities in all five sub-regions of the continent in order to promote their tourist attractions

A need to partner with the media

To a large extent, under-performance in the tourism field stems from negative reporting of the continent in the global media. In most cases, natural and man-made disasters get the limelight while positive developments are ignored. This has created a situation where there is widespread lack of awareness of the vast tourism potential in the continent. Both ignorance and negative image creates considerable skepticism in tourist generating countries even among Africans who would like to visit parts of their continent.

Another shortfall arises from the fact that tourism in Africa is mostly associated with Eco-tourism, that is, wildlife and natural reserves. While some of these are unique to Africa and attract a great number of visitors, there is a need to also promote the other aspects especially those highlighting the wealth of the continent in the history of human civilisation.

These include mankind's important monuments and various cultures. Exploitation of all these potentials would inevitably lead to the expansion of tourist traffic in the continent from sources within and without.

We therefore need to work closely with the media as partners and educate the world about this tourism destination called Africa. As much as it has its own challenges, there are good stories that will continue to motivate people to explore this destination. As Africa, we are not only looking at International tourists but we do promote domestic tourism so that our people can appreciate the beauty within their borders.

I therefore urge you all to follow the discussion we are going to have with the African Ambassadors under the theme "Advancing Africa Together" closely on 19 February 2013. The venue is Sandton Convention Centre.

I thank you.

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