

TEMPLATE – SIDE EVENTS SUMMARIES

Summary of Side Event

JOURNEY TOWARDS PROSPERITY: EMPOWERING AFRICA'S TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

January 30, 2024, from 8:15 AM to 9:30 AM (EST, New York time) Virtual

Background on the event

African Tourism Board is thrilled to present a dynamic side event as part of the ECOSOC Partnership Forum. The session, titled "Journey towards Prosperity: Empowering Africa's Tourism for Sustainable Development," aims to explore the intersection of sustainable tourism, poverty eradication, and addressing multiple crises in Africa while reinforcing the 2030 Agenda. As a proud partner with African Union and a force on the ground, African Tourism Board is responsible catalyst to foster intra and inter African tourism. The side event sessions delve into the importance of delivering sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions within the context of Africa's tourism industry. The session explore how tourism can become a catalyst for sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and environmental preservation in Africa.

Key Issues discussed

- 1- **Africa's Tourism Potential:** Emphasize Africa's vast tourism potential, underscoring the diversity of its offerings such as cultural and natural tourism, the wealth of heritage and historical sites, urban tourism with its recreational activities, and the unique wildlife experiences. Highlight how tourism acts as an engine for broad economic development, creating jobs, fostering investment, and improving livelihoods across the continent.
- 2- **Diverse Tourism Opportunities:** Urge consideration of untapped tourism sectors that Africa could exploit, like religious pilgrimages, business and trade expos, sports events, gastronomy, adventure and wilderness experiences, wellness retreats, educational tours, and humanitarian travel. These varied forms of tourism could further diversify income sources and attract different traveler demographics.
- 3- **Challenges in African Tourism:** Outline the challenges hindering the growth of tourism in Africa, such as inadequate funding and investment, the impact of negative travel advisories, suboptimal promotion and marketing strategies, and a lack of technical expertise. Address issues of counterproductive competition, regional conflicts, foreign exchange scarcities, and high unemployment rates that could be mitigated through tourism development. Highlight the general issue of accessibility within the continent and to individual countries, exacerbated by poor infrastructure, deficient services, and stringent regulatory barriers to free movement.
- 4- **Economic Characteristics of Tourism in Africa:** Detail the contribution of tourism to the African economy, including spending patterns in business and leisure tourism, both from international and domestic travelers. Emphasize the role of tourism in employment generation and its impact on GDP. Present data on tourism revenue as a vital part of African economies, and discuss how it can act as a stabilizing force in fluctuating economic conditions.
- 5- **Way Forward and Policy Recommendations:** Advocate for a unified approach that respects Africa's diversity while establishing a unique tourism path. Recommend policies that promote regional tourism, such as increasing air connectivity, improving road and rail networks, and simplifying visa procedures to facilitate easier access. Call for an increase in tourism investment by enhancing the business climate and prioritizing sustainability. Stress the importance of upgrading tourism destinations to foster a resilient and sustainable tourism sector in Africa.
- 6- **Harnessing Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Tourism:** Suggest leveraging technology and innovation to create more sustainable tourism practices. This includes using data analytics for targeted marketing, adopting renewable energy sources at tourist sites, and implementing digital tools for enhanced visitor experiences and conservation efforts.

- 7- **Collaboration and Partnerships for Sustainable Development:** Discuss the necessity for collaborative efforts between governments, international bodies, the private sector, and local communities to create a supportive environment for sustainable tourism. Emphasize the importance of shared goals and mutual benefits in these partnerships, such as creating jobs, protecting natural and cultural heritage, and ensuring the long-term viability of tourism ventures.

Key recommendations for action

Africa's tourism sector is a significant employer, providing jobs for over 20 million individuals, with women and youth making up 50% of this workforce, contributing to 8% of the continent's GDP. Consequently, the sector is prioritized for service trade liberalization within the African Continental Free Trade Area framework. The African Union Commission has implemented several key strategies, ratified by African leaders, to serve as the foundational policy for member states and regional economic communities. These strategies are integral to the Agenda 2063 flagship initiatives, anticipated to spur broad economic growth and specifically advance the tourism industry, including initiatives like the Single African Air Transport Market. Therefore, the key recommendations out of our forum are as follows;

- **Capacity-Building Trainings:** Advocate for targeted training programs aimed at enhancing the skills of individuals in the tourism sector, focusing on both the service and managerial levels to improve the quality of tourism services and ensure sustainable practices.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Recommend frameworks that incentivize the private sector to invest in African tourism, including tax incentives, public funding matches, and streamlined regulations, to foster collaborative development and innovation.
- **Ministerial Collaboration:** Encourage the establishment of regular dialogues and knowledge-sharing platforms among tourism ministers to harmonize regional tourism policies and share successful strategies and data analytics for informed decision-making.
- **Financing Connectivity:** Suggest creating dedicated funds or leveraging existing ones to invest in critical infrastructure, such as transportation networks and digital connectivity, essential for tourism growth and enhancing visitor experiences.
- **Prioritizing Tourism:** Urge countries to integrate tourism into their national economic strategies, recognizing its role in job creation, cultural exchange, and its significant spillover effects into other economic sectors.
- **Adopting Recovery Plans:** Recommend the development of a comprehensive digital marketing strategy for tourism that incorporates emerging technologies, such as augmented and virtual reality, to create immersive and engaging promotional content.
- **Crisis Management Strategy:** Advise the formulation of a crisis management plan that includes an advisory team with expertise in health, security, and environmental sustainability to provide guidance and ensure resilience in the face of disruptions.
- **Youth Engagement:** Call for programs that actively engage the youth in the tourism industry, particularly through digital marketing and social media, recognizing their role as digital natives in innovatively promoting tourism destinations.

Reported by;

African Tourism Board

Hiwotie Anberbir Assefa (Secretary General)

secretariat@africantourismboard.africa

info@africantourismboard.africa

+251913148497

www.africantourismboard.africa