Dear Esteemed members,

Tourism is a sector that has proven to be resilient and able to adapt to change despite many challenges. This has been true in several instances especially in Africa whereby over the past years we have been faced with several challenges ranging from political instability to pandemics and natural disasters.

Despite these challenges, in 2014 Africa’s international tourist numbers grew by an estimated 2%, equivalent to an increase of one million arrivals. The region reached 58 million tourists and US$ 36 billion in exports from international tourism (+3%). While arrivals to North Africa were weak (+2%), Sub-Saharan Africa saw international tourist numbers rise by 3% despite the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in a few West African countries. The future outlook remains positive with 134 million arrivals forecasted by UNWTO for 2030.

Early this year we successfully hosted the 6th edition of INVESTOUR, the annual tourism and business forum held on the occasion of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR). The well-attended forum saw the participation of 16 Tourism Ministers from Africa and the Middle East and tourism experts who came together to discuss on key issues for tourism in Africa, including branding and promotion, foreign direct investment, human resources development and visa facilitation.

Last February, UNWTO, together with UNESCO, hosted the first World Conference on Tourism and Culture which brought together Ministers, leading experts and stakeholders in the two fields to highlight the need to create a new framework for collaboration between tourism and culture. Culture and heritage are major assets in our region and a major attraction for visitors.

Through our programme of work this year we will continue to address the pertinent issues and challenges of the region whilst focusing on the positive outcomes that tourism as an engine of growth and a tool for socio-economic development brings in terms of job creation and poverty alleviation.

We wish you a happy read and encourage you to share with us your activities.

Elcia Grandcourt
Regional Director for Africa

INVESTOUR 2015: Africa needs a stronger brand

Branding and promotion, foreign direct investment, human resources development and visa facilitation were among the key topics in focus at the VI Investment and Tourism Business Forum for Africa (INVESTOUR). 16 Tourism Ministers from Africa and the Middle East and experts from different areas attended the yearly Forum, held on the occasion of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR). The debates focused particularly on the need to work towards a stronger Brand Africa (Madrid, Spain, 29 January 2015).

Between 2000 and 2014, international tourist arrivals to Africa more than doubled, from 26 million to 56 million. Despite a challenging 2014, the region still grew 2% compared to 2013, and the future outlook remains positive with 134 million arrivals forecasted by UNWTO for 2030.

INVESTOUR, a joint UNWTO, FITUR and Casa Africa initiative now in its sixth year, has become a central platform for companies and African tourism authorities to promote investment and commercial opportunities in the continent. This annual event is also a key forum to debate some of the most pressing issues affecting tourism in Africa. Read More+
UNWTO Secretary General Official Visit to South Africa

Last February, UNWTO Secretary General visited South Africa at the kind invitation of H.E. Derek Hanekom, Minister of Tourism of South Africa. At the School of Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, Mr Rifai joined a roundtable discussion with Minister Hanekom and Leaders of the Tourism Industry hosted by Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA). This was followed by a visit to the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, one of South Africa’s eight World Heritage Sites and the world’s richest hominid site, home to around 40% of the world’s human ancestor fossils. In Cape Town, the Secretary-General visited several sites including Robben Island and Hotel Verde, South Africa’s greenest hotel and the first hotel in Africa to offer carbon-neutral accommodation and conferencing.

During the visit, Mr Rifai also addressed the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) conference on Cultivating Sustainable and Peaceful Communities and Nations through Tourism Culture and Sport in Johannesburg. On the occasion, Mr. Rifai emphasized that ‘Tourism, from its peace and mutual understanding. Peace is thus at the very heart of UNWTO’s mandate. The fundamental aim of our Organization is to promote and develop tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, peace, prosperity and mutual understanding.’

The visit was a fundamental opportunity to reinforce the cooperation between UNWTO and South Africa and engage South Africa’s commitment to the development of human capital in tourism and sustainability.

Conference on The Atlantic Initiative for Tourism 2015

UNWTO and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco organized jointly the Conference on The Atlantic Initiative for Tourism 2015 that was held in Rabat, on 11 and 12 March 2015. The Conference aimed to:

- Strengthen the partnership among the countries on both sides of the Atlantic
- Promote the sharing of experiences and good practices
- Create a multi-party roadmap for the development of tourism on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean (Rabat Declaration).

The Rabat Declaration, which was adopted on the 11 March 2015, is to promote mutual understanding and the exchange of experiences and best practices for the sustainable development of tourism in the countries on both sides of the Atlantic. It is also aimed at building and strengthening the cooperation among the countries concerned. The principal theme of the conference, which was attended by 15 Ministers of Tourism from Africa, Europe and the Americas as well as more than 150 high officials and stakeholders of the tourism sector, was ‘Tourism as a vehicle for closer relations between the peoples and civilizations on both shores of the Atlantic Ocean.’ This topic was approached from several angles with a particular emphasis on the actions that make it possible to bring people closer together, including:

- The development of air and sea transport to strengthen tourism between the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean;
- Culture’s role in tourism development and in bringing people closer together and;
- The valorisation of fragile ecosystems and biodiversity as a vehicle for the development of niche tourism.

UNWTO Capacity Building Course on e-marketing in Zimbabwe

UNWTO, the UNWTO.Themis Foundation and the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry of Zimbabwe, organized a regional capacity building Course on e-marketing in Harare, Zimbabwe from 23 to 27 March 2015. The course was open to executive officials and stakeholders of Zimbabwe and the SADC region who have responsibility for the design, implementation and monitoring of e-Marketing in the tourism sector.

The rise of the Internet and expansion of new technologies has transformed the tourism sector in unprecedented ways. This presents immense opportunities yet also great challenges for National and Destination Marketing Organizations that need to keep abreast in a constantly changing and competitive environment. As online information becomes one of the primary factors influencing travellers’ decisions, an effective e-marketing strategy is crucial to stand out on the global stage.

Launch of the Ethiopia Hotel Classification project

The Ethiopian Government, through its Ministry of Culture and Tourism, has placed great attention and commitment to boost the role of the tourism sector in the socio-economic development of the country. The Government recognizes that tourism plays a vital role in creating more job opportunities and alleviating poverty. In line with this, the Government has progressively increased investment in the sector that is seen as an engine for the overall growth of the nation. The vibrant economy and a growing tourism sector which spans cultural tourism, nature tourism and business tourism, has resulted in a rapid growth of new hotels both in Addis Ababa and other
Tourism development in Africa challenged by wildlife crime

Wildlife watching tourism is one of the most important tourism segments in Africa, according to new UNWTO research released on the occasion of World Wildlife Day. (3 March 2015) In view of tourism’s potential in advancing inclusive growth across the continent, poaching and illicit trade in wildlife pose a serious threat to the future of Africa’s socio-economic development, the publication warns.

In support of international efforts to tackle unprecedented levels of poaching and to strengthen the role of tourism vis-à-vis wildlife crime, UNWTO is spearheading efforts to increase knowledge on the economic value of wildlife watching in Africa.

Towards Measuring the Economic Value of Wildlife Watching Tourism in Africa, provides a first overview of this segment, its economic impact and the current involvement of tourism in anti-poaching measures.

"Poaching is not only destroying precious ecosystems, it also poses a serious threat to socio-economic development. The loss of biodiversity is directly linked to lost development opportunities in the African tourism sector, which provides livelihoods for millions of people", said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai in his message on the occasion of World Wildlife Day.

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon said "illegal wildlife trade undermines the rule of law and threatens national security; it degrades ecosystems and is a major obstacle to the efforts of rural communities and indigenous peoples striving to sustainably manage their natural resources."

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On the Ground in Africa

regions of the country. However, the lack of a hotel classification scheme was considered an obstacle in ensuring the development of a quality tourism experience in the country.

Thus, the Government of Ethiopia, under the framework of the Ethiopia Sustainable Tourism Development Project which is funded by the World Bank, developed a new Classification and Grading system for the accommodation sector and has requested UNWTO’s technical assistance to implement this scheme and thereby launch Ethiopia’s first comprehensive hotel classification programme.

Burundi: promoting the participation of youth and women in the tourism sector

In January 2015, the ST-EP project in Burundi, titled Enhancing Participation of Youth and Women in the Tourism Sector was successfully completed. The project had been launched in March 2014, and had as a main objective to build the capacities of women and young people to make a career in tourism enterprises in Bujumbura and at Lake Tanganyika and to strengthen the capacity of tourism SMEs at Lake Tanganyika. The project organized an advanced level training course for receptionist with 13 participants, and training courses for waiters at initial and advanced level with, respectively, 20 and 21 participants. Furthermore, the project identified opportunities and developed a strategy for providing business development support to selected micro and small tourism enterprises. In the last quarter of 2014, small grants were provided to nine local tourism enterprises and associations for investment needed to develop and improve their tourism activities, mainly excursions and handicraft production. The grants, of approximately US$ 1,500 each, were used to purchase various materials, such as canoes, bicycles, camping equipment, sewing machines, computer equipment, and have helped to diversify the product offer and improve operations.
11th UNWTO Ulysses Awardee for Innovation in Enterprises

Isoitok Camp Manyara, The African Footprint Co ltd (Tanzania) was the 11th UNWTO Ulysses Awardee for Innovation in Enterprises, on the occasion of the UNWTO Ulysses Award ceremony celebrated on 28 January 2015.

Isoitok Camp Manyara was created and designed to allow foreign travelers to experience the true life and daily existence of the Maasai whilst enjoying amazing views across “The Great Rift Valley” to Lake Manyara National Park.

Staying at Isoitok Camp is a learning experience both in terms of cultural tourism but also on how to run a business using the environment we have around us. The traveler gets to understand how the Maasai neighbors generally live and what they must endure over the changing seasons. The initiative does not end there as once again the traveler sees first hand and is educated during familiarization briefings as to what means to be an ‘eco-friendly’ “sustainable” camp.

Their responsibility is to aid educate and give back where ever possible to the Esilalei Maasai community at large. Their relationship with the Maasai has stood the test of time and the key to Isoitok Camps harmonious existence is how we treat and have worked alongside our Maasai neighbors delivering more than just words but fulfilling and reaching the goals that together we have set out to do. Read More+

Upcoming Events

- UNWTO Regional Conference –Enhancing Brand Africa, Fostering Tourism Development– Accra, Ghana, 17-19 August 2015
- 57th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa
- 21st Session of the UNWTO General Assembly, Medellin, Colombia, 12 to 17 September 2015

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