

Africa Day 2022 (25 May 2022)

Message from UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili

Dear Friends,

I send my warmest wishes to all those celebrating Africa Day.

This is a chance for us to come together to recognize the richness of this diverse continent, its people and its destinations, while at the same time noting the challenges and opportunities we face. And this year we focus on food security and nutrition, one of the most pressing issues for so many people in Africa.

Africa is endowed with 70% of arable land and agriculture is one of the most important economic sectors in the continent. To be sure, there are many challenges to address to transform the sector, to make it more sustainable and to secure food access and distribution. But we have good reason to be optimistic about the future.

Africa is home to the fastest growing urban populations on Earth and its growth is being driven by a buoyant youth possessing incredible talent and ingenuity. Moreover, tourism is returning across Africa, and our sector has the power to deliver positive change and inspire transformation.

Right now, around one-third of all the money tourists spend globally goes on food. In Africa, this supports businesses and both local and national economies. It also supports jobs and provides opportunities, most notably for women, for youth and for many people living in rural areas. But this enormous potential is yet to be fully realized.

We need to invest in human capital as a main pillar of recovery, giving people capacity, skills development and the right tools for entrepreneurship. MSMEs that

are the backbone of the sector must receive the necessary support from government to drive the sector and secure millions of jobs in Africa.

Africa is rich in immense natural and cultural resources and the diversification of the economy through tourism will be key to build resilience against external shocks and so build economic stability and greater food security.

Domestic and regional intra and inter tourism are valuable sources of income and can boost infrastructures. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) are paramount for advancing Africa's agenda on sustainable development.

Through the UNWTO Agenda for Africa –Tourism for Inclusive Growth, we will continue to support the continent and grow the sector as a pillar of opportunity for all. And we will continue to support Africa tourism with major flagship events:

In October, UNWTO will hold its 65th UNWTO Commission meeting for the region in Tanzania. And then in November, we will meet in Nigeria for the Global conference on Linking Tourism, Culture and Creative Industries, Pathways to Recovery and Inclusive Development.

And above all, we will continue to champion Africa, its people, its rich heritage and vibrant cities and its rich gastronomy.

On behalf of everyone at UNWTO, I wish you all a happy Africa Day.