Africa unites to form tourism board, harnesses growth on the continent

Africa's tourism competitiveness is below its potential, and despite the great progress that it has been made, the tourism industry on the continent remains behind other regions in terms of competitiveness; experiencing a 5% share in worldwide arrivals and not more than 3% share in tourism receipts.

Slava Bowman via Unsplash.

This calls for a radical change in the continent's approach to tourism policy formulations, implementation and development in all destinations and at the continental level.

If Africa's tourism industry has to make a meaningful contribution to United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063 dubbed "the Africa we want" it calls for a unity of purpose to work together and make the continent competitive.

That is why a regional organisation is needed to provide a dialogue mechanism between the public and private tourism stakeholders and academia within a coherent framework to give guidance in building and strengthening tourism competitiveness policies and strategies. **To this end:**

Aware of the global significance of the tourism industry as the world's largest and fastest growing industry that has proved to have the power to contribute to the social-cultural and economic development and also forms an excellent instrument for promoting economic emancipation, understanding, goodwill and foster closer relations among different peoples of the world.

Conscious of Africa's share of the world tourism receipts and global standing is below its perceived potential.

Acknowledging that the need to bolster international development cooperation through projects and programs aimed at increasing the benefits of tourism for the less privileged societies of our Region.

Desiring to promote the integration of the four dimensions of sustainable tourism development, economic growth and the end of poverty, social inclusion environmental sustainability and good governance, towards the achievement of the United Nations 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

Mindful of the region's rich tourism potential which offers an array of natural and man-made tourism products. Added to all these the region's diversity of history and cultural heritage.

Deeply concerned that most of this potential remains underdeveloped and, therefore, not contributing to the economic well-being of the people of the Region.

Convinced that the realisation of Africa's tourism potential can only be achieved through unity of purpose, collective and concerted efforts by all stakeholders in the 54 countries that make up this great continent.

Wishing to contribute, through common action in tourism development, to the progress and wellbeing of the peoples of the Region

Recognising and considering the efforts of the international organisations' key industry players such as World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) play in advancing tourism development on the region.

Appreciating the role of the regional body of the African Union (AU) plays in advocating for tourism development on the Region

The African Tourism Board founded in 2018 by the International Coalition of Tourism Partners, is a regional organisation with an international character for both private and public sector firmed on acting as a catalyst for the development of responsible tourism and travel within, to and from the African region resulting from stakeholders desire to move with a unity of purpose on tourism development in Africa.

The fundamental aim of the organisation is to advocate for the sustainable development and promotion of tourism as a driver for the social-economic development of the Africa Region. Further to be a leading voice and advocacy authority on tourism development in Africa.

The fundamental objectives of the organisation are to:

• Promote regional and international understanding, peace, prosperity, and universal respect for all,

• Advocate for the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without discrimination based on race, sex, language or religion.

• Provide support to members and partners that are targeted at sustainable tourism development

• Foster public-private partnerships and contribute to the safeguarding of natural, cultural and man-made tourism products of the region.

• Promote tourism education, training, and research

In its day to day operations, the organisation shall focus on organising, engaging and carry out tourism activities that encourage socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable tourism activities, and that contribute to eliminating poverty and inequalities through the implementation of concrete projects.

To accomplish this strategic goal the organisation shall seek to embark on but not limited to the following activities:

• Conduct promotions, events for fundraising purposes, and other self-financed activities.

• Conduct research and forums in association with the public, private, and international communities and publish reports that will form a basis for decision making.

• Strengthen regional and international cooperation by encouraging public-private partnerships that contribute to the development of Africa;

• Collaborate in the implementation of tourism projects done by other executing agencies which have similar purposes and activities.

• Support research and innovative tourism projects that meet international standards;

• Cooperate and carry out projects and activities with other stakeholders focusing on sports, culture, education, and human resources development as they relate to sustainable tourism development.

• Provide training, operational support, technical assistance, human resources development, and tourism development programs aimed at bridging the gap between the rich and the poor

• Identification of tourism investment opportunities and the preparation of investment plans, to benefiting members and

• Implement other activities in line with the organisation's aims and objectives.