

**AFRICAN UNION**

**الاتحاد الأفريقي**



**UNION AFRICAINE**

**UNIÃO AFRICANA**

---

**P. O. Box 3243, Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA Tel.: (251-11) 5525849 Fax: (251-11) 5525855**

[www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)

---

**Ref.: CIE/ ...**

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

**Mr. Edward Bergman  
Chief Executive Officer  
Africa Travel Association  
eddie@africatravelassociation.org**

**Dear Mr. Bergman,**

Thank you for your communication regarding the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of the Africa Travel Association (ATA). On my own behalf and on behalf of the African Union, I would like to convey my heartfelt greetings to you and all the delegates attending the meeting. Indeed, this is an important event for the development of the tourism industry in Africa that, enjoys the support of all stakeholders in the continent. In that regard, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government and people of Egypt for hosting the event in the beautiful and historic city of Cairo.

More specifically, please extend my greetings to Honourable Shamsa S. MWANGUNGA, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania and the current Chairperson of Africa Travel Association and Honourable Mohamed Zoheir GARANA, the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Egypt. The African Union is confident that ATA would benefit immensely from their able leadership.

I would have wished for the opportunity to attend the congress in person and share with you and all the participants the vision of the African Union in this important sector. However, as you are aware, I will not be able to join you in Cairo due to previous commitments that I have to attend to during the same period. However, I would like to assure you and all the delegates that the African Union associates itself with the Annual Congress Meeting and all activities of ATA.

As you embark on reviewing the annual activities of ATA, I wish to underscore that, in Africa, tourism is considered as a sector with a very high potential that could contribute more substantially to economic growth, poverty alleviation and overall achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Africa is endowed with various natural phenomena of high touristic value. Furthermore, the continent has a rich cultural heritage. Yet, Africa accounts for hardly 4% of international tourist arrivals and receipts even though the continent has over 12% of the world's population.

The situation is mainly a result of poor infrastructure, inadequate investment, lack of promotion as well as prevalence of a negative image and perceptions especially associated with insecurity and safety aspects in some parts of the continent.

Therefore, the African Union counts on ATA to come up with practical solutions particularly on how to cost-effectively promote Africa's tourist attractions as well as foster co-operation among all tourism stakeholders including policy-makers, development planners, investors, financiers, operators and the public at large, with a view to addressing the specific development needs of the tourism sector in Africa.

To that end, I wish to assure you that the African Union will always be ready to work closely with ATA to ensure that the continental tourism industry meets its primary objectives of facilitating socio-economic development and integration of Africa.

Finally, I would like to wish the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress Meeting successful discussions and very positive results. I would be grateful to receive the outcome documents of the meeting and engage with you on ways of accelerating implementation of various tourism programmes and projects for the benefit of the continent.

Please accept the consideration of my highest consideration.

**Dr. Elham M.A. IBRAHIM**  
Commissioner  
Infrastructure and Energy