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### **Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo Sends Tourism Delegation to the U.S. to Promote Nigeria's Travel and Tourism Industry**

**New York, NY**, October 11, 2006 - Nigerian Minister of Culture and Tourism Chief Olufemi Fani-Kayode kicked off a two-week promotional visit to the U.S. on September 18<sup>th</sup> in New York. The opening event was hosted by the New York chapter of the Africa Travel Association (ATA) in Harlem, where the Minister was joined by former CNN correspondent and National Public Radio journalist Charlayne Hunter-Gault.

“For Nigeria, tourism is one of the priority sectors of our economy,” said Fani-Kayode to more than forty ATA chapter members. “Each state has spectacular attractions, ranging from warm springs to ancient medieval collections and from cultural festivals to monuments of the trans-Atlantic slave trade across the country.”

The Minister said that despite its vast tourism offerings, Nigeria was relatively unknown to international travelers. “Some of you have visited Nigeria and can testify to the security and safety of our country.”

ATA organized the three-city—New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles—tour to promote Nigeria's emerging travel industry, and ATA's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Eco-Tourism Symposium, to be held in Nigeria's Atlantic Coast resort town of Calabar from November 15-20, 2006.

Among the delegates were Permanent Secretary Otaki M. Oyigbenu, Director General of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), Otunba Segun Runsee, and other distinguished members from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Nigerian delegates visited New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles, where they held press conferences, met with prominent city officials, and spoke to leading travel professionals, ATA chapter members, and representatives of the Nigerian Diaspora community.

In New York, ATA held its first annual African Presidential Forum at New York University, where President Olusegun Obasanjo invited everyone to invest in Nigeria's tourism sector.

“For African-Americans and our brothers in the Diaspora, Nigeria is not just a desirable tourist destination, but it is indeed a second home. To them particularly, we open up our arms and offer a warm embrace,” said Fani-Kayode on behalf of the President.

In Atlanta, at the DeKalb County Government Office, the delegation met with department heads to discuss building economic links between Nigeria and American business leaders.

Nigerian delegates met with city officials in Los Angeles and invited the Nigerian Diaspora to participate in tourism development of Nigeria.

Ron Mracky, a member of the ATA International Board and Los Angeles ATA chapter, spoke about the significant increase of international travelers to Africa from California. "Anywhere between 30-50% of leisure travelers to Africa come from California," said Mracky, who traveled to Calabar, Nigeria in October to help plan the upcoming Symposium.

Eddie Bergman, ATA Executive Director, represented "Nigeria truly is an amazing country and I assure you that you will have a journey of a lifetime. The Calabar Symposium is designed to introduce Africa's culturally rich west coast—the Atlantic coast—to the American travel industry and traveling public," said Eddie Bergman, ATA Executive Director. "Whether you are arriving at the airport in Lagos, visiting the two-millennia-old sites of Calabar, or enjoying the Abuja Carnival, your comfort and security at every stage of your journey is of utmost importance for President Obasanjo and his government."

#### **About ATA**

ATA is the premier international travel association, promoting tourism to the African continent and intra-Africa travel and partnership since 1975. ATA members include ministries of tourism, tourism boards, airlines, hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, media representatives, public relations firms, NGOs, individuals, and small-and medium-sized businesses. Upcoming events include the 10<sup>th</sup> Eco-Tourism Symposium in Nigeria from November 15–20, 2006 and the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Congress in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from May 6-10, 2007, on the occasion of the Ethiopian Millennium celebrations. For more information, contact ATA by telephone at (212) 447-1357 or via email at [info@africatravelassociation.org](mailto:info@africatravelassociation.org).

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