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### **ATA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EDWARD BERGMAN ISSUES STATEMENT ON US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S TRIP TO GHANA**

#### **Calls for US Support for Tourism Industry Development and Investment in Africa**

**July 10, 2009, New York, NY** – ATA Executive Director Edward Bergman today issued the following statement on President Barack Obama's arrival in Ghana, his second visit to Africa as president following his speech in Egypt in early June.

"With pressing foreign policy challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Iran, North Korea and most recently Honduras, alongside the global economic downturn, President Obama has not yet articulated a comprehensive policy for Africa-U.S. relations. This will change on Saturday, when the first African American president is expected to set a new US agenda for Africa in his speech highlighting the role that sound governance and civil society play in development. He is also expected to link these elements to economic prosperity.

"President Obama said in an interview with AllAfrica.com that in addition to foreign aid he wants to strengthen the capacity for economic development internally in Africa. This is where travel and tourism has a critical role to play as there is no better way to achieve sound governance, accountability and prosperity than by investing in Africa's tourism industry.

"Tourists leave behind hard currency and help drive job growth, as well as infrastructure development in a variety of areas, from airlines to hospitality industries and from entertainment to shopping. Tourism can also contribute to environmental and cultural preservation and be a source of national pride. It is the only export industry that takes nothing from the continent except photos, curios and memories and leaves behind hard currency when planned and managed properly.

"Tourism is a basis for development, helping diversify national economies, build regional cooperation, and improve peoples' lives. It is a win-win for all: the government, the community and the private sector.

"Despite the global economic downturn, Destination Africa, with cultural and heritage tourism, arts and crafts, business travel, adventure, leisure, sports, conservation, food, and plenty of shopping tourism opportunities—continue to give one of the world's best performances in terms of tourism growth. In fact, according to industry projections, growth is expected to continue in Africa, albeit at a slower rate.

"What does all this tell us? That many African countries have experienced their own political, economic and social challenges in the last few years and now have the opportunity, and the proof, that investing in tourism is a wise choice.

"President Obama's choice of Ghana is not coincidental. Ghana is stable and a country with a demonstrated commitment to democracy. President John Atta Mills has positioned trade and investment and infrastructure development as high priority areas for his administration. And while challenges lie ahead, the world remains optimistic about Ghana and its opportunities for growth and investment. It's also not a coincidence that Delta Air Lines, the world's largest airline, offers direct non-stop air access from the U.S. to Ghana. Africa's tourism industry has suffered from the lack of direct access, hampering the number of arrivals and investment from the U.S.

“President Obama’s visit embodies Africa’s optimism; Ghana presents the story, the people, and the conditions for significant tourism growth and investment. If a strong and stable tourism industry can take hold in Ghana and across Africa, misperceptions could change and it could have an extremely positive impact on the future of Africa-U.S. relations.”

**About the Africa Travel Association (ATA)**

The Africa Travel Association (ATA) was established as an international travel industry trade association in 1975. ATA’s mission is to promote travel, tourism and transport to and within Africa, and to strengthen intra-Africa partnerships. As the world’s premier travel industry trade association, ATA provides services to a broad range of members including: tourism, diaspora, culture, and sports ministers, tourism boards, airlines, hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, travel trade media, public relations firms, consulting companies, non-profit organizations, businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises, and other organizations engaged in tourism promotion. For more information, visit ATA online at [www.africatravelassociation.org](http://www.africatravelassociation.org) or call +1.212.447.1357.

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