



The Gambia- Africa-Tourism **VERSION IMPRIMABLE**

The Gambia hosts 35th congress of African Travel Association

APA-Banjul (The Gambia) Opening the 35th annual congress of the African Travel Association at the Sheraton Hotel and Spa at Brufut, about 20 kilometres outside Banjul, the Gambian Vice President Isatou Njie-Saidy said the hosting of the congress by The Gambia, for the second time, makes it stand out conspicuously as a unique destination and tourist haven.

The ATA congress, which The Gambia first hosted in 1984, is being attended by more than 300 delegates from 17 African countries and seven other states outside Africa including the United Kingdom and the United States.

It has the theme "sustainable and responsible tourism in Africa" offers learning and exploration opportunities on a broad range of industry topics such as marketing and branding, African Diaspora travel, hospitality, education etc.

In her opening statement on Monday, Njie Saidy said The Gambia offers a variety of appreciable opportunities, attractions and rewarding engagements for all who chose to visit.

She said the relatively small size of the country serves as "a source of strength for growth, development, unity, peace and preservation of its flora and fauna and rich cultural diversity that is the envy of others."

Pointing to the government's commitment and unflinching support to the tourism and travel trade, she said this hinges on a "national vision of transforming The Gambia into a tourism paradise, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector that is self-reliant and enterprising, guaranteeing a well balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for all."

She told the congress that the government, to achieve this vision, has already elaborated a tourism master plan that is under implementation.

She said the plan focuses on the growth, development and marketing of The Gambia as "an interesting, attractive and exciting tourism destination."

She added that the plan also seeks to "improve the quality of our tourism product as well as ensure diversification such as eco-tourism, sports tourism, cultural and heritage tourism."

The key objective, she concluded, is to create an enabling environment for rapid and sustainable economic growth and alleviate poverty for the broader cross section of Gambian society.

Other speakers at the occasion included the Tourism and Culture Minister, Fatou Mass Jobe-Njie, the Executive Director of the ATA, Edward Bergman who said the annual congress, which ends on 20th May, brings together travel, tourism, transport and hospitality professionals from around the world.

He spoke of the ATA/AU initiative already under way to brand Africa for tourism, adding that tourism presents nations with opportunity to derive socio-economic growth, create jobs, promote growth and investment, preserve culture and foster national pride.

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