



# Afranblog

AFRICA  
IRAN  
WEBLOG

## TOURISM TIPPED AS DRIVER OF GAMBIA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH

This entry was posted on May 20, 2010 at 9:41 am.



**The Gambia's minister of Tourism and Culture, Honorable Fatou Mass Jobe Njie has highlighted the important role the tourism sector plays in the country's socio-economic development describing it as the engine of growth for the country's economy.**

She made this remark Tuesday evening at a cocktail reception organized by the United States Embassy in The Gambia. The cocktail reception was organized for the delegates of the 35th Annual Congress of the Africa Travel Association (ATA) at the Coco Ocean Resort and Spa in Bijilo.

According to the Tourism and Culture minister, The Gambia's experience in tourism development has evolved over a considerable period of time and the industry today serves as the driver of the country's growth. "Besides the fabulous and agreeable climate, there is abundant peace and tranquility which has been ensured thanks to the efforts and sterling qualities of our dynamic President, Sheikh Prof. Dr. Alh. Yahya AJJ Jammeh. We also have at our disposal a range of unique attractions and trendy hotel facilities," she said adding that these trendy facilities have been designed to appeal to a vast array of clientele from the up market discerning tourist to the budget traveler.

She described The Gambia as a recognized leader in responsible tourism and promised that the government through her ministry will continue to fine tune their offer and increase the scope and magnitude of the industry so that the Gambian hospitality will become a reference point for other markets.

The minister further described the reception as an occasion to showcase the diverse areas of tourism, trade and investment opportunities that abound in the country. She added that the reception is set specifically for the delegates to be accorded the opportunity to interact with each other and sample the various delicacies and the sumptuous cuisine of The Gambia. She described ATA as an opportunity for networking and the sharing of experiences in such way that attracts not only the eco-minded tourists, but other discerning tourists in very sustainable settings. She concluded by applauding the US embassy for sponsoring the cocktail reception.

In welcoming the ATA delegates, the US ambassador to The Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Barry L Wells welcomed the ATA delegates to The Gambia. According to him, after two and a half years in the country, he has come to refer to The Gambia as the “secret jewel of West Africa,” describing The Gambia as a country on the move. He also said that the country has plenty of exciting opportunities for tourists including over 10 five star hotels with a great combination of restaurants and a warm, friendly environment that rivals any competitor.

“The US Government and The Gambia enjoy a strong friendship based on mutual interests and respect. Over the past few years, the US government has increased its contributions to the education, health, and social development sectors and will continue to do so in the future,” he said, adding that The Gambia has developed an environment conducive to business investment, allowing both the private and public sector to form better partnerships.

According to him, there is immense opportunity to invest in various sectors of the economy and more importantly, The Gambia benefits from the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which is a congressionally mandated authority that provides the country with tax-free trade with the United States on thousands of products. Ambassador Wells described The Gambia as an English speaking destination with political stability and unwavering religious tolerance.

“Thanks to the efforts of our Deputy Chief of Mission, Cindy Gregg, the embassy has recently established an American Corners which offers more engagement with Gambian youth with access to the internet to explore educational opportunities and conduct research. We have heard from a number of our Gambian colleagues in government and the private sector that the American Cultural Center was a favorite gathering place to study and meet friends when they were in school. As well we have recently launched an American Chamber of Commerce, as another sign of our engagement in the community,” he said.

He commended the government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Tourism and Culture noting that The Gambia has made tremendous strides in its travel and tourism industry and is a choice destination as a true gem of the West African coast. He said that from an excellent airport facility, with a runway designed by NASA to the emotional experience of learning about the slave trade in Juffereh and James Island, The Gambia is truly a tourist destination. He continued to say that he unreservedly supports The Gambia in her efforts to promote tourism.

For her part, Ms. Binta Jobe, director of the Gambia Tourism Authority appreciated the efforts of all those who have contributed to the success of the 35th Annual ATA Congress. She commended the US ambassador, noting that during his tenure in office he has contributed tremendously in cementing the bond that exist between Banjul and Washington DC. She added that they are really inspired by his interest in promoting all aspects of the tourism and culture sector of The Gambia. She also applauded the US

Ambassador on his Self Help Fund, which is aimed at improving the quality of life for Gambians at the community level.

The GTA director recognized the efforts of Ms. Tashawna Bethea, Diplomatic, Political and Economy Officer of the US Embassy as their goodwill ambassador. According to her, Ms. Bethea's key achievements is not restricted to the tourism industry but in some of the other sectors in the country.

The GTA director said Ms. Bethea's efforts led to the successful organization of the first ever business forum organized by the US Embassy and the business forum also led to the signing of a MOU with two major banks in the country namely, ECOBank and Trust Bank in 2009. According to her, the MOU provides access to loans to Gambian entrepreneurs with special concessionary rate to help increase access, output and expand capacity, contribute to poverty reduction and micro economic growth.

She also thanked the general manager of Coco Ocean, Mr. Mohammed Zaki and his staff for their hospitality. Dignitaries like Aloyce K Nzuki, managing director of the Tanzania Tourist Board, Edward Bergman, executive director of ATA all spoke at the cocktail reception.

***Direct link: <http://www.abh.ir/blog/?p=707>***