

## **The African Union New Tourism Direction**

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The African Union in recognition of the Continent's need for a more cohesive execution of its tourism policy has signed a MOU with the Africa Travel Association (ATA) during the 35<sup>th</sup> ATA World Congress held in Banjul, The Gambia.

The MOU calls for African Union Commission (AUC) and ATA to work together to advance Africa's agenda within the NEPAD context of the AUC Tourism Action Plan addressing following areas:

- Creation of an enabling policy and regulatory environment;
- Institutional capacity building;
- Promotion of tourism marketing;
- Promotion of research and development;
- Promotion of investments in tourism infrastructure and products;
- Mobilization of financial resources;
- Establishment of code of conduct and ethics for tourism; and
- Strengthening of human resources and quality assurance.

The signatory for AUC was the Honorable Dr. Elham M.A. Ibrahim, Commissioner Infrastructure & Energy. On behalf of ATA, the MOU was signed by the ATA President, the Honorable Mrs. Shamsa S. Mwanguanga, Minister of Natural Resources & Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania...

ATA since its inception in 1975 has represented Africa's public and private tourism sectors - many of the AU States are members of ATA, together with their national tourism boards, as are all the major airlines, hotel groups, tour operators and front-line travel agents serving or having operations in or with Africa worldwide.

In an additional development of establishing a cohesive Africa tourism direction and in an effort of establishing as many tourism economies within the 53 AU States, ATA welcomed the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) presence and deliberation contributions at the Congress.

These developments are designed to crystallize and mainstream tourism into the individual AU States' economies and encourage greater collaboration between government and industry on marketing, planning and execution of the AUC Tourism Action Plan.

To operationally respond to these new ATA responsibilities, the ATA International Board of Directors has been supplemented by several high-level international tourism and economic development experts, notably Lelei LeLaulu, Founder and President, Sensible Development Corps; Chair of the Leadership Council of George Washington University's School of Business Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management; Alvin Rosenbaum, Senior Advisor for CDC Development Solutions, and R.S.Mracky of the Africa Consult Group.

ATA Executive Director, Edward Bergman in heralding the 35<sup>th</sup> ATA Congress and its accomplishments, made a strong case for increased investment in Africa's tourism industry, and for Africa tourism and travel stakeholders to join the ATA new efforts and responsibilities: "ATA members and friends and supporters have shown that we are truly committed to promoting tourism to Africa as a means to promoting socio-economic development, I know that when we return to our home countries, we will continue to work in partnership with tourism stakeholders in the public and private sectors to promote the industry and inspire others to follow our example."

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