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The State of Tourism in Africa

35th ATA Congress report by R. Mracky, Managing Director of Africa Consult Group and Member of The African Times/USA Editorial Board

During the just concluded 35th Africa Travel Association Congress in Banjul, The Gambia, three-organization report was presented on the Africa's tourism and the tourism affect on the Continent's economy.

The three organizations, which formulated the report, are The World Bank, The Africa House of the New York University and the Africa Travel Association. The report is an overview of Africa's tourism focused on providing insight to this vital industry, which already shapes the economic character of many African countries.

The most startling revelation within the report is that Africa receives more tourists than the Caribbean, Central America and South America combined. Further, it relates that the tourism industry is growing faster in Africa than the world average and is expected to keep growing. It documents that tourism in Africa has shown greater resilience to the world economic crisis than any other world region.

While worldwide tourism arrivals fell by 4.3%, arrivals to Africa increased by 3% in 2009, during the world economic and financial crisis. Arrivals in North Africa grew by 2% and Sub-Saharan countries by 4%. The report notes that destinations that performed especially well in 2009 include Morocco, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Swaziland. In addition, the preliminary United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) numbers for the first two months of 2010 already show double digit growth for Kenya, Seychelles, Egypt and Morocco.

Overall, the growth of Africa's tourism is impressive, per UNWTO, Africa tourism arrivals grew from 37 million in 2003 to over 58 million in 2009, and this growth is expected to continue with a boost provided by the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa.

Tourism reflects directly into the everyday lives of Africa. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the tourism industry group composed of the top and most senior executives in the tourism industry, estimates that direct travel and tourism employment in Africa totaled 6.5 million in 2008. This makes tourism one of Africa's largest employers and an overwhelmingly critical engine for Africa's economic growth.

An additional important event took place during the Congress, which was attended by Ministers of Tourism, their Tourism Boards, airlines, and most of the major players of Africa tourism, joined by over 300 delegates from many of the Africa destinations, North America, Europe and Asia.

The African Union and ATA signed a far reaching Agreement which calls for African Union Commission (AUC) and ATA to work together to advance Africa's tourism within the NEPAD context of the AUC Tourism Action Plan.

The AUC Tourism Action Plan addresses 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. Mwangunga, 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 of unique collaboration between major economy and tourism organizations crystallize and mainstream tourism as a major export revenue producer into the individual AU States' economies and encourage greater collaboration between government and industry.

ATA Executive Director, Edward Bergman in heralding the 35th 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 AU responsibilities: "ATA members, 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."

Africa's Tourism Employment Overview

Following data, developed by World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), provides an insight of what international incoming leisure tourism contributes to the employment of select African countries.

ALGERIA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 498,000 jobs in 2010, 5.2% of total employment or 1 in every 19.3 jobs to 681,000 jobs, 5.4% of total employment or 1 in every 18.5 jobs by 2019.

ANGOLA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to fall from 8.9% of total employment, 387,000 jobs, or 1 in every 11.2 jobs in 2010, to 6.8% of total employment, 425,000 jobs, or 1 in every 14.7 jobs by 2020.

BENIN

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 83,000 jobs in 2010, 4.3% of total employment or 1 in every 23.4 jobs to 120,000 jobs, 4.6% of total employment or 1 in every 21.6 jobs by 2020.

BOTSWANA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 54,000 jobs in 2010, 10.3% of total employment or 1 in every 9.7 jobs to 88,000 jobs, 11.8% of total employment or 1 in every 8.5 jobs by 2020.

EGYPT

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 2,543,000 jobs in 2010, 10.9% of total employment or 1 in every 9.2 jobs to 3,408,000 jobs, 11.6% of total employment or 1 in every 8.6 jobs by 2020.

ETHIOPIA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to fall from 6.9% of total employment, 1,626,000 jobs, or 1 in every 14.5 jobs in 2010, to 6% of total employment, 1,808,000 jobs, or 1 in every 16.7 jobs by 2020.

GAMBIA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 67,000 jobs in 2010, 9.9% of total employment or 1 in every 10.1 jobs to 91,000 jobs, 10.1% of total employment or 1 in every 9.9 jobs by 2020.

GHANA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 288,000 jobs in 2010, 5.4% of total employment or 1 in every 18.5 jobs to 393,000 jobs, 5.9% of total employment or 1 in every 16.8 jobs by 2020.

KENYA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 439,000 jobs in 2010, 7.3% of total employment or 1 in every 13.7 jobs to 595,000 jobs, 8% of total employment or 1 in every 12.4 jobs by 2020.

LIBYA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 167,000 jobs in 2010, 9.1% of total employment or 1 in every 11.0 jobs to 218,000 jobs, 9.6% of total employment or 1 in every 10.4 jobs by 2020.

MALI

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 80,000 jobs in 2010, 3.9% of total employment or 1 in every 25.6 jobs to 129,000 jobs, 4.8% of total employment or 1 in every 20.8 jobs by 2020.

MOROCCO

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 1,334,000 jobs in 2010, 12.2% of total employment or 1 in every 8.2 jobs to 1,904,000 jobs, 14.5% of total employment or 1 in every 6.9 jobs by 2020.

NAMIBIA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 71,000 jobs in 2010, 17.1% of total employment or 1 in every 5.9 jobs to 109,000 jobs, 18.9% of total employment or 1 in every 5.3 jobs by 2020.

NIGERIA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to fall from 3.3% of total employment, 1,118,000 jobs, or 1 in every 47.7 jobs in 2010 to 2.4% of total employment, 1,656,000 jobs, or 1 in every 42.3 jobs by 2020.

SENAGAL

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to fall from 7.4% of total employment, 202,000 jobs, or 1 in every 13.6 jobs in 2010, to 7.3% of total employment, 255,000 jobs, or 1 in every 13.7 jobs by 2020.

SOUTH AFRICA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to remain level at 6.9% of total employment, 869,000 jobs, or 1 in every 14.6 jobs in 2010, to 6.9% of total employment, 1,097,000 jobs, or 1 in every 14.4 jobs by 2020

TANZANIA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to remain level at 6.3% of total employment, 624,000 jobs, or 1 in every 15.8 jobs in 2010, to 6.3% of total employment, 776,000 jobs, or 1 in every 15.9 jobs by 2020.

ZAMBIA

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to rise from 59,000 jobs in 2010, 3.8% of total employment or 1 in every 26.1 jobs to 75,000 jobs, 4.1% of total employment or 1 in every 24.6 jobs by 2020.

ZIMBABWE

The contribution of the Travel & Tourism economy to employment is expected to fall from 8.7% of total employment, 96,000 jobs, or 1 in every 11.5 jobs in 2010 to 7.2% of total employment, 143,000 jobs, or 1 in every 13.9 jobs by 2020.

