

ATA HOSTS ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL FORUM ON TOURISM IN NEW YORK



Shown left to right (back row): Unknown; Ogo Sow, Radio Journalist, ATA Board Member; Dr. Kaire Mbuende, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations; Dr. Oldemiro Baloi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Mozambique; Karen Hoffman, Senior Vice President, Bradford Group, ATA Board Member; Jane Thompson, Consultant, Bradford Group, ATA Board Member; (front row) Dr. Yaw Nyarko, Director, Africa House, New York University; Ambassador Ombeni Sefue, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the USA; Obiageli Ezekwesili, Vice President, Africa Region, World Bank; Edward Bergman, Executive Director, Africa Travel Association; Anna Kachikho, MP, Minister of Tourism, Wildlife, and Culture, Republic of Malawi; Baba Hamadou, Minister of Tourism, Republic of Cameroon; Samia Suluhu, Minister of Tourism, Trade & Industry, Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar; Doris Wooten, ATA Vice President, ATA Board of Directors; Amadeu Leita Nunes, Minister Counsellor, Trade Representative, Embassy of Angola to the U.S.

The Africa Travel Association (ATA) held its fourth annual Presidential Forum on Tourism at New York University's Africa House in September. Co-sponsored by South African Airways (SAA) and Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), the forum focused on how tourism can drive economic growth even during challenging economic times.

"Whether it's fostering economic growth through foreign exchange earnings and increasing state revenue—or improving people's well-being in the areas of, job creation, income distribution and regional development, or even changing perceptions, Africa's tourism industry requires attention, investment and partnership," ATA Executive Director Edward Bergman said in his welcoming remarks.

Tanzanian Ambassador to the United Nations Obmeni Sefue then presented the Tanzania Tourist Board's 2009 Print Media Award to journalist Eloise Parker for her coverage on summiting Mount Kilimanjaro. Speaking on behalf of Tanzania, a country that currently holds ATA's rotating presidency, Ambassador Sefue also spoke about the role ATA can play in improving tourism on the African continent.

World Bank Vice President of the Africa Region, Obiageli Ezekwesili delivered an opening statement, which set the stage for the panel discussion that followed, much of which centered on introducing each country as a unique travel destination and the role that tourism plays in each economy. Ezekwesili also spoke about the need to build a tourism sector driven by economic and social considerations rather than political ones.

Africa House Director Dr. Yaw Nyarko moderated the discussion featuring Dr. Oldemiro Baloi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mozambique, Baba Hamadou, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Cameroon, Anna A. Kachikho, MP, Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture of the Republic of Malawi, Samia H. Suluhu, Minister of Tourism, Trade & Industry of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, Dr. Kaire M. Mbuende, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the U.N., and Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika, Ambassador of the Republic of Zambia to the U.S.

In three years, the forum has become a highlight on the diplomatic and travel industry calendars, taking place in parallel to the UN General Assembly meetings in September. In 2006, Tanzania's and Nigeria's heads of state launched the inaugural event; in 2007, Tanzania's and Cape Verde's heads of states delivered the keynote addresses. They were joined by ministers from Benin, Ghana, Lesotho, and Malawi, as well as representatives from Rwanda and the Africa Union. In 2008, ministers from Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi participated.

This year, over 200 participants from the travel trade industry, media, diplomatic community, African diaspora, business sector, non-profit world, and academia and hospitality studies participated.

Africa Travel Association (ATA),
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