



Africa Travel Association Concludes Congress in the Gambia

The Africa Travel Association wrapped up its 35th Annual Congress with a commitment among Africa's tourism stakeholders to boost efforts to develop new public-private partnerships devoted to advocating for and developing the tourism industry in Africa. Fatou Mass Jobe-Njie, The Gambia Minister of Tourism and Culture and incoming ATA president, closed the event with an emphasis on the importance of tourism as an engine for economic growth and prosperity. "This may mark the end of a successful event, but it also marks the beginning of our joint efforts to work in partnership with the public and private sector to promote the travel and tourism industry to and within Africa," she said. "The Gambia was a proud host of this event and hopes that our infectious spirit will inspire other countries and tourism stakeholders to action."

ATA announced a number of milestones for making a strong case for increased investment in the tourism industry. "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," said Edward Bergman, ATA executive director. "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."

Congress milestones include the following: the announcement of the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Africa Union and ATA declaring that the two organizations will undertake a commitment to develop collaboration in the area of travel and tourism promotion; the launch of a joint effort by [New York University's Africa House](#), the World Bank and ATA to make a case for developing Africa's tourism industry with the preparation of the joint publication *The State of Tourism in Africa*; discussions between the ATA and UNWTO on how to pursue collaboration and cooperation in the areas of travel and tourism development in Africa in the future; commitment of The Gambia Organizing Committee to hosting the first Carbon Off-Set Free ATA congress.

Under the banner "Discover Africa's Genuine Warmth," the ATA-Gambia event brought together tourism ministers and more than 300 travel industry professionals from across Africa, Europe and North America for four days to explore the latest issues facing the travel trade industry, learn about "Destination Gambia," and advocate for increased resources to the tourism industry.

During the congress, delegates explored the following industry topics: Sustainable Tourism in The Gambia, Innovative and Interactive Marketing, Niche Markets and Emerging Trends, Standards in the Hotel Market in Africa, Connecting the Africa Diaspora to Destination Africa, and Hospitality and Tourism Education in Africa. Special sessions were held on tourism and development, advocating for tourism resources, and partnerships with airlines serving Africa. For more information, visit www.africatravelassociation.org.

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