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Travel and Tourism Magazine



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The Seychelles Islands...

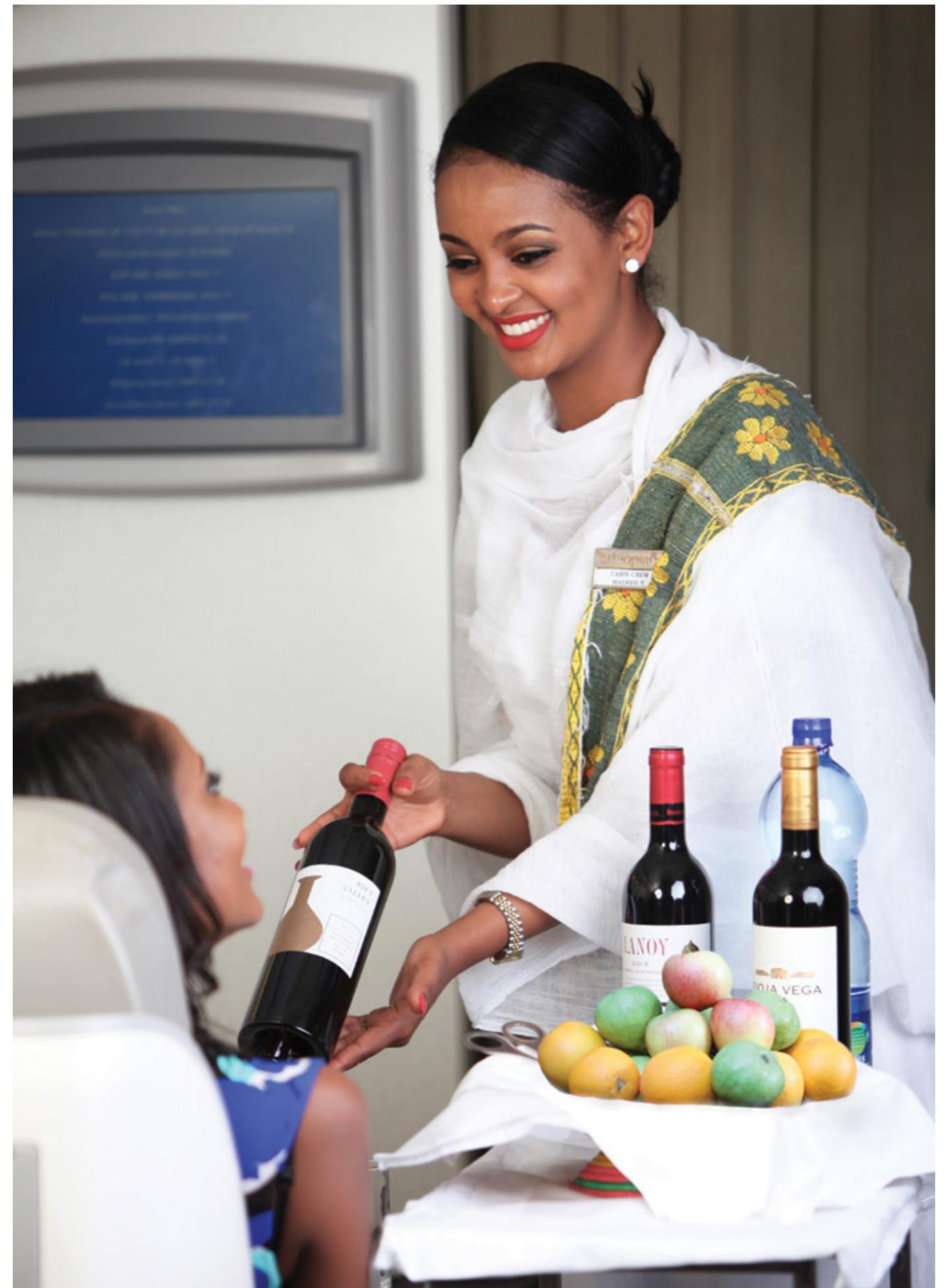


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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Ethiopian 



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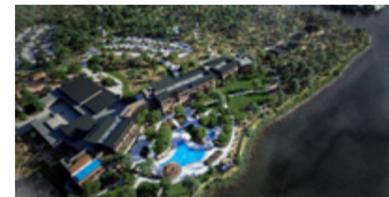
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

The start of the year 2022 has been of mixed feelings following a fourth wave of the pandemic-stricken run which was mostly experienced in parts of Europe. The positive news however, is the availability of vaccines and uptick in the vaccination drive which helped minimize the impact of the virus.

As the latest UNWTO barometer index reported, there were some green shoots which culminated in a paltry 4% growth shot of the 74%. Africa has shown some signs of a quicker than expected recovery although it's a bit early to conclude.

The availability of vaccines and continuous work by medical experts is a feather in the cap as the virus transition from pandemic to endemic is brimming and restoring confidence to the tourism industry.

The leaderships of the sister UN agencies, UNWTO and WHO have consolidated their partnership to offer guidance and hope to the tourism industry.

The latter part of the first quarter of 2022 has seen a number of destinations making significant changes in their covid 19 travel requirements and Africa since the last weeks have joined nations making progress to return their economies to normalcy. Uganda, Seychelles, Mauritius, Kenya and Namibia deserve commendation for scrapping the mandatory PCR requirements in their bid to get tourism back on track.

It is equally important to highlight the resumption and increase of frequencies by major airlines to African destinations. Aviation's role is critical to the economic fortunes of destinations. A seasoned aviation expert, Sean Mendis in his maiden article encourages African nations and governments to take pragmatic and business centred decisions to realize the dream of seamless travels on the continent.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)'s launch of a tourism and security white paper has come at the right time to help destinations adopt best practices in their quest to develop the sector.

The organizers of "Meetings Africa", the South African tourism and



• Kojo Bentum-Williams



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specifically its national convention bureau led by Amanda Kotze-Nlapo ensured the successful hosting of the 16th "Meetings Africa" in Sandton, Johannesburg. It did a number of things to signal a real return to live events and also served as a blueprint for Africa to get going. Its theme of reigniting African economies was in line with the power of business events to help resuscitate ailing economies.

Our cover story for the first issue for the year sheds light on the work of indefatigable gender champion and human rights advocate, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka. The current chairperson of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics and former UN Women Executive Director takes a deep dive into the areas of women, tourism, gender equality and how the sector can turn women's immense contribution to the sector to uplift them into the upper echelons of the establishment. She encourages governments to continue to do more for the girl child.

The Government of Liberia's unveiling of its first tourism and branding strategy deserves plaudits for realizing tourism's power towards recovery.

One thing that has been highlighted and cannot be over-emphasized enough is encouraging partnerships and collaborations between the public and private sector to bring the real change that tourism needs. Covid-19 illuminated this perennial challenge and may the sector never go back to its old ways.

The tourism sector is not out of the woods yet, but we certainly can be encouraged on its current trajectory.

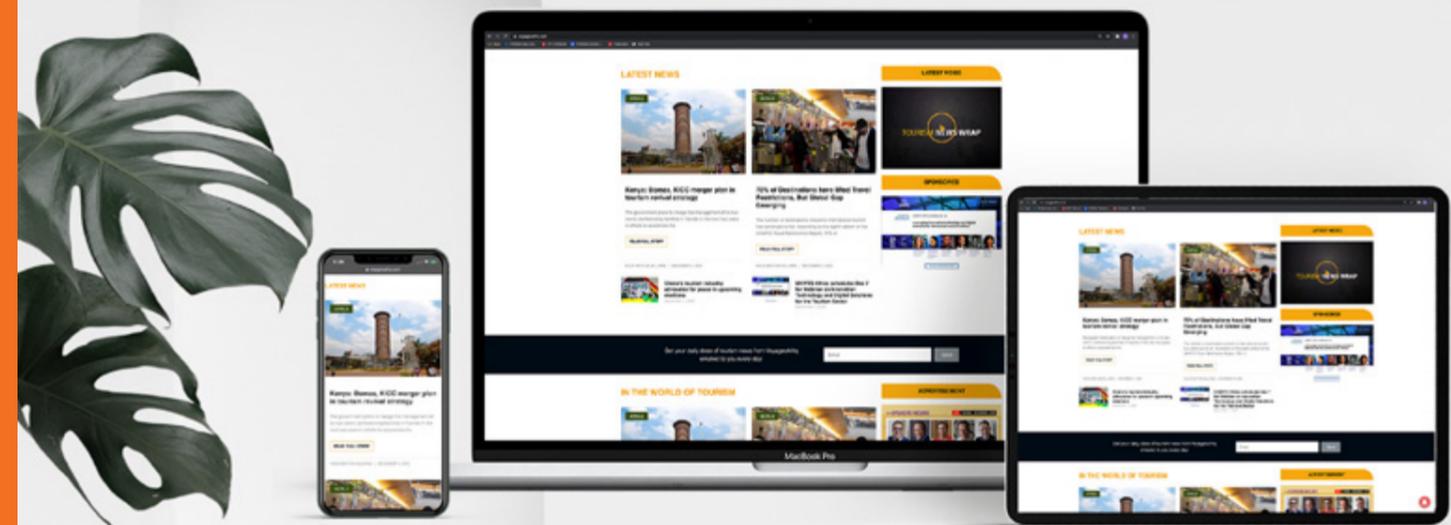
This issue is filled with major developments shaping the return of the tourism sector.

Have a happy read!



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UNWTO MEMBERS SUPPORT LEADERSHIP AND BACK PLANS FOR TOURISM'S FUTURE



The Member States of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have strongly aligned themselves behind its leadership and vision for the global body. Coming together for the 24th General Assembly in Madrid, Spain, members from every global region approved the Organization's Programme of Work and endorsed key initiatives designed to build a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable tourism.

The General Assembly brought together more than 1,000 delegates from 135 countries, including 84 Ministers of Tourism as well as business leaders, destinations and representatives of key international organizations. Opening the General Assembly, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili cited the spirit of solidarity and determination that has defined tourism's response to an unprecedented crisis. Presenting his Report to Members, he made clear how a focus on collaboration and harmonization of protocols, political advocacy and securing financial support for tourism have helped the sector mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and laid the foundations for tourism's restart in many parts of the country.

UN and International Community Backing

Mr Pololikashvili said: "In every global region, the pandemic has made clear the importance of our sector – for economic growth, for jobs and trade and for protecting natural and cultural heritage. We must make the most of this opportunity – to transform goodwill into concrete support."

• Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sanchez speaking at the thematic session during the General Assembly



• His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain



• UNWTO members applauding the decisions of the General Assembly

Emphasizing the significance of the General Assembly, as well as UNWTO's elevated stature within the global agenda, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed delegates and called on them to work together for a "green, inclusive, sustainable" future. Mr Guterres added: "I commend UNWTO and Secretary-General Pololikashvili and hope the decisions taken at the General Assembly will help restore trust in travel and get the world moving safely so developing economies can reap the benefits of sustainable tourism."

The United Nations Secretary-General's words of support were echoed by the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Rebeca Greenspan, Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Juan Carlos Salazar Gómez, Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization, and Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas.

Alongside receiving an updated on UNWTO's activities since the last General Assembly two years ago, Members also benefited from a comprehensive overview of the latest tourism trends, as indicated by UNWTO's latest data, as well as an updated overview of restrictions on travel worldwide. From the floor of the Assembly, Members from different global regions expressed their solidarity with countries impacted by the continued imposition of travel restrictions. Also in Madrid, Member States voted in person to approve the UNWTO Executive Council's nomination of Mr Pololikashvili to serve as Secretary-General for a

second term. On the back of the strongly favorable vote, Mr Pololikashvili will lead UNWTO from 2022 to 2025.

UNWTO Again Welcomes Royal Approval

On the eve of the General Assembly, His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain praised UNWTO's "outstanding work" in leading global tourism, most notably over the past 18 months during the worst crisis in the sector's history. At a special Royal Gala Dinner, His Majesty also emphasized the importance of tourism for economies and societies, both in Spain and globally, making the sector's recovery essential for many millions of people.



24TH UNWTO General Assembly in Pictures



24TH UNWTO GENERAL ASSEMBLY: Tourism United, Resilient And Determined

Over the course of three days, the 24th session of the UNWTO General Assembly underscored global tourism's commitment to restarting around the shared pillars of sustainability, innovation and solidarity.

Representatives of 131 UNWTO Member States, including 59 Ministers and Vice-Ministers of Tourism, attended the Assembly in the Spanish capital, Madrid (30 November – 3 December). Alongside the participation of Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Ms. Reyes Maroto, the political support to UNWTO from the Spanish government was underlined with the presence of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, and Minister of Foreign Affairs José Manuel Albares. On the eve of the General Assembly, the King of Spain, Felipe VI expressed his recognition of tourism's socio-economic relevance and appreciation of the role of UNWTO.

Unprecedented reach and recognition

UNWTO presented its accomplishments over the past two years since the last General Assembly, most notably guiding tourism through the biggest crisis in the history of the sector. Against this backdrop, members endorsed the Programme of Work for the coming biennium and voted strongly (77%) in favour of the Secretary-General serving a second term (2022-2025). United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, as well as the leaders of key UN agencies UNWTO has been working with throughout the pandemic - WHO, ICAO and UNCTAD – delivered dedicated messages to UNWTO.

Power of youth and private sector

The General Assembly of the UNWTO together with Member States and Affiliate Members shared a vision for the future of tourism and UNWTO itself. Members endorsed a landmark

International Code for the Protection of Tourists, making clear the responsibilities every part of the sector has in assisting tourists in crisis situations and helping restore trust in international travel.

Sustainable, inclusive future

Away from the Plenary Sessions for Members, the General Assembly also saw UNWTO bring Tourism Ministers and representatives from international organizations and the private sector together for a special Thematic Session on "Building for the Future: Innovation, Education and Rural Development". Here, the winners of the UNWTO Global Rural Tourism Competition were announced. It was the first list of Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO, recognizing the power of new ideas to create opportunities outside of big cities and destinations that are already leading the way in harnessing the power of tourism as a driver of recovery and sustainable development.

At the same time, the best young talent was also celebrated with the winners of the UNWTO Students' League sharing their ideas alongside established sector leaders. The role of UNWTO's Affiliate Members in putting plans into action the ground was also emphasized. New Affiliate Members were welcomed and examples of effective public-private partnerships singled out, for helping tourism adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Members voted to hold the 25th Session of the General Assembly in 2023 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Before then, Members also endorsed, Bali in Indonesia to host World Tourism Day 2022 to be held around the timely theme of 'Rethinking Tourism', while the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be the host country for World Tourism Day 2023, to be held around the theme 'Tourism for Green Investment'.



Zurab Pololikashvili begins second term mandate



The Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Zurab Pololikashvili has hit the ground running as he begins work for his second term mandate.

The 24th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reappointed the Georgian Diplomat Zurab Pololikashvili as Secretary General for the year 2022-2025.

In a resounding vote of confidence in the leadership of the current UN Tourism Chief, Mr Pololikashvili secured more than two thirds (85-25) of the votes to continue his sterling leadership of the organization.

The Secretary General had been recommended by the 113th Executive Council in Madrid after he beat off competition from Bahrain to be confirmed by the Assembly. It has to be noted that, the secret vote for the reconfirmation of the Secretary General is the first to be used by the 40-year organization in the appointment of a Secretary General.

The Government of Costa Rica triggered a statute of the

organization to push the widely acclaimed convention of acclamation to a 3-hour election.

In a brief speech after his reaffirmation, the affable Zurab Pololikashvili expressed his appreciation for the support and remarked that, the task ahead is enormous and he is ready to meet the challenge.

Throughout the and intensive days in Madrid, global leaders and ministers sent messages of support and applauded the Zurab led administration for a remarkable work even in the face of nearly 24 months of a ravaging pandemic. Key among the messages was one from the Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Gutierrez. He applauded the work done to help accelerate tourism recovery.

The current, and now re-elected, Secretary General has proven his determination and leadership by repositioning the Madrid UN specialised agency into a truly foremost international position, steering global tourism affairs to an extraordinary level.

Travel Measures Should be Based on Risk Assessment



• UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili and WHO Director General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus after a meeting in Geneva

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have called for the lifting of travel bans as they do not provide added value and continue to contribute to economic and social stress. The two UN agencies agreed to collaborate on a global trust architecture for the recovery of the travel sector.

Over recent days, a growing number of countries around the world have started easing their rules for international arrivals, including the easing of travel bans. These decisions are in line with WHO's latest recommendations for safe international mobility, which highlight the ineffectiveness of blanket restrictions in controlling virus transmissions. Such a trend is also consistent with UNWTO's repeated warnings of the great social, economic and developmental harm of restrictions.

UNWTO and WHO: a shared approach

In Geneva, the leaders of UNWTO and WHO agreed on the importance of easing or lifting travel bans. Blanket restrictions should be replaced with risk-based, evidence-informed, context-specific policies.

"Guided by UNWTO, global tourism has followed WHO's advice from the very start of this crisis," said UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili. He underscored the need to "continue to do so, and to open up again, safely and responsibly, and allow tourism to deliver on its unique potential as a driver of recovery and growth".

Risk and evidence-driven approach

According to the WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee on COVID-19, all measures applied to international travellers should be based on

"risk assessments – including testing, isolation and vaccinations". Furthermore, the financial burden of such measures should not be placed on travellers themselves.

"As countries ease travel restrictions, health must remain the key priority. By basing their decisions on evidence and a risk-based approach adapted to their specific context, countries can find the right balance between keeping people safe, protecting livelihoods and the economy, and keeping borders open", said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Building a global trust architecture

The two UN agencies also stressed the need for clear and consistent rules relating to health and travel. There is a need for building a global trust architecture for societies and economies in the context of the pandemic, and there is a "real opportunity for tourism to contribute to that process, with UNWTO playing a critical role", said Dr Michael Ryan, Executive Director WHO's Health Emergencies Programme.

Properly managed, tourism has the potential to act as a force for development and opportunity, as highlighted in the sector's enhanced relevance in the wider United Nations development agenda. Destinations around the world report increased tourist arrival numbers on the back of easing or removing restrictions. This trend offers the potential to kickstart economic recovery and put social development progress back on track.

Among the countries to have revised their travel restrictions is Switzerland, one of Europe's leading destinations, which welcomed the UNWTO delegation at the beginning of a week of key meetings.

UNWTO and UEFA partner around shared values of Sport and Tourism

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) has announced their partnership around shared values and a common vision for the future.

The leaders of both organizations met at the UEFA headquarters and agreed to jointly promote the benefits of sports and sports tourism for development and opportunities for all, including young people. UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili and UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin recognized the values shared by tourism and football, both prominent people-led sectors with the capacity to promote understanding, friendship and solidarity and drive social and economic change.

Shared objectives

UNWTO and UEFA will work to deliver a legacy across Europe. The UEFA Foundation will join representatives of the different divisions of UEFA at the UNWTO Global Youth Tourism Summit (July 2022, Sorrento, Italy), designed to give young people a say in the future of the sector and to give them the skills and knowledge needed to move tourism forward.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said "Tourism and football are natural partners, bringing joy to many millions with benefits going far beyond vacations or single matches. Working together, UNWTO and UEFA will build on our potential to celebrate our shared humanity, foster friendship across borders and create experiences

and opportunities for people everywhere."

UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin added: "Sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing tourism segments. And tourism and football, as the world's most popular sport, uniquely complement each other. Sporting events, such as UEFA EURO and UEFA Women's EURO, are making an exceptional contribution to tourism in the host countries. More importantly, football offers teams and supporters a chance to travel the world, discover new destinations and cultures. I cannot think of a better way to learn more about each other, grow together rather than drift apart."

Jobs and education

Under the new partnership, UNWTO and UEFA will work together to grow sports tourism across Europe, including through facilitating travel and mobility and promoting the opportunities for jobs and education this can bring. Both organizations will also jointly champion sustainability within their sectors, in line with the wider United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the UEFA Sustainability Strategy 2030.

The agreement emphasises the far-reaching impact of both tourism and sports, touching on almost every part of economies and societies the world over. Both sectors are leading employers and champions of youth empowerment and gender equality. Under the guidance of UNWTO and UEFA, tourism and sports are also advancing hard to meet their climate action responsibilities.



• UEFA President (Left) Aleksander Čeferin and UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili



UNWTO to Hold Emergency General Assembly on Russian Membership

The UNWTO Executive Council has decided to hold an extraordinary General Assembly to address the suspension of the membership of the Russian Federation. The first ever Extraordinary UNWTO General Assembly will be convened in the coming days. This was the first time in the history of UNWTO that the Executive Council met to address a request to consider suspending a Member from the Organization.

Held in Madrid at the request of several UNWTO Members, the Executive Council met amid ongoing global concern and condemnation for the unilateral actions of the Russian Federation.

“War is never a solution! Not now, and not ever. But it is evident that not everybody is committed to this ideal,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili. He added: “For this reason, UNWTO – and me as the voice of the Organization – must be loud and clear: If you are a Member, then you commit to our rules. And you must embrace our values. So, when Members go against our goals, there must be consequences.”

The aggression against Ukraine is inconsistent with the United Nations Charter and contravenes the fundamental aim of the UNWTO as enshrined in Article 3 of its Statutes, which states the “promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights”, as the fundamental principles of the Organization.

Strengthening global governance

UNWTO stands fully behind the resolution of the UN General Assembly and the vote of the UN Human Rights Council. The sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders must be upheld, and the call of the United Nations for peaceful resolution of the conflict must be followed.

Last week, the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of a Resolution demanding that Russia “immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders”. The UNGA reaffirmed the paramount importance of the UN Charter in the promotion of law among nations.

Also last week, the UN Human Rights Council condemned the actions of the Russian Federation “in the strongest possible terms”. Its members voted in favour of establishing a special commission to investigate alleged human rights violations including possible war crimes in Ukraine.

In accordance with its Statutes, the UNWTO General Assembly alone has the sovereign responsibility to decide on the suspension of membership of any Member State, if it found that the Member persists in a policy contrary to the fundamental aims of the Organization, as enshrined in article 3 of its Statutes.

South Africa opens up to travellers with "Live Again" global campaign



• Lindiwe Sisulu,
South Africa's Tourism Minister

From breath-taking beauty to sun-soaked coasts; from wildlife to active adventure; from vibrant urban energy to the incredible warmth and cultural diversity of its people – South Africa is a traveller's dream. Now, after two years of restricted travel movements, South Africa invites the world to come experience this country filled with rich, authentic, unfiltered experiences and to Live Again!

South Africa is decidedly spearheading the global shift towards a “post-lockdown” global travel and tourism era. The destination marketing organisation, South African Tourism, has unveiled its first global audio-visual marketing campaign in five years.

Around the world, extended periods of living with COVID-19 left people yearning for a travel experience that can break them out of the cycle of stress and numbness they have come to feel. People increasingly want to live their lives to the fullest and have experiences beyond the fleeting moment of mere rest and relaxation. As such, bucket-list destinations, adventures and experiences are high on travellers' priorities. With a globally-benchmarked health and safety protocols in place, South Africa is poised to not only give travellers a life-enriching experience with its wide variety of tourism experiences and products, but travellers can have the comfort of knowing that they will be safe enjoying their time in South Africa.

The “Live Again” Global Brand advert captures the story of a young traveller's life-changing journey through South Africa. Feeling numb, she leaves her home country and heads to South Africa. From the moment she arrives, she starts to reawaken as she begins to experience South Africa and its amazing people. It is a showcase of captivatingly beautiful landscapes, dynamic culture and people, vibrant night-life and exquisite cuisine.

Headlining the launch, South Africa's Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu spoke of the South African tourism sector's intent to restore tourism's allure; “Resilience, industriousness and adaptability are part of the

indefatigable South African spirit. Fuelled by these qualities, and driven by an unshakable conviction that we can and must climb back to the peaks we have previously summited with tourism in our country, we boldly announce to the world that South Africa is open and ready to welcome all visitors”.

Minister Sisulu added that “the goal is simple, albeit daunting under the circumstances – restore the sector to its pre-COVID-19 pinnacle and take it even higher. The aim is to use this to catapult South Africa's tourism sector to the forefront of the country's economic recovery effort and position South Africa as safe and secure destination.”

Also Speaking at the launch SA Tourism Acting Chief Executive Officer Mzilikazi Themba Khumalo said; “This campaign sums up South Africa's resolve to not postpone living life to the fullest one moment longer. It taps into South Africans' renowned optimism and resilience that have stood this nation in good stead at every turn when we faced seemingly intractable challenges. Through it all, we never lose our zeal for life and we're inviting the world to approach the COVID-19 situation in the same way. We are inviting everyone to come to experience the unique sounds and textures of South African cultures and experiences. We're saying it's time to ‘Live Again’ but to continue to observe Covid-19 safety protocols.”

“The “Live Again” brand campaign entails the country's brand promise to deliver the ultimate leisure and business events travel experiences that will re-energize body, mind and spirit. Through the South African song created especially for the film – weaving in sounds and textures of this rich tapestry of people and experiences, we continue to extend our signature hospitality with grace and gratitude.” adds Khumalo.

South Africa welcomed 2 255 699 arrivals, in 2021. Already, green-shoots of what promises to be a strong recovery of the sector are increasingly observable, with thousands of travellers making their way to our shores to scratch the travel itch that has been bugging them for two years.



• Mzilikazi Themba Khumalo,
Acting Chief Executive Officer, South Africa Tourism



Harmonization of Travel Protocol dominates UNWTO Secretary General's meeting with African Tourism Ministers

The need for harmonized travel protocols for the tourism sector has once again come to the fore as African Tourism Ministers reiterated their concern about the current protocols regarding travel during their meeting with the Secretary-General of the world tourism Organization (UNWTO) Zurab Pololikashvili in Madrid, Spain recently.

Reiterating his long-standing message of coordination, partnership, and collaboration as needed ingredients to resuscitate the tourism sector, the UNWTO secretary said, it is through a harmonized partnership and collaboration between countries, international organizations, and governments that the much needed accelerated tourism recovery could be achieved.

Tunisia's Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts Mohamed

Moez Belhassine was the first to call on the UN Tourism Chief. The Minister appraised the Secretary-General of the progress made by Tunisia in getting tourism back on track and added his voice for governments to collaborate in making travel seamless for tourists.

Mr. Pololikashvili was encouraged by Tunisia's actions to restore confidence in travel and thanked the minister for the visit.



• Mohamed Moez Belhassine, Tunisia's Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts



• Mozambique's Minister of Culture and Tourism Eldevina Materula, and UNWTO Secretary General

The Minister of Tourism of The Gambia Hamat Bah congratulated the Secretary-General for his reappointment and pledged his support for his administration. The two leaders dived into the way forward for tourism's recovery in the Africa region.

The Secretary-General assured him of UNWTO's support and said "Harmonisation of health protocols and investments lay the foundations of our joint actions to RestartTourism."

The Minister of Culture and Tourism of Mozambique Eldevina Materula took turns in the bilateral meeting with the Secretary-General to outline the progress made

to restart tourism through innovation, education and investments. The Minister was optimistic of a great recovery and urged Africa to see the pandemic as an opportunity to build a robust and resilient tourism sector for the region.

The Secretary-General in receiving the Minister of Tourism of The Democratic Republic of Congo Modero Nsimba extolled the country's traditions and exceptional biodiversity, as a must-visit destination in Africa.

Mr. Pololikashvili assured the visiting Ministers of UNWTO's commitment to set up common projects to relaunch tourism.

Maiden Global Youth Tourism Summit launched



The first Global Youth Tourism Summit aimed at empowering the youth to be active participants in decision-making processes in the tourism sector was launched on February 2, 2022.

The summit which is scheduled to take place from 27th June to 3rd July in the Italian city of Sorrento is powered by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with support from the Ministry of Tourism of Italy.

Addressing participants in a virtual brief the Secretary-General of UNWTO Zurab Pololikashvili said the initiative is geared at soliciting all the exciting ideas from the youth in building better and sustainable tourism for the future.

"Youth is high on the agenda of the United Nations and UNWTO is committed to finding and supporting the best young tourism talent – as this landmark event makes clear" Mr. Pololikashvili said.

"Tourism is a proven source of opportunity for young people – in cities and in rural communities, from every educational background and in every global region. As the sector evolves, we need to make sure young people have the skills and knowledge they need to be part of it"

He added that cultural tourism will be one of the main topics to be discussed and wants the young generation to be closer to their culture. "Working in tourism is the right decision you make. It is prestigious and very exciting", the Secretary-General observed.

He expressed profound appreciation to the Tourism Minister of Italy Minister Garavaglia and his team for their

hard work and commitment in organizing the summit.

Italy's Minister of Tourism Massimo Garavaglia on his part said, Sorrento is happy to welcome the exciting ideas from the youth as it set the right tone for the restart of the tourism sector.

"I think that more than others, young people have experienced the impact of restrictions in the past two years and they – continued the Minister – can play a great role in overcoming this crisis in the tourism sector." Massimo Garavaglia said, "We look forward to welcoming you all to beautiful Sorrento", He concluded.

UNWTO's Ambassador for Responsible Tourism and Ivorian soccer legend Didier Drogba in a recorded message pledged his utmost support for the historic event.

"Tourism is a great sector full of positive objectives and humanity in a sector where children of the world have to be protagonists and am looking forward to being with you all physically in Sorrento this year."

He expressed his appreciation to the Secretary-General and Italy's Minister of Tourism for the initiative which he deemed very important for the planet and the current generation.

The summit will include a series of international events, workshops, and other educational initiatives that will give children and youth a unique platform to share and discuss ideas and shape their visions for the future of sustainable tourism within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

White Paper on Safety and Security in Tourism Launched



The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has in collaboration with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) launched a White Paper on Safety and Security in the tourism sector.

The virtual unveiling of this unique publication presented in three volumes has tools which are expected to help design and carry out safety and security policies – to restore trust, both in Africa and across the world.

Setting the scene was the UNWTO Regional Director for Africa, Elcia Grandcourt, who expressed appreciation to countries who contributed to the White Paper with their country case studies.

“A sincere thank you and appreciation goes to the UNWTO Member States, namely Colombia, Kenya, Morocco, Mauritius, Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia who generously contributed to this White Paper by sharing some of the best existing practices put in place to ensure the safety and security of local and international tourists in their respective destinations” Ms. Grandcourt said.

In his welcome address, the Secretary-General of UNWTO Zurab Pololikashvili echoed the importance of partnership and coordination to restore travel confidence and also address the current and other pressing needs of the tourism sector.

He said “Restoring trust and confidence are critical to restarting tourism. The “White Paper on Safety and Security in Tourism” shows our commitment to working together to keep tourists safe.” Mr. Pololikashvili added.

“Safety and Security are one of the main priorities of the UNWTO Agenda for Africa and as such we have responded to the needs of our Member States, especially in this current context

The “White Paper on Safety and Security in Tourism” shows our commitment to working together to keep tourists safe. It also makes clear that we are serious regarding our duty of

care to keep tourism workers safe.

The White Paper has two main objectives: First: to rebuild trust in the short term, to get the world moving again, safely and responsibly. This is very important for destinations where tourism is a lifeline and an economic pillar. Many of them are in Africa and Small Island Developing States.

The UN Tourism Chief expressed delight at the partnership with the African Union Development Agency and the West African Economic and Monetary Union for this important project.

The CEO of AUDA NEPAD Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki said the pandemic has indeed exposed the region to reunite the capacity to mobilise domestic resources and that is why tourism offers that avenue to close the gaps in development.

He believes a well-managed tourism sector in a horizontal manner will help mobilize sufficient resources. He said the pandemic has offered an opportunity for this.

“The paper goes beyond tourism and frame tools that can help to manage security and health issues beyond tourism. The collaboration is a demonstration of efficient partnership to solve problems and produce useful tools. Dr. Mayaki said.

It is embedded with pragmatic tools, extremely useful not only for policymakers in the public sector but also for the private sector. Rounding up his message, he paid glowing tributes to the experts who helped put the document together.

In a message read on his behalf, President of UEMOA Commission Mr. Abdoulaye Diop said with the launch of the white paper, we in turn support the need to guarantee the safety of tourists and tourism professionals.

“It will be useful to accompany this initiative with constant monitoring to help further improve the tourism sector with the growing risk affecting the tourism industry. He added that the right platforms and dialogues are needed to bring stakeholders together to calm the fears of tourists.”

“This initiative will allow us to strengthen our cooperation to ensure a better future for TOURISM in the region and Africa” he concluded.

The publication in 2022 will be translated into workshops, online courses and capacity building programmes that will support the public and the private sector to become more resilient in order to accelerate the restart of the tourism sector.

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Ensuring safety for quick recovery still high on UNWTO agenda for Africa – Elcia Grandcourt

• Elcia Grandcourt,
Regional Director for Africa, UNWTO



The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) will continue to prioritise health safety of tourists in Africa as it continues to introduce measures to help the continent recover from the global Coronavirus pandemic. This was announced by Elcia Grandcourt, Head, Department of Africa, UNWTO.

In a lengthy conversation with Kojo Bentum-Williams on the VA Tourism Podcast, she said the world body was working to bring accelerated recovery through coordinated efforts with other agencies and African member states of the UNWTO to bring tourism figures to pre-pandemic levels.

“For you to start seeing the figures go back up to what it was before the pandemic, there is a lot of work that needs to be done across the board not only by the different international organisations like World Health Organisation, but of course with the UNWTO member states as well as

the different stakeholders and partners that are working in the tourism sector.

Our commitment remains to continue to work with the member states in the recovery of the sector. A lot of ministers have highlighted very strongly to the Secretary General that we need a more harmonised approach especially with the protocols,” she said.

Safety and security is captured under fostering resilience on the UNWTO’s Agenda for Africa. And the body in partnership with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) launched a White Paper on Safety and Security in the tourism sector last December.

Elcia said because the topic of safety and security in the tourism sector has been a long standing point on the agenda for Africa for UNWTO, “we managed to materialise this white paper that is in three volumes and also more importantly, it cuts across not only on the African continent.”

“It cuts across other regions because when one looks at this white paper which is available on our virtual library and online as well, you will see different case studies from around ten countries cutting across from Africa including Tunisia, Kenya, and also going also to Colombia, the Philippines, for example, which gives a perspective also from where these countries have come in terms of tackling this issue in their respective countries and regions.”

The Africa Department Head, said UNWTO will engage in training countries on the framework of the white paper as they seek to consolidate the gains that have been made so far.

“So we are looking forward to do this with several member states to conduct different training modules. By the way we started last year but we did it virtually and the interest was really very high. We had very good participation, and now the members are telling us to bring it to the ground. This is one point that we want to focus on, going forward,” she reiterated.

The extensive conversation also touched on important areas such as African gastronomy, tourism education and training, investment into the sector and the possibility of Morocco hosting a UNWTO Africa office.

Tourism Grows 4% in 2021 but Remains Far Below Pre-Pandemic Levels

Global tourism experienced a 4% upturn in 2021, compared to 2020 (415 million versus 400 million). However, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) were still 72% below the pre-pandemic year of 2019, according to preliminary estimates by UNWTO. This follows on from 2020, the worst year on record for tourism, when international arrivals decreased by 73%.

The first 2022 issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer indicates that rising rates of vaccination, combined with easing of travel restrictions due to increased cross-border coordination and protocols, have all helped release pent up demand. International tourism rebounded moderately during the second half of 2021, with arrivals down 62% in both the third and fourth quarters compared to pre-pandemic levels. According to limited data, international arrivals in December, 2021 were 65% below 2019 levels. The full impact of the Omicron variant and surge in COVID-19 cases is yet to be seen.

Slow and uneven recovery

The pace of recovery remains slow and uneven across world regions due to varying degrees of mobility restrictions, vaccination rates and traveler confidence. Europe and the Americas recorded the strongest results in 2021 compared to 2020 (+19% and +17% respectively), but still both 63% below pre-pandemic levels.

By subregion, the Caribbean saw the best performance (+63% above 2020, though 37% below 2019), with some destinations coming close to, or exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Southern Mediterranean Europe (+57%) and Central America (+54%) also enjoyed a significant rebound but remain 54% and 56% down on 2019 levels respectively. North America (+17%) and Central Eastern Europe (+18%) also climbed above 2020 levels.

Meanwhile, Africa saw a 12% increase in arrivals in 2021 compared to 2020, though this is still 74% below 2019. In the Middle East arrivals declined 24% compared to 2020 and 79% over 2019. In Asia and the Pacific arrivals were still 65% below 2020 levels and 94% when compared to pre-pandemic values as many destinations remained closed to non-essential travel.

Increased tourism spending

The economic contribution of tourism in 2021 (measured in tourism direct gross domestic product) is estimated at US\$1.9 trillion, above the US\$1.6 trillion in 2020, but still well below the pre-pandemic value of US\$ 3.5 trillion. Export revenues from international tourism could exceed US\$700 billion in 2021, a small improvement over 2020 due to higher spending per trip, but less than half the US\$1.7 trillion recorded in 2019.

Average receipts per arrival are estimated to reach US\$1,500 in 2021, up from US\$1,300 in 2020. This is due to large pent-up savings and longer lengths of stay, as well as higher transport and accommodation prices. France and Belgium reported comparatively smaller declines in tourism expenditure with -37% and -28%, respectively over 2019. Saudi Arabia (-27%) and Qatar (-2%) also posted somewhat better results in 2021.



Outlook for 2022

According to the latest UNWTO Panel of Experts, most tourism professionals (61%) see better prospects for 2022. While 58% expect a rebound in 2022, mostly during the third quarter, 42% point to a potential rebound only in 2023. A majority of experts (64%) now expect international arrivals to return to 2019 levels only in 2024 or later, up from 45% in the September survey.

The UNWTO Confidence Index shows a slight decline in January-April 2022. A rapid and more widespread vaccination roll-out, followed by a major lifting of travel restrictions, and more coordination and clearer information on travel protocols, are the main factors identified by experts for the effective recovery of international tourism. UNWTO scenarios indicate that international tourist arrivals could grow by 30% to 78% in 2022 compared to 2021. However, this would still be 50% to 63% below pre-pandemic levels.

The recent rise in COVID-19 cases and the Omicron variant are set to disrupt the recovery and affect confidence through early 2022 as some countries reintroduce travel bans and restrictions for certain markets. At the same time, the vaccination roll-out remains uneven and many destinations still have their borders completely closed, mostly in Asia and the Pacific. A challenging economic environment could put additional pressure on the effective recovery of international tourism, with the surge in oil prices, increase in inflation, potential rise in interest rates, high debt volumes and the continued disruption in supply chains. However, the ongoing tourism recovery in many markets, mostly in Europe and the Americas, coupled with the widespread vaccination rollout and a major coordinated lifting of travel restrictions, could help to restore consumer confidence and accelerate the recovery of international tourism in 2022.

While international tourism bounces back, domestic tourism continues to drive recovery of the sector in an increasing number of destinations, particularly those with large domestic markets. According to experts, domestic tourism and travel close to home, as well as open-air activities, nature-based products and rural tourism are among the major travel trends that will continue shaping tourism in 2022.

ATTA's note to the tourism Industry



What a change from this time last year. With Covid protocols easing around the world, travellers are again making plans to visit Africa. Travel organisers are busy rebooking those who postponed from 2020-21 and we have had reports of new bookings coming in as well.

This transition time from full on Covid restrictions and no bookings to the return of normal travel trading conditions as we know it is proving challenging across all sectors of the industry. Availability in some well-known destinations or at popular times of the year are already booked out due to the deferred bookings receiving first preference on new dates.

Already cash strapped travel organisers are having to ensure they have enough staff to deal with their full workload once again while in some instances only with deposits as their income at present.

Consumers are understandably wary about the possibility of curtailments, and many are opting to book with financially protected travel organisers who will support them if things go awry. Travel organisers also have the latest information on destination protocols and entry requirements.

On the ground across Africa, suppliers are ready to welcome visitors again. They're working closely with DMCs and travel organisers to ensure travellers feel safe and secure. The wide-open spaces and plethora of outdoor activities provided across Africa certainly help to reinforce that feeling.

Associations in source markets are working hard with their governments to ensure proper contingency measures are in place for future variants. In the UK, the Save Future Travel Coalition, an amalgamation of the key tourism association representatives, is asking government to make clear that any future measures or restrictions need to be evidenced backed, have a clear policy objective and an understanding of the consequences for the travel industry.

The start of in-person trade events such as the recent Africa's Eden at Victoria Falls with a total of 70 top notch buyers from 23 countries and 103 exhibitors from the KAZA Region, show there certainly is an appetite to get back to business. Experience Africa Events, MD, Chris Mears attended and said the vibe was fantastic and that it was great to be back speaking to people in person again.

Chris is currently busy organising ATTA's attendance at other forthcoming trade events such as WTM Africa and the much-anticipated Indaba. ATTA's own hallmark event, Experience Africa, is set to take place at London's Kia Oval from 22-24 June. Registrations have been steadily coming in from both buyers and sellers and the event is expected to be a sell-out. Interested parties should visit www.experienceafrica.travel

If there's one thing that Covid-19 has taught us is that relationships are key in our industry, whether its B2B or B2C. Maintaining trust, transparency and integrity have certainly helped many companies hold onto their businesses. The travel industry is never without incident and our ability to 'just get on and make the best of it' has helped many through the past two years and no doubt will continue in the years to come.



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President Weah outdoors Liberia's National Tourism Brand and Marketing Strategy

The President of the Republic of Liberia George Weah has unveiled the country's national tourism brand and marketing strategy in a ceremony at the capital, Monrovia.

This momentous feat is part of the Government's commitment to improving its economic growth and employment opportunities through tourism.

Speaking at the august occasion, the President of the republic said the document will guide, develop and market the country's tourism sector.

He indicated that "our country is endowed with immense cultural and tourism potential".

He said Liberians should take special pride in the diversity of their heritage and tourist attractions—the lush green vegetation, beautiful waterfalls, pristine beaches, and other stunning landscapes.

"We are also blessed with a striking coastline of over 560 kilometers," the President added: "We have a unique flora and fauna, largely unexplored wildlife and an excellent ocean tide, thus making Liberia an ideal destination for tourism."

He reiterated his administration's commitment to investing in tourism and making it a key sector to drive the country's economic growth.

The sector, President Weah said, has the potential to create employment for thousands of Liberians, while contributing to revenue generation.

"Tourism development brings together all sectors, including the private sector, which is an important engine of growth and economic development," The President noted, calling on actors in the private sector to play a major role in the development of the Liberian tourism industry, either as independent entrepreneurs, or through public-private partnerships with the Government.

"Let me at this point convey my sincere gratitude to the International Trade Center and United Nations World Tourism Organization for their strong support and collaboration. We also would like to thank the Enhanced Integrated Framework Program for funding this project. I am hopeful that the other components of this project will be implemented and completed as planned", Dr. Weah noted.

The Regional Director for Africa at the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Elcia Grandcourt who spoke at the launch said, UNWTO is happy to have been part of the project and will continue to offer support for the development of a sustainable tourism sector in Liberia.

"The launch of the brand and marketing strategy is timely especially as the continent continues to face low brand awareness among international tourists for African destinations. UNWTO through its Agenda for Africa-Tourism for inclusive Growth has been Advocating Brand Africa as one of the key priorities to channel the positive narrative



• George Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia

and incredible stories of the continent" Ms. Grandcourt said.

The Brand Africa project also aims at influencing and putting Africa including Liberia in the minds of travelers seeking new destinations, authentic experiences, and exploring the unique biodiversity that the countries have to offer.

Ms. Grandcourt revealed that the UNWTO Brand Africa Publication is expected to guide member states in the preparation of their marketing assets.

"Through the recently launched UNWTO Brand Africa publication, we have set pathways for our member states to strengthen their competitiveness and marketing strategies. Liberia's New Tourism Brand and Official Marketing Strategy present an opportunity for the destination to use the power of tourism to drive development" she observed.

The Liberia Tourism Brand Identity was developed with the technical support of the International Trade Center and the United Nations World Tourism Organization under the Liberia Tourism Development Project, funded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

About the Tourism Development Project

The Liberia Tourism Development project emanates from the National Export Strategy on Tourism 2016-2020 and responds to the implementation of the Strategy. It has an objective of developing the tourism sector offerings by: a) improving the policy environment and institutional capacity, b) developing new tourism destinations around surfing and other historical and natural attractions, and c) undertaking targeted promotion and advocacy campaigns to promote tourism to international, regional and domestic markets. Specifically, the project aims at: a) establishing a tourism information booth at the Monrovia Roberts International Airport, b) developing tourist reception facilities at the Robertsport beachfront, the Providence Island and the Marshall Island, and c) developing a tourism marketing strategy and a tourism brand identity for Liberia, focusing on Robertsport as a surf tourism destination.

Cabo Verde's "Tourism Operational Programme" aimed at boosting the Sector



• Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister of Cabo Verde

The Prime Minister of Cabo Verde Ulisses Correia e Silva has launched in São Lourenço dos Órgãos, the Operational Tourism Program (POT) as an accelerator of growth and a boost to employment and as a transforming and reliable sector in the resumption of tourist flow.

As a strategic part of the executive's program for tourism, the POT is based on a model of tourism growth anchored on sustainability, preservation of the country's natural, cultural, heritage, and human resources, as an added value for the construction of a resilient and sustainable tourism product.

The program also aims at diversified tourism products in all islands and municipalities.

Ulisses Correia e Silva said that with this program "we are at a point of arrival and departure regarding the transformation that is intended to be introduced in the tourism sector,

strongly impacted by the pandemic, convinced that tourism is one of the sectors that will recover most quickly, as long as there is a return to flow and confidence."

"We are ensuring that this recovery is not the same as what existed before, but that it is even better, in relation to everything that Cabo Verde can offer for the development of sustainable tourism and that it is in fact an accelerator of development, which has an impact on economic growth", said the Head of Government.

In this regard, he stressed that tourism should be seen as a sector that attracts other sectors, as it has this valence, warning that Cape Verde needs scale and dimension, not only in terms of quantity but above all, in terms of income.

The POT, he specified, was developed as a very integrated concept, coming out of strategic planning, facing long-term horizons, which go beyond that of political cycles, since they are structuring and fit into the "master-plans" of each of the islands that define the architecture and the inventory of the existing potential in the country, in a diversified and differentiated way.

"The first step is understanding this. We need to have all the actors, the Government, the municipal councils, the private sector, our international partners focused on the same program and for the same objectives", asserted the Prime Minister. He highlighted the focus on economic, social and environmental sustainability, environment and green tourism.

This is due to the understanding that Cape Verde has dormant potential on its islands, which can be agreed upon and transformed in resources into values, as long as they are worked on with quality and accessibility.

South Africa repeals PCR test requirement for vaccinated travellers

South Africa has joined the growing list of countries who have dropped PCR test requirements for vaccinated travellers .

Addressing the nation on the country's latest response to the covid-19 pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa said travellers who have been vaccinated against the virus will no longer require a negative PCR test to enter the country.

"Travellers entering South Africa would need to show proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test not older than 72 hours," the president said.

He added that "all unvaccinated travellers entering South Africa who wants to be vaccinated will be offered vaccination. These measures will take effect from Wednesday, 22/03/22 once the new regulations are gazetted"



Five African Destinations make Tourism Villages List

Five African destinations have been selected as part of the novel World Tourism Organization's Best Tourism Villages project. In total 44 destinations were celebrated at the just held 24th UNWTO General Assembly in Madrid, Spain.

The five African countries are Morocco, Rwanda, Kenya, Mauritius and Ethiopia.

Le Morne-Mauritius, Wonchi,-Ethiopia, Sidi Kaouki-Morocco, Olgessailie-Kenya, Nkotsi Village, Rwanda made the list.

Nkotsi Village, Rwanda

Nkotsi brings together communities around the Virunga Mountains to promote community sustainable development by involving local people in programs which improve their livelihoods through Environmental Conservation, Arts & Culture, Education, and Community Health & Food Security Initiatives.



• Rwanda's Ambassador to Spain receiving the plaque on behalf of Nkotsi Village

Le Morne-Mauritius

The Village of Old Grand Port is known as the cradle of the colonisation of the island, given that the first settlement of the island was set up in this area by the Dutch. Its multi-ethnic population, which is mainly composed of the fishermen community, farmers and local artisans still perpetuate the traditional way of life and cultures that was once prominent on the island in peace and harmony.

Wonchi,-Ethiopia

Situated about 150 km west of Addis Ababa, Wonchi is one of the most magnificent tourist destinations in Ethiopia. Its magnificence emanates from the blend of its natural and

cultural peculiarities of which its landscape and the lake lying in the deep basin offer an extraordinary beauty.



• Ethiopian's Minister of Tourism and the Secretary General of UNWTO in a photo pose

Sidi Kaouki-Morocco

Sidi Kaouki is a small village located 2 hours away from Marrakech. A Berber fishing and shepherd village, its main activities besides fishing and agriculture include the production and marketing of high-quality 100% natural organic products such as Argan Food, Cosmetics, Honey, Amlou, soap, shampoo, and cream.



• Morocco's representative receiving the honour

Olgessailie-Kenya

Located in the Southern region of Kenya, Olgessailie is famous for the hand axes many of which dates back almost one million years and are some of the oldest ever found.

Finds unearthed in this region dated between 1.2 million and 490,000 years ago. It is home to the Maasai people that still practise their ancient traditions.



These initiatives create employment opportunities for women and youth through arts and cultural experiences focused on conservation and skills sharing through workshops.



• Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Tourism Najib Balala received the certificate on behalf of the village

The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO initiative was launched to advance the role of tourism in safeguarding rural areas, along with their landscapes, natural and cultural diversity, and their local values and activities, including local gastronomy.

A total of 44 villages from 32 countries across the five world regions were granted recognition in 2021. All of them stand out for their natural and cultural resources as well as for their innovative and transformative actions and commitment to the development of tourism in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Initiative includes three pillars:

1. The 'Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO': Recognizes villages which are an outstanding example of a rural tourism destination with recognized cultural and natural assets, that preserve and promote rural and community-based values, products and lifestyles and have a clear commitment to innovation and sustainability in all its aspects – economic, social and environmental.
2. The 'Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO' Upgrade Programme: The Upgrade programme will benefit a number of villages that do not fully meet the criteria to receive the recognition. These villages will receive support from UNWTO and its Partners in improving elements of the areas identified as gaps in the evaluation process.
3. The 'Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO' Network: The Network will provide a space for exchanging experiences and good practices, learnings, and opportunities. It will include representatives of the villages recognized as the 'Best Tourism Village by UNWTO', the villages participating in the Upgrade Programme, as well as experts, public and private sector partners engaged in the promotion of tourism for rural development.

A total of 174 villages were proposed by 75 UNWTO Member States (each Member State could present a maximum of three villages) for the 2021 pilot initiative, among which 44 were recognized as Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO. Another 20 villages will enter the Upgraded Programme of the Initiative. All 64 villages enter to make part of the UNWTO Best Tourism Villages Network.

Morocco to host First UNWTO Regional Office for Africa



• Fatima Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism, Handicrafts and Social Solidarity

The Kingdom of Morocco has received the nod from the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to host the first regional office of the UN Tourism Agency in Africa.

At the 115th session of the Executive Council Meeting held in Madrid, the council approved the requests by the Governments of Morocco and Brazil to host regional offices of the organization subject to the ratification of the General Assembly. The decision on the establishment of the offices read

"Having heard the observations from Members of the Council regarding the establishment of potential regional offices. Approves, subject to the ratification of the General Assembly, the establishment of the Regional Offices in Brazil, Morocco and Argentina provided that they are in compliance with the legal and operational framework adopted by the General Assembly"

The Secretary-General of UNWTO Zurab Pololikashvili in a tweet confirmed the establishment of the two offices and believes it will help the UN Tourism Agency's commitments to its members.

"We move closer to our members to deliver our commitments. I am happy to announce that we will establish the UNWTO Regional Office for the Americas in Brazil and the UNWTO Regional Office for Africa in Morocco. The future starts now! " the tweet read.

The Kingdom of Morocco first expressed its intent formally when it submitted a request to the 64th Commission for Africa Meeting held in Cabo Verde in September 2021.

Making a persuasive pitch to the Executive Council Members during the meeting in Madrid, the Kingdom's Minister of Tourism, Handicrafts and Social Solidarity Fatima Zahra Ammor assured the Council of the commitment and readiness of the Government of Morocco to help the organization in reaching out well to the needs of members by being on the ground.





MEETINGS AFRICA set a new Era for Live Events

As Africa makes strides to see a rebound of its meetings and events industry, Meetings Africa has taken a giant leap towards the realization of this objective. The 2022 Meetings Africa was the first major in-person event that brought key stakeholders of the continent's MICE sector to chart a new path while offering exhibitors and buyers a unique opportunity to do business again after a year of inactivity due to COVID-19.

The organizers of the event in assuring stakeholders and the industry of its preparedness to embrace the return of the "people-to-people" sector instituted robust sanitary measures to guarantee the safety of all participants. From securing your QR code after your registration to undergoing screening at the various entry points were some of the procedures one needed to exhaust before being admitted into the auditorium.

As one elated exhibitor remarked on the trade floor "Seeing colleagues and closing deals can never be replaced not even with hyper-tech infrastructure" were the sentiments many expressed at Sandton Convention Centre.

If there was one thing that the return of Meetings Africa did for the MICE sector, it created opportunities to reignite Africa's economy so that it can grow back stronger than ever before.

This was the consensus at a pulsating Meetings Africa trade floor opening ceremony on 1st March, 2022 at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg. The 16th edition of



• South Africa's Tourism Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu

Africa's premier business event show – a flagship of the South African National Conventions Bureau (SANCB) – brought together some 161 buyers and 216 exhibitors from 13 African countries.

Speaking at the trade floor opening, South Africa's Tourism Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu, said that Meetings Africa presented an opportunity to collectively review and realign the African business events industry – one that embraces the increasing interconnectedness of trade and tourism



• Mzikazi Themba Khumalo, Acting Chief Executive Officer South Africa Tourism

"Opening trade corridors across the continent must also open pathways for intra-African tourism to thrive, and vice versa. It is us – the African business events sector that have to be intentional and strategic in ensuring that we leverage this mutual benefit between trade and tourism." Sisulu added that the business events industry accelerates progress as it is a platform for sharing information and collective engagement. "This, in turn, results in innovation and re-invention which are key for economic and professional development and advancement."

She did not doubt that the industry will be able to recuperate swiftly after a dormant two years. "During our Global Brand campaign launch, we shared with you how we have risen time and time again, from many episodes of destruction and devastation of the continent's history. We shared our ability in always being able to rise with pride and resilience- that is the essence of Africanism. It is our ability to live again and build back better that sets us apart."



Building Africa's brand together

Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, SANCB's Chief Conventions Bureau Officer, said Meetings Africa will play a part in our sector's recovery mainly by focusing on regional buyers to align with South Africa's Tourism Industry Recovery Plan, which focuses on domestic and regional recovery first. It will also look at reintroducing international buyers to Africa as the Covid travel restrictions are eased. "Platforms like these allow us to come together as Africa. In our sector, while we

are in competition, we are also in co-operation. And then of course, we need to build on our brand together go out there and tell the world that Africa is ready."

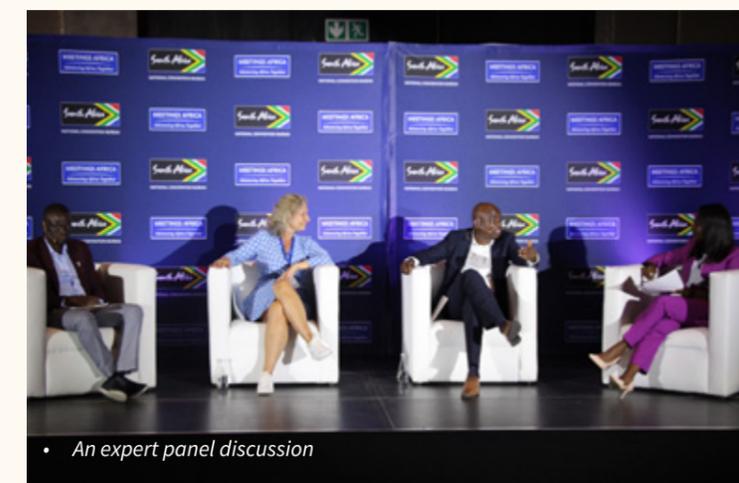
She said bidding – a process by which a country competes against others to attract international events – can be a tool that will encourage collaborative efforts among African countries. "It is a collaborative effort to go out there and bid for these big events. With our culture of sharing, we as a continent have the opportunity to rotate meetings among each other. We can help build that knowledge economy on the continent."



• Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, SANCB's Chief Conventions Bureau Officer

She said the business events industry is the catalyst to get the world to open up its borders again. "After two years of shutting our imaginary national borders to each other, now is the time to allow for a freedom of movement. Sharing minds and economies does not mean we sit behind our desks and stare at each other through screens. It means being able to travel from one place to another freely so as to create and grow relationships."

She added that Africa can start the business events economy rolling by using its African Continental Free Trade Area (AcFTA) as a springboard to achieving a shared economy. The AcFTA was signed into existence in 2018 and was effectively underway in January 2021. It will push all African countries towards greater collaboration with each other so as to boost trade and tourism.



• An expert panel discussion



• Fish Mahlalela,
Deputy Minister of Tourism



Collaboration crucial to MICE Revival

Meetings Africa got off to a flying start with Business Opportunities Networking Day (BONDay), bringing together meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) industry leaders and entrepreneurs to discuss ideas around reviving the tourism sector and rebuilding relationships after a two-year hiatus.

The theme “Shared Minds, Shared Economies” is a call to all industry stakeholders in Africa to open its borders to each other so as to allow free cross-pollination of goods, people and ideas.

The 16th edition of Meetings Africa, a South African National Conventions Bureau (SANCB) flagship trade show, was held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg in February, 2022. It continues in Advancing Africa Together through collaborative growth.

A new addition to BONDay was the Africa Business Tourism & MICE Masterclass, which were a series of educational talks concerning business events industry matters addressed to youth, small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and MICE practitioners. Industry leaders shared powerful insights on how to remain flexible in tough times and collectively grow the intra-Africa MICE industry.

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela, said collaboration is going to be key to uplifting and ensuring a viable future for the MICE sector. “Your presence shows you want to restore the tourism sector. BONDay as a platform

is where serendipitous encounters may take place, where you may just find your ideal partner in business growth.”

He addressed the government’s obligation to support tourism entrepreneurs. “We have implemented a number of programmes that look to provide SMMEs with an enabling environment in which to do business.”

These programmes include the Tourism Transformation Fund, Enterprise Development Support Programme, Enterprise Development and Transformation Programme and Enterprise Development Directorate. “All of these incentives are with the intention to recover the tourism industry. We recognise that SMMEs such as you bring agility and fresh ideas to the game. It is in this space that we will see transformation occurring,” said Mahlalela.

Covid-19 has had a devastating effect on the business events industry. According to the business advisory firm, BDO, the global MICE sector was worth \$916-billion (R14.1-trillion) in 2019. By the end of 2021, it had dropped to \$500-billion (R7.7-trillion).

Before the advent of Covid-19, the major drivers of the global MICE trade were, among many factors, exponential economic growth, global trade, the rise in per capita disposable income, continuous scientific and technological innovations, and an increase in global tourism. Currently, science and technology innovations remain the only drivers.

Juliette Losardo is WTM London’s new Exhibition Director

RX, the parent company of World Travel Market London, has announced that Juliette Losardo is the new Exhibition Director of WTM London, the leading global event for the travel industry.

The annual WTM London event will take place at ExCeL London on 7-9 November 2022.

Losardo is an experienced business leader with an impressive track record of more than 18 years at leading companies in the international media and events sectors.

She joins WTM London from Clarion Events, where she was Group Commercial Director, and has also held senior roles at Centaur Media and Getty Images.

Losardo succeeds Simon Press, who has left the company to pursue new opportunities.

Vasyl Zhygalo, Managing Director, RXME and Portfolio Director for WTM and IBTM events, said:



“We are delighted to announce Juliette’s appointment as we work steadfastly to support the resurgence of the global travel trade.

“She has extensive experience in driving success for B2B trade shows and conferences – and her accomplishments demonstrate that she has the commercial acumen and management skills to help lead the WTM London team as the tourism and travel sector bounces back.

“We look forward to working together to deliver a valuable WTM London in 2022, providing the best platform for industry professionals to do business.”

Losardo commented: “I am thrilled to be joining Vasyl and the WTM London team at such an important time of change and recovery.

“The travel industry has proved to be incredibly resilient despite the extraordinary challenges of the pandemic and there are very positive prospects and opportunities ahead.

“I look forward to engaging with colleagues and travel industry professionals from across the world – and meeting delegates and exhibitors at WTM London in November as this dynamic sector works towards a sustainable and robust future.”

Zhygalo also hailed the contribution of Simon Press, commenting: “Simon has been a passionate advocate for WTM and the wider travel portfolio over the past 14 years and will remain part of the legacy of WTM.





Illustrious CEO of Ethiopian Airlines retires after three decades

Ethiopian Airlines have announced the retirement of its Legendary Group CEO Tewolde GebreMariam. In a press statement, the Airline group said, the CEO had requested for an early retirement, citing his personal health issues as the reasons for his decision.

“Mr. Tewolde GebreMariam requested the Board of Management of Ethiopian Airlines Group (the “Board”), for early retirement in order for him to focus his full attention to his medical treatment.” The statement said.

Mr. Tewolde GebreMariam has been under medical treatment in the USA for the last six months.

The Board, in its ordinary meeting held on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, has accepted Mr. Tewolde’s request for early retirement.

As he needs to focus on his personal health issues, he is unable to continue leading the airline as a Group CEO, a duty which demands a closer presence and full attention round the clock.

Mr. Tewolde led the Airline for over a decade with remarkable success reflected in its exceptional performance in all parameters including but not limited to exponential growth from one Billion USD annual turn-over to 4.5 Billion, from 33 airplanes to 130 airplanes and from 3 million passengers to 12 million passengers (pre-COVID).

Under his leadership, the airline group has grown by four fold in all measurements, building more than USD 700 million worth of vital infrastructure like Africa’s biggest hotel, Cargo terminal, MRO hangars and shops, Aviation

Academy and Full Flight Simulators. The Board, the Senior Management, employees and the whole Ethiopian Airlines family express their gratefulness for his contribution and wish him a full recovery soon. The Board will announce the new Group CEO and the successor to Ato Tewolde GebreMariam shortly.

Mr. Girma Wake, former CEO of Ethiopian Airlines, has been appointed recently as a new Chairman of the Board of Management of Ethiopian Airlines Group by the Ethiopian Public Enterprises Holding & Administration Agency. Mr. Girma Wake is a highly experienced, successful and well-regarded business leader and a well-known figure in the aviation industry who previously led Ethiopian Airlines for 7 years as a CEO and laid the foundation for the fast and profitable growth of the airline. The combination of his experience, work-culture and drive makes him capable of chairing the board and take the airline to the next level. Mr. Girma’s decision-making skills are tested and well proved.



Botswana to host 5th Africa Tourism Leadership Forum

Botswana will host the 5th and 2022 edition of the Africa Tourism Leadership Forum (ATLF) at the Grand Palm GICC.

Themed “**Igniting Intra-Africa tourism through inclusive intra-Africa trade, partnerships and Investments**”, the intra-African travel game-changing event will take place in Gaborone in November 2022 and is expected to bring together industry leaders from across Africa and the rest of the world

The country will host the next three editions from 2022, 2023 and 2024. It will be the second Southern African country to host the event after Durban, South Africa staged it in 2019. Other past host countries are Ghana in 2018 and Rwanda in 2020 and 2021.

Botswana takes over the hosting of Africa’s leading tourism Thought Leadership Forum from Rwanda which successfully hosted this gathering in November 2021.

Announcing the next destination for the Pan African tourism event at Meetings Africa 2022 at Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, the CEO of African Tourism Partners Kwakye Donkor said “The Africa Tourism Leadership Forum has shown the commitment and resolve to the development of the continent’s tourism sector in the last five years. I congratulate Botswana Tourism Organization and its partners for embracing the initiative”.

“We are enthused that the event has become a blueprint for actionable collaboration among African tourism stakeholders and service providers in the past five years. We urge all industry stakeholders across the continent to make time to be in Gaborone this year, and also submit their entries for the 2022 Africa Tourism Leadership Awards.”

• Kwakye Donkor, CEO of African Tourism Partners



African Tourism Partners is also grateful to previous hosts Ghana, South Africa, and Rwanda for their immense commitments to the growth of Africa’s Tourism development.

Africa Tourism Leadership Forum is a Pan-African dialogue platform that brings together key stakeholders from Africa’s travel, tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors. It aims to provide a continental platform for dialogue, networking, sharing insights and devising strategies for sustainable travel and tourism development across the continent. It also focuses on the enhancement of Africa’s brand equity and promoting intra-Africa travel.

The African Leadership dialogue platform designed and convened by Africans in Africa to promote tourism as a priority sector and significant economic development pillar in African states.

The event is organised by African Tourism Partners (UNWTO Affiliate Member) and BDO South Africa.



- Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

We must fix

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN TOURISM

- Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Although women make a greater part of the labour force in tourism, issues such as job security, pay discrepancies and business ownership tilt heavily against them. These, in addition to the myriad of unsavory conditions, are what the immediate past Executive Director UN Women, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka wants tourism to address.

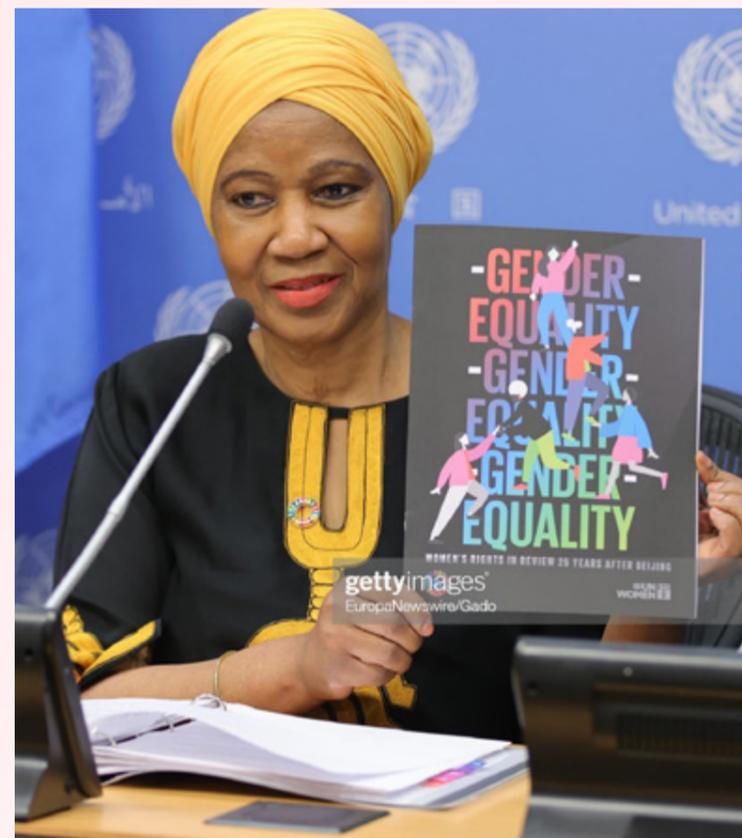
In an exclusive interview with Kojo Bentum-Williams from her Johannesburg residence, she said COVID-19 has further exposed the vulnerabilities of women in tourism.

“One of my biggest concerns in tourism and women is the discrimination against women. Women tend to be in jobs that are not protected. And in the pandemic, a lot of the women who lost jobs were those jobs where the employer can just say, the job is over. There is no security and that that is guaranteed is no pay or you get terminated. I mean people will clean and cook. These are essential jobs for the industry. You'd expect that people who do these jobs have got protected and safe jobs. I think as we build back better recovering from the pandemic, we must fix that so that women do not carry the burden of the impacts of the pandemic and even beyond the pandemic,” she said.

The World Committee on Tourism Ethics Committee Chairperson says institutions should give equal opportunities to women in areas such as access to finance in order for them to play more strategic roles. Dr. Mlambo-Ngcuka explained: “If you think of ownership, where ownership is skewed towards men, they're the ones who are shareholders; the financial institutions would trust a man's business plan. And even though the people who are the real actors who make things happen are the women, they will recognise a male voice. He is the one who is going to have the business written in his name. That is not fair. Women ought to be role players and take strategic and decisive leadership in the running of the industry. Building back better means we must create protected and decent jobs for women in a thriving industry. And further women must be in decision making and have ownership of the businesses”

“Building back better means we must create protected and decent jobs for women in a thriving industry. And further, women must be in decision making and have ownership of the businesses”

For a people-centered sector like tourism, Dr. Mlambo-Ngcuka posits that there is a lot that can be done to ensure inclusivity.



• Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka outdoor a publication on Gender Equality during her time as UN Women Executive Director

“We know that the tourism industry is about caring, about people because you entertain and you receive guests and you want them to have the best possible time in your institution, and we know that women do it very well. And it's important to turn that talent and ability of women into a product, a product that generates money for them; they must not bring that skill into the job situation as a product which works just for someone who employs them. They should be the ones who benefit greatly from their talents.”

The second UNWTO Global Report on Women in Tourism indicates that 54% of people employed in tourism are women. In sharp contrast, women in tourism earn 14.7% less.

The 24th Session of the UNWTO General Assembly, which met in Madrid on 30 November-3 December 2021 unanimously approved Dr. Mlambo-Ngcuka's nomination for the position of Chairperson, World Committee on

Tourism Ethics. She will serve as Chair for four years, starting on 3 December 2021, taking over from Pascal Lamy, former Director-general of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute.

In accepting her new appointment, Dr. Mlambo-Ngcuka said "It is with great honour that I accept this appointment and I will, together with the members of the Ethics Committee, work hard to provide a fair guidance towards more ethical practices in the tourism sector."

Profile

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women from August 2013 to August 2021. She was sworn into office on 19 August 2013 and brought a wealth of experience and expertise to this position, having devoted her career to issues of human rights, equality and social justice. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka had previously worked in government and civil society, and with the private sector, and was actively involved in the struggle to end apartheid in her home country of South Africa.

From 2005 to 2008, she served as Deputy President of South Africa, overseeing programmes to combat poverty and bring the advantages of a growing economy to the poor, with a particular focus on women. Prior to this, she served as Minister of Minerals and Energy from 1999 to 2005 and Deputy Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry from 1996 to 1999. She was a Member of Parliament from 1994 to 1996 as part of South Africa's first democratic government.



Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka began her career as a teacher and gained international experience as a coordinator at the World YWCA in Geneva, where she established a global programme for young women. She is the founder of the Umlambo Foundation, which supports leadership and education. A longtime champion of women's rights, she is affiliated with several organizations devoted to education, women's empowerment and gender equality.

She completed her PhD in education and technology at the University of Warwick, United Kingdom.

The Council of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) earlier this year announced the appointment of Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, as its new Chancellor. Her five-year term of office will run from 1 October 2022 until 30 September 2027. She will succeed Professor Njabulo Ndebele, whose second five year term as Chancellor ends 30 September 2022.

Photo Credit: Photo: Kea Taylor



Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
UN Women Executive Director



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Zambia's big ambition to become MICE Powerhouse

Making a record, 15th appearance at Africa's premium event, "Meetings Africa" and forging partnerships form part of Zambia's strategy and big plans to make tourism a pillar of its economy.

The Tourism Agency's new Chief Executive Officer, Chavunga Lungu has revealed initiatives the government has embarked on to make it a reality. Speaking to VoyagesAfric in Sandton on the side-lines of "Meetings Africa", the ZTA Boss said, the government has seen the need to diversify its tourism offering because of the enormous benefits business events and MICE offer destinations.

"We've realized the importance that is found in MICE and businesses when they come to meet. So as a country, the government that is in place has seen a lot of infrastructure development to the extent that right now, we are building a 5000 seating capacity meetings centre intending to host the African Union in Lusaka come July. So for us and Zambia as a MICE destination, we are actually positioning ourselves within the region," he revealed.

He believes the new convention centre being constructed to host the Africa Union Summit will lay the foundation for a massive take-off in the areas of meetings and conferences.

Chavunga also singled out the slashing of visa fees by 50% in all categories and the rollout of e-visa and visa on arrival facility is a huge leap for its commitment to making Zambia a smart destination.

He disclosed that "We have had to look at the whole visa regime. Our visa has three categories; A, B and C. We have those who can come without a visa, we have those who can come and do visas at the point of entry and others that need to do visa even before coming into the country. For all these categories, what the government has done in this year's budget is to slash the visa amount from \$50 to \$25. And that is just to promote accessibility into the country



Chavunga Lungu,
Acting CEO of Zambia Tourism Agency

and to show that even during COVID, Zambia is still open for tourists to come in."

On his impression of "Meetings Africa", the former marketing and financial guru said, it was about time meetings and mega events happened and the bold decision taken by South African Tourism was laudable and will play a key role in resuscitating the tourism sector which has been battered by the coronavirus pandemic.

"The human nature is very interactive and so then to have another opportunity to meet people not just for the sake of interaction but to end up having business conversations is great and I think it's something we must be getting to. We've all learnt from different industries how to handle the Covid and we can go past that and start to meet physically," he emphasised.



A Group photo of Zambia's delegation at MeetingsAfrica

Africa's Travel Indaba is Back!

After a two-year absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa's Travel Indaba is back and registration is open!

Durban's Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre will once again become a hub of activity with the return of Africa's Travel Indaba, from the 2nd to the 5th of May 2022.

After a successful "Meetings Africa" 2022, which created a platform for the coming together of the Africa business events industry, it is now the turn of the continent's leisure tourism industry to showcase to the world what is on offer at Africa's Travel Indaba 2022, a trade show that has established itself as the continent's premier tourism trade platform. Owned and managed by South African Tourism, the 2022 edition of Africa's Travel Indaba will yet again be hosted in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

"Africa's Travel Indaba is back with renewed energy and focus on creating a platform for the recovery of our industry. As the African continent, we cannot wait to welcome back international delegates from various parts of the world to reconnect and share our real success stories of resilience, whilst demonstrating Africa's world class tourism products that will continue to give travellers an unforgettable experience. This is our signature leisure tourism trade show and we are thrilled that we, as a tourism sector, can once again gather in person, network, share ideas and do business that will contribute to the much-needed recovery," says Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, Chief Convention Bureau Officer.

At the last edition of Africa's Travel Indaba in 2019, the show attracted about 6200 delegates from all over the world, with 1033 exhibiting businesses from 19 countries on the continent, showcasing an array of travel and tourism offerings to almost 1177 local, regional and international buyers.

Furthermore, almost 452 local, regional and international media representatives participated at Africa's Travel Indaba 2019, pointing to the stature and global profile of the African continent's tourism industry.

Africa's Travel Indaba 2022 will create an opportunity for face-to-face participation and therefore be taking a physical format, but also still have virtual components, as we all got accustomed to, with the following structure:

- Physical participation for all exhibitors
- Physical participation for all global hosted buyers not impacted by travel restrictions or other socio-political factors in their countries
- Virtual Diary access for qualified buyers unable to attend

Amongst the key highlights to look forward to this year are:

- A welcome function which will take place on the first day of the show, an opportunity for networking and engagements amongst the delegates;



- Insightful educational and information sharing sessions throughout the three days focusing on innovation, ideas, new trends and solutions to challenges that will assist to contribute to the recovery and growth of the tourism sector;
- Globally selected and vetted quality buyers;
- Various media briefing sessions providing much needed updates from the greater tourism industry;
- An effective online diary and matchmaking system, that closely pairs buyers' needs with exhibitors' offerings in order to ensure a more efficient and productive trade show;
- More SMMEs showcasing the lesser known variety of South Africa's product offering; and
- Overall a covid-19 regulations adherence event that will ensure delegates safety.

While registration for exhibitors is already open, early-bird discounts will be available to exhibitors who confirm their participation by 31 March 2022. Registration dates for buyers and members of the media are as follows:

- Hosted buyer applications opened on Thursday 10 March 2022
- Non-hosted buyer applications opened Monday 21 March 2022
- Media applications open on Thursday, 04 April 2022
- Online Diary System bookings open on Tuesday, 15 April 2022

"We know from our research and connections with partners and consumers that travellers increasingly want to live their lives to the fullest again but that they are looking for reassurance that it is indeed safe to travel. With globally-benchmarked health and safety protocols in place, all travellers (domestic, regional and international) can have the comfort of knowing that they will be safe, while enjoying their time in South Africa. Africa's Travel Indaba is our showcase of all that South Africa and Team Africa has to offer, ranging from quality assured accommodation establishments, adventure, relaxation, lifestyle events and culture and heritage-inspired experiences and products" concludes Kotze-Nhlapo.

Mauritius bolstering its tourism and MICE offering



• Director General of the Mauritius Promotion Tourism Authority Arvind Bundhun

A burgeoning MICE sector is emerging in the Indian Ocean state of Mauritius as it rolls out comprehensive program to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the destination.

Known for its pristine beaches and alluring draws for the ideal holiday haven, the destination is looking at a slice of the MICE cake to encourage incentive travellers and host other events which will help diversify its products.

“Basically, we have the capacity. As I speak to you, we have 112 hotels registered. We are talking about a capacity of about 12000 rooms and what we have noticed here is that there is this desire for great companies to start travelling again. On our agenda today we have about five or six confirmations, and I am sure this even will trigger more sales. I am extremely confident on this market. Mauritius is safe, we know how to handle groups and incentives that’s one of the reason we are here,” said Director General of the Mauritius Promotion Tourism Authority, Arvind Bundhun on the VA Tourism Podcast at the 2022 Meetings Africa in South Africa.

Another area the Indian Ocean Island country is turning attention to is gastronomy. Being a confluence of people from diverse continents, the Director General asserts that Mauritius’ unique culinary culture is heavily influenced by many around the world.

He maintained: “About inclusive tourism and gastronomy is a direct link to our population because as you are aware people migrated to Mauritius from Africa, from India, from China, from Europe and they came and that is what you call “L’ordre de vie.”

From that came all the spices, and the different cooking methods which grew towards the creation of the creole cuisine. It is basically all these influences together in terms of spices, in terms of cooking methods which influence our cuisine. Today, what we see with the modern traveler is that gastronomy is a key element. People, tourists, come and they want to discover and I think we have done that quite well, integrating gastronomy as one of the criteria towards promoting tourism.”

In addition to this, Bundhun is of the firm belief that Mauritius has all it takes to remain a competitive tourist destination.

“You have got pristine features everywhere, you have got amazing waterfalls everywhere, and you have got clear blue skies everywhere. But as I told you before, the DNA of Mauritius is the people. It is the population. We have built our reputation as a Tourism destination. People go to Mauritius for the smile, for the legendary hospitality and there is no Tourism without the Mauritian,” he posited.



• Mauritius’ Stand at Meetings Africa

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FITUR 2022 rounds up with record Trade Participation

FITUR 2022, the International Tourism Trade Fair organised by IFEMA MADRID ended with impressive trade participation. This special tourism recovery edition which was held from 19th January to Sunday 23rd January 2022 highlighted the efforts by the entire tourism industry value chain to explore new opportunities to be able to look forward to 2022 with strong expectations for an accelerated recovery. This edition was critical for recovering levels of business and turnover, has made Madrid the hub for the global international tourism community, and enabled the tourism industry to convey a message of confidence and strength to the world.

The figures for FITUR 2022 exceeded all initial expectations. On the one hand, trade participation over its first three days rose to 81,193 attendees from 127 countries, doubling the figures for the 2021 edition, in addition to general public visitors at the weekends that, even before the final closing figures were recorded, were estimated at about 30,000 people, giving a grand total of 111,193 attendees. Online



• King Felipe IV is received at IFEMA by UNWTO Secretary General of other executives

professional engagements at FITUR from around the world also achieved record figures. The FITUR LIVEConnect platform complements the Fair to provide a hybrid format



• DRC Stand at FITUR

over a more extended season and broader geographic scope. As of today, it has had 33,286 registrations, ten per cent above initial forecasts.

The response from companies, countries, and destinations was excellent. It showed an upward trend in terms of representation, with figures approaching FITUR record attendances in previous editions. This was evident in the 6,933 participants from 107 countries gathered at FITUR 2022. There were 600 exhibitors and official representation by seventy countries, led by the Dominican Republic, which this year, under the slogan "Has it all", deployed extraordinary resources and organised activities as FITUR Partner Country.

All these arrivals at FITUR generated an economic impact for Madrid of approximately €150 million as announced by the Madrid Regional Government's President, Isabel Diaz Ayuso, on the occasion of FITUR's Madrid Day.



• Brazilian exhibitors at FITUR

Another feature was the solid institutional backing for FITUR this year. Spain's Royal Family once again put the finishing touches to the opening day with the presence of Their Majesties, the King and Queen. The Prime Minister chose FITUR to announce the second edition of the Spanish Government's Tourism Sustainability Plan. FITUR was also attended by UNWTO representatives, tourism ministers from 21 countries and four delegations, seven Spanish government ministers, regional presidents, tourism councillors from the Spanish regions and mayors from several Spanish towns and cities.

FITUR 2022's impact also reflected in the extensive international media coverage of the Fair, with 3,981 accredited journalists from forty countries. Almost twice as many as in May 2021.

FITUR's impact channels on social media also doubled, with more than six million impressions and 90,000 interactions with the Fair's profiles, as a result of the 1,200 posts published on its channels to broadcast the event. The Fair currently has a community of more than 263,000 followers, of whom more than 8,000 joined in one week. FITUR was a Trending Topic on Twitter for two consecutive days in Spain and one in the Dominican Republic, FITUR 2022 Partner Country. The online reach of the #Fitur2022 hashtag on all platforms topped 600 million potential impacts, making this edition the best to date on social media.



• Seychelles Director of Destination Marketing Bernadette Willemin in a meeting with industry partners

In addition to the wide-ranging content presented throughout the fair's eight halls by the different companies, countries, and destinations, the Fair also hosted hundreds of activities, forums, presentations, and various initiatives to stimulate the market in its special-interest sections. These sections were FITURTECHY, FITUR KNOW-HOW & EXPORT, FITUR MICE, FITUR SCREEN, FITUR LGBT+, FITUR TALENT, FITUR WOMAN, and FITUR LINGUA, along with the TRAVEL TECHNOLOGY space, the FITUR NEXT Sustainability Observatory, and the début FITUR CRUISES.

FITUR was also the platform for the public presentation of HELIXA Experience Center to tourism sector companies and professionals. HELIXA Experience Center is the result of IFEMA MADRID's innovation programme to promote the adoption of cutting-edge technology in the trade fair business. HELIXA Experience Center is a collaboration platform for sharing knowledge and innovation, designed to inspire and mentor businesses in its transformation process and evolution towards new business models opened up by metaverses.



• The Dominican Republic enchanting performers

Destination Focus - Seychelles

INDUSTRY PLAYERS AND GOVERNMENT OPTIMISTIC OF ACCELERATED TOURISM RECOVERY IN 2022

Seychelles Island, a tourism-dependent economy in the Indian ocean is hopeful of great recovery of the Tourism sector in 2022.

The public sector led by the country's Ministry of Tourism and foreign affairs with the collaborative efforts of the vibrant private sector is encouraged by the booking trend and measures put in place to see tourism bouncing back in style.

In a recent trip by VoyagesAfric to the paradise island to assess the readiness and measures put in place to give travellers confidence to travel to the country, we observed how the local population have strictly observed the health and sanitary protocols.

"Even before arriving at the Seychelles International Airport, a traveler is expected to complete the Seychelles Islands Travel Authorization system. The platform powered by Travizory was introduced as part of the measures to curb the spread, reduce importation of covid-19 cases and also to make travel seamless and secure for passengers and the country.

As it moves to enhance security screening and centralize traveler data, the Department of Civil Aviation, Ports & Marine has introduced biometric data analysis capabilities, combining data from airlines with data from travelers. Using facial recognition technology, selfies uploaded during the Travel Authorization application

are matched to traveler faces on arrival. This according to the Ministry of Civil Aviation is a new process to centralise the information and make travelling to the island hassle-free.

The launch of a state-of-the-art biometric corridor for health travel screening at Seychelles International Airport makes the island nation only the second country in the world after the UAE to leverage walk-through biometrics at its borders. In addition, it guarantees contactless and secure travel and delivers an unmatched customer experience for all travelers arriving by air.

Fully integrated with the Seychelles Islands Travel Authorization system, the new "biocorridor" checks

• Mrs Sherin Francis,
Principal Secretary at the
Department of Tourism



temperatures, validate if each traveler matches an approved, valid authorization through state-of-the-art facial recognition technology, and classifies travelers for handling based on pre-departure risk assessments."

The Department of Tourism in Seychelles in December 2021 celebrated the surpassing of 2020 tourist arrival numbers which were key milestones in this uncharted territory the world and the tourism sector particularly are going through.

Speaking to VoyagesAfric from Botanical House, Mont Fleuri in Mahe, the Principal Secretary at the Department of Tourism Mrs. Sherin Francis said, "the archipelago island since the outbreak of the pandemic studied the situation and offered the best possible solutions to minimize the impact on the tourism sector."

"Considering the restrictions and difficulties travelers had to endure, it was great and encouraging the milestones we achieved. Last year (2021) we managed to catch up with almost 50% of our arrivals compared to the performance we did in 2019". We also managed to grow new

emerging and secondary markets while the traditional markets still had some restrictions."

Explaining the new structure of Tourism Seychelles, Mrs. Francis said, the new changes are to consolidate the structure with one reporting command under the principal secretary and rationalise resources. 'one of the first priorities is to look at product diversification within the tourism sector. Here we are looking to encourage investments into other areas other than accommodation activities, leisure and cultural activities amongst others" she said.

Market Diversification

Asked about the need for the destination to go beyond to offer something different other than sea sand and sun, she responded by saying, "the Department had already planned to roll out the communication and project other exciting things one can enjoy in the Seychelles before the pandemic hit."

"We are placing a lot of focus on cultural tourism, community-based tourism, so we will be launching this year, a series of community-based

experiences that visitors can engage in when they visit Seychelles in all the various districts of Mahe, Praslin, La Digue. That would also give visitors a lot of opportunities and experiences to fill their itineraries while visiting Seychelles."

"Throughout the pandemic, we have diversified our markets with the likes of Russia, UAE, Israel and Eastern European countries, these are not new markets, we have been investing in these markets over more than a decade, but these markets have been the most reactive markets and thus classified as our Go to markets"

"This period has also allowed us to take stock in terms of tourism carrying capacity, The updated carrying capacity studies for the main islands has recently been completed. The studies hope to create the right path for tourism for Seychelles and recommends new measures to direct growth in the sector. This is also to ensure infrastructure that supports the tourism industry are able to keep pace with the developments."

According to her, even though the new Covid 19 variable exists, the Department was optimistic of a positive outlook for 2021 for the sector considering the worldwide vaccination programme.

Mrs. Francis postulated that despite the travel restrictions across its main markets, the ministry is hoping by the end of 2022 the country should have at least about two-third of arrivals compared to the year 2019.

She added that the silver lining of this pandemic is also offering the opportunity for economic diversification as Tourism was at the receiving end. The principal secretary was proud of the work done by the Tourism sector in uniting to restart in a safe and responsible way.

Covid:19 Adherence

With its impressive vaccination drive, at least eight out of the ten persons you meet on the street have face coverings and all shops or public eateries have strictly enforced the covid 19 protocols, it brims confidence for travellers who make it to the destination of choice.

There are at least two round checks by stewards of the cat cocos boat to ensure that all passengers have their face masks/coverings on. There are sanitary machines and points on board encouraging all to sanitize while on board and it becomes necessary.

Industry Reaction

The General Manager of the newly opened L'escale Hotel Marina and Spa Cyrille Carofano told VoyagesAfric that the national measures to control covid of which they take direction is commendable and they as a hotel have gone further to implement additional actions to make the guest enjoy their stay.

"Seychelles has always been a destination for its beauty and nature, we have 40% of our land that is a natural reserve so it's extremely protected and a unique experience for our guests to discover. The beaches are stunning along with breath-taking views from the mountain, there is a diversity in sessions. So it's a lot of opportunities for the guest to have a different option with island type. We have a coral island, granite island, and the main island which is very vibrant and offer a lot of options in terms of dining experience and a little bit of nightlife as well." Mr. Carofano said.

We pride ourselves in the state of security of the destination. Tourists and travelers will discover something they will basically have the opportunity to be outside of the box and to feel free again and to be able to interact with nature again, especially during this

time of lockdown, so I invite people to consider Seychelles destination number one for the holidays."

The General Manager of 7 Degrees South, Andre Butler Payette is convinced Destination Seychelles has managed the situation in a way that it places public health as a priority as well as gradually introducing measures to keep the economy going.

"I believe Seychelles has done well in striking the balance between public health concerns and rebooting the much-needed tourism economy. Because without it we would have had another crisis on our hands. The measures that we currently have in place are adequate to protect the local people as well as not being a deterrent for travelers to Seychelles. We are not asking anything out of the ordinary. Whilst in Seychelles, you are free to explore and move around the island."

"With over 85% of the population fully vaccinated, it is not only a safety net for the Seychellois people but helps the guests travel with confidence to the island" Mr Butler Payet added.

At La Digue, the third most populated island of the Seychelles, small businesses whose livelihoods are dependent on tourism became innovative and introduced other staycation packages which helped promote domestic tourism as well as save the tourism sector.

Owner of Casa Deela Robert Pool said "We offered customers massive marketing and promotion like staycation promotions which worked very well. We also did television adverts which had a lot of domestic travellers booking rooms most weekends and also, we had to drop prices to attract customers. "This kept us running as a business and helped generate revenues enough to pay staff and



• Cyrille Carofano, General Manager of L'escale Hotel Marina and Spa

utility bills," he added.

Our conversation with other frontline personnel like the taxi drivers, tour guides and restaurant operators expressed delight in the gradual return of tourism activities on the island. They make the point that it is through collective efforts can the virus and return to full economic activities be achieved. Paul, a taxi driver, told us that the virus will not go away and we need to accept that fact and accommodate it in a safe manner.

A tour guide, Baes in Praslin and owner Laboudallonia Tours Praslin Medina Laboudallon told VoyagesAfric that due to the covid situation with the new variant it's not easy with lots of booking cancellations

"Covid is here to stay, so being a little bit innovative is necessary to remain different from the rest and focus more on Seychelles culture. For Seychelles tourism is our number one pillar. For us tourism is like butter on bread. It feeds mostly all Seychelles families in different ways from farmers to fishermen to waitresses etc. Now we have omicron in Seychelles with cruise ship cancellations but hopefully by February things will pick up"

Brief about Seychelles Island

The Seychelles is an archipelago of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean, off East Africa. It's home to numerous beaches, coral reefs and nature reserves, as well as rare animals such as giant Aldabra tortoises. Mahé, a hub for visiting the other islands, is home to the capital Victoria. It also has the mountain rainforests of Morne Seychellois National Park and beaches, including Beau Vallon and Anse Takamaka.

Uganda unveils new destination brand identity to boost tourism



• President Museveni pointing to the brand logo during the lunch

Uganda has launched a new destination brand identity to promote the country as a competitive tourism destination in the larger strategy of rebuilding, restarting and "more importantly, winning Uganda's rightful place in the global tourism market."

CEO, Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Lilly Ajarova during the launch in January, said "Yes, everyone knew that Uganda is and has always been the Pearl of Africa, – but there was a lack of clarity and consistency on, if Uganda is the Pearl of Africa- what pearls does it have to offer for each of the various travel segments and preferences."

In respect of this, the new destination brand is "to harmonize messaging around all the positive Ugandan experiences into a consistent, credible, authentic and trusted promise and value proposition that tourists and the travel trade are not only willing to buy into but are happy and confident to recommend to their friends and family and their customers, we needed to go back to the basics," she said.

The new brand identity is to also offer anchorage towards the objective of 'Sustainably Promoting Uganda as a Competitive Tourism Destination for Inclusive Development.'

"Explore, Uganda the Pearl of Africa is an invitation to our tourists- both domestic, regional and international to rediscover the magnificence of the Pearl. We are promising and inviting them to Explore Uganda, the Pearl of Africa, for adventure of their lifetime," the UTB CEO said.

Before the new brand, there were a number of campaigns by various stakeholders, most of which were built around "Visit Uganda" as a call to action, something that Ajarova says did not appropriately capture the uniqueness of Uganda's attractions.

"If you think about it, when you invite someone to visit you, you are simply asking them to check on you, maybe for a few days. But an invitation to explore is really about

inviting someone to indulge themselves. To spoil themselves; to delve into; to deep-dive; to discover and rediscover- the depth, range and variety of attractions in the pearl," Ms Ajarova stated.

To increase global destination awareness of the new Pearl of Africa brand and the Adventure of a Lifetime brand promise domestically and in key and emerging source markets around the world- over the next couple of months, UTB is rolling out a domestic, regional and global marketing campaign.

Lilly Ajarova said: "The campaign has two layers- one a domestic one that aims at creating citizens' appreciation of our unique pearl and the second is focused on leveraging this renewed appreciation of the brand amongst the citizenry as well as leveraging other media platforms, to serve this brand to the world."

The campaign will be placed on key broadcast, print and digital media platforms for a period of at least six months (January 2022 – June 2022)."

There will also be a number of unground activations as well as familiarisation and immersion experiences to give stakeholders a feel of the brand.

The official launch of the new Destination Uganda Brand and unveiling of the brand logo was done by President Yoweri Museveni beckoned the world to Explore Uganda, The Pearl of Africa saying that, 'the uniqueness of her attractions guaranteed a better experience and higher return on investment.' He particularly extolled Uganda's unique terrain, that made the country a "roof of Africa" where Lake Victoria sits, giving birth to the Mighty River Nile that flows through various Ugandan lakes on its way to Alexandria in Egypt.

He also highlighted Uganda's abundant vegetation, temperate climate, variety of wildlife, strategic location on the Equator, cultural diversity, community tourism, peace and security, among others.



South Africa rolls out eVisa System in 14 Countries



Cyril Ramaphosa, President South Africa

President South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa says the eVisa system has been launched in 14 countries, including China, India, Kenya and Nigeria, according to government's commitment.

President Ramaphosa said the government is also streamlining and modernising the visa application process to make it easier to travel to South Africa for tourism, business and work.

In his State of the Nation Address delivered in Cape Town, President Ramaphosa said the revised Critical Skills List has been published for the first time since 2014, following detailed technical work and extensive consultations with business and labour.

"The updated list reflects the skills that are in shortage today, to ensure that our immigration policy matches the demands of our economy," President Ramaphosa said.

He said a comprehensive review of the work visa system is currently underway, led by a former Director-General of Home Affairs, Mavuso Msimang.

"This review is exploring the possibility of new visa categories that could enable economic growth, such as a start-up visa and a remote working visa," President Ramaphosa said.

He said the world over, the ability to attract skilled immigrants is the hallmark of a modern, thriving economy.

The South Africa e-visa application is aimed to make more fluid the immigration process and to amplify the border security checks.

It allows eligible citizens to enter the country without going to an embassy.

The e-Visa enables the prospective visitor to apply for a Visa from his/her home country online without visiting the Mission and also pay the visa fee online.

On arrival, the visitor presents the authorisation to the immigration authorities who would then stamp the entry into the country.

The South Africa online visa is aimed at being available to a larger number of nationalities, such as the United States, Australia, Canada, and all European Union member states.



Sierra Leone unveils new Brand Logo for Tourism at FITUR

The Minister of Tourism and Culture of Sierra Leone Memunatu Pratt has unveiled the new brand identity of Sierra Leone Tourism at the last FITUR International Tourism Fair.

The logo which is themed "Explore Freedom" is part of the country's tourism covid recovery strategy to market the country.

Speaking at a media briefing at FITUR, the Minister said, Over the last year one year, the country has tried to rebrand Sierra Leone and wanted a brand logo that speaks to the unique tourism attributes of Sierra Leone such as eco-tourism, culture, beaches, gastronomy and many more."

"We are shifting from the old logo which had a diamond as its main theme. As you know diamond was part of the conflict situation during the civil war and we are happy to showcase the inclusive brand with Explore Freedom as its tagline" Memunatu Pratt said.

She thanked the World Bank for the immense support to the West African country through the Sierra Leone economic diversity project.

The Regional Director for Africa at the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Elcia Grandcourt who witnessed the briefing applauded the Minister and her team for the initiative. She added that, as the world gradually returns to normalcy, an integrated approach to tourism will be essential in driving recovery.



TOUGHA, SA Tourism deepen partnership with business dialogue

The Tour Operators' Union of Ghana (TOUGHA) has firmed up its partnership with South Africa Tourism (SAT) with a day's business dialogue event.

The event which was held at the Kempinski Hotel in Accra, March 8 had in attendance TOUGHA members, officials from SAT- West Africa, both public and private industry stakeholders including personnel from Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Heads of Trade Associations, Ghana Tourism Authority and the Ghana Tourism Development Company.

South Africa's High Commissioner to Ghana, H.E. Grace Jeanet Mason who also graced the occasion commended the two entities for taking steps to forge closer ties and pledged her support.

President of TOUGHA, Mrs. Alisa Osei-Asamoah said the business event was to concretize the existing relationship her outfit and SA Tourism have had over the years.

She stated: "Today's business dialogue, which is under the theme "Exploring Opportunities for Travel and Tourism Business in the Midst of a Pandemic" is further testament of the strength of the progressive partnership and collaboration between TOUGHA and SA Tourism and our earnest determination to contribute to the establishment of a sustainably congenial environment for our industry to thrive."

In the current fluid tourism environment, the TOUGHA President postulated that collaborations are crucial to ensuring that the sector works for all engaged in it.

"Indeed, we need to work together to explore and identify our comparative advantages which can be knit together into a formidable competitive advantage that can be deployed to boost our resilience in a hostile environment as shown by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, global economy as a whole and the travel and tourism industry, in particular. We cannot afford to do business as usual by operating in our respective silos anymore," Mrs. Osei-Asamoah emphasized.

The team from SAT led by its West Africa Manager, Thekiso Rakolojane and Trade Relations Manager, Mohammed



Alisa Osei-Asamoah, President of TOUGHA,

Tanko Kwajaffa made extensive presentations on Destination South Africa and opportunities for tour operators to maximize their business through close collaboration with SAT.

The duo touched on new destination offerings, revised protocols, the upcoming Africa Travel Indaba which they urged operators to attend among others, including the SA Specialist –an interactive online learning programme designed to improve operators' knowledge of South Africa.

A panel of four discussed, "Exploring Opportunities for Travel and Tourism Business in the Midst of a Pandemic." Members included Ekow Sampson, Deputy CEO, Operations, Ghana Tourism Authority, Prof. Issahaku Adams, Head, Department of Tourism, University of Cape Coast, Dr. Kobby Mensah, Senior Lecturer, University of Ghana Business School and Regina Hammond, a SheTrades Consultant.

Other highlights of the business dialogue were presentations by Alice Mensah on Digital Marketing and Country Manager of South African Airways, Gloria Wilkinson Mensah on the resumption of operations of the airline and their new offerings.

Manager of Labadi Beach Hotel, David Eduaful was full of praise for TOUGHA for initiating the event to further strengthen their partnership with SA Tourism and assured his outfit's full backing.

A raffle was held where two patrons won a weekend for two at the Labadi Beach Hotel, with a TOUGHA member also winning a ticket to travel to South Africa.

The TOUGHA Business Dialogue event was moderated by ace broadcaster and tourism expert, Gilbert 'Abeiku Santana' Aggrey.

South Africa secures hosting rights for 20 events



• Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, Chief Convention Officer of South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB)

South Africa will from now up till 2027 host at least 20 regional and international events at various centres across the country.

This is according to Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, Chief Convention Officer of South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB) who revealed to VoyagesAfriq that the rainbow country had managed to win that number of events out of 66 that have been bid for so far.

“For the financial year, we bid for 66 regional and international events between 2022 and 2027 and of those, we’ve already won 20. And the potential of those 66 events is one billion Rand if we convert all of them and also 13000 delegates,” she stated.

She said the opportunity the meetings and events industry offer for tourists to visit the country underscores the significance of MICE to tourism.

“I keep on saying that’s why I love and am passionate about this industry, this sector of the tourism industry - is that it is a future industry, because we fill up the pipeline. You know, you have people up to 2027 that you know will come,” Amanda reiterated excitedly.

The SANCB boss added that bidding towns need to meet a set of criteria that is linked to the international bidding process. “We are trying to get them to host international meetings that fit their town. If the town can meet the criteria, [the SANCB] will support you,” said Kotze-Nhlapo.

New National Registrar appointed for Tourist Guides in South Africa

The Department of Tourism in South Africa has announced the appointment of Ms. Mmaditlonki Setwaba as the National Registrar of Tourist Guides. Ms Setwaba is currently the Deputy Director-General: Tourism Sector Support Services within the Department.

As the National Registrar, Ms Setwaba will work in conjunction with the Provincial Registrars to ensure the growth and development of the guiding sector. Her responsibilities, among others, will include:

- Maintenance of a central database of tourist guides registered by the Provincial Registrars;
- Development of a code of conduct and ethics for tourist guides;
- Facilitate Hearing and determining appeals;
- Monitoring of trends in the sector; and
- Promotion and development of the guiding sector nationally.



• Ms. Mmaditlonki Setwaba as the National Registrar of Tourist Guides

Her appointment occurs aptly as the tourism sector acknowledges International Tourism Guide Day on 21 February 2022. This annual commemorative day aims to raise awareness about the profession and the critical role tourist guides play as brand ambassadors at destinations.

“On International Tourist Guide Day, I would like to thank all guides for their commitment towards this profession. We have some of the best tourist guides in the industry and they are one of the reasons why tourists keep returning to our country and tourism sites. I urge you to keep learning and growing as we position South Africa as a world-class destination,” says the National Registrar.

Ms. Setwaba hosted a virtual event to honour South African guides in March 2022. This celebration will offer guides a platform to share best practices and discuss challenges. This year’s theme is: “**Re-igniting the Tourist Guiding Sector**” which will focus on restoring, re-activating and re-thinking tourism, particularly in the tourist guiding space.

“Building a more resilient tourism economy post-Covid-19 is key to the future of tourism and the sustainability of the tourism sector and the tourist guiding profession,” says Ms Setwaba.

In South Africa, tourist guiding is a regulated profession governed by national legislation and policies. Individuals who wish to become tourist guides must undergo training as part of a formal qualification registered by SAQA. Upon being certified as competent, such persons will receive a certificate issued by the Culture, Arts, Tourism Hospitality and Sports Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA). They must thereafter apply to relevant Provincial Registrar to be registered in order to operate legally. This process unfolds as prescribed in the Tourism Act, 2014 and the Regulations in respect of Tourist Guides, 1994 and 2001 respectively.

Rwanda turns attention on Sports Tourism



• Janet Karemera, Deputy CEO, Rwanda Convention Bureau

Rwanda is eyeing the potential of sports to grow its meetings, incentives, conferences & events (MICE) portfolio as the world recover from the ravages of the pandemic.

Rwanda’s capital of Kigali played host to several sporting events and championships including the BAL Africa 2021 tournament held in September 2021, in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic. The country’s convention Bureau sees this as an opportunity to further add sports to its bouquet of activities.

Speaking to VoyagesAfriq at this year’s “MeetingsAfrica” held in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Deputy Chief Executive of the Rwanda Convention Bureau (RCB) Janet Karemera said sports came in handy for the destination when the world came to gridlock as a result of the pandemic.

She opined that whether holding events in a bubble (in-person with limited or no audience) or hybrid formats, encouraged them to think of innovative ways to develop interesting content that had the potential to attract patrons despite the limitations presented by the pandemic.

“We are so grateful for the efforts that the government made, as soon as we were able to open up before vaccines were even available, we were open. As a government, what we really focused on was sports. The sports segment, we saw return because many people expected the championships or tournaments to happen, whether it’s in a bubble or hybrid form”.

Rwanda hosted the Basketball Africa League (BAL) inaugural season in a bubble the whole of May 2020. They also played host to the Afro basket, which is the African continental championships, and the volleyball championships for the continent in a bubble.

Working with different partners, the private sector, hotels, and other stakeholders, while ensuring strict adherence to COVID-19 prevention and safety protocols, the RCB coordinated efforts to as much as possible sustain tourism by exploring the opportunities presented by the sports sector.

“We were able to show that we have the capacity to do this because we work so well with security, medical services, and venues. In some cases, for BAL, we were even able to have limited fans to access the venue so by the time we hosted afro basket we were able to have more fans attend. We saw that the sports sector as it really was an important sector for us to pursue whether during a pandemic or not. When it’s appropriate you’re able to have these games and keep everyone safe”.

The services sector contributed 49.12% and 46.42% to Rwanda’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

International Women's Day: CELEBRATING AFRICA'S TOURISM HEROINES

The role of women in tourism around the world cannot be discounted and in Africa is even more dominant. Their roles have gone beyond their specified descriptions to incorporate the human touch that tourism pride itself in.

Nonetheless, gender equality issues in most cases have been against women and on a day like this, when we celebrate

International Women's Day, to mark their roles in shaping the world, it is important that the women who are driving tourism are applauded.

The Tourism sector has a significant 54% of its workforce as women but sadly does not correspond with the numbers that can be found in the upper echelons of the sector; although, a lot has been

done to reduce the gap that exists.

From public policies to corporate governance structures, women matters should be deliberate to encourage many of them to take leadership positions. In commemorating this landmark day, VoyagesAfriq solicited the thoughts of women leaders in the tourism sector on how to make the day count.



Elcia Grandcourt, UNWTO Regional Director for Africa

I am so encouraged by the tenacity and determination which drives us women to pursue our dreams and aspirations in all aspects of life. Today, we are in a better position to support and guide women towards achieving their goals and in taking leadership roles in the sector. My wish is that we continue to empower them with the appropriate skills and tools to accelerate gender equality in the tourism sector and women's ability to access the tourism markets.



Oulimata Sarr, Regional Director, UN Women Central and West Africa

The COVID19 pandemic gives us an opportunity to build back better. It will require policies and programs which take into account the needs of women in the tourism sector. They play a central role in the industry pillars and need to have a voice in reshaping the recovery of tourism activities in all countries.



Dr Memunatu Pratt, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Sierra Leone

The continuous marginalization of women, lack of fairness and equal opportunities if not tackled through commitment to implementation of gender hospitality responsive policies will embolden and deepen gender biases in denying the accelerated growth of the Tourism industry as women constitute over 50% of the work force.



H.E. Eldevina Materula, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Mozambique

International Women's Day is not just a day dedicated simply to honoring women, but an invitation to reflect on the various opportunities to empower women, especially those working in the tourism sector. In Mozambique, women, above all, face the daily challenge, with courage, the stigma of gender, to conquer their rights, so we need to be together to dialogue about the future of the tourism sector where equality and equity can produce countless good examples to share and be inspired by.



H.E. Fatima Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism, Crafts and Social Economy and Solidarity of the Kingdom of Morocco

For an egalitarian and solidarity-based future, for more inclusive and sustainable economic growth, for a modernizing societal project and to build a better world together, it is more than ever time to promote women's rights, support their social and economic integration and support their projects aimed at their empowerment.



Dr. Aminata Touré, former Prime Minister, former President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Senegal

Tourism is a key sector of the Senegalese economy where a large majority of women in the most precarious jobs are working. In equal work, women are often paid less than men and are regularly subjected to sexual harassment. It is important that our States effectively combat all forms of discrimination against them and encourage their access to decision-making positions.



Marina Novelli, Professor of Tourism and International Development and International Consultant, University of Brighton

As a woman academic and practitioner in tourism, I have learnt to appreciate the presence and sharing of the essence of life through visiting and working in many destinations around the world. I feel privileged for the inspiration received from other women who have devoted their lives to practicing values of kindness, compassion and responsibility to future generations.



Mafalda Borea, Chair & Founder, Sustainable First and International Affairs & ESG, E-GAP

Tourism is one of the few industries where Women represent more than 50% of the workforce, but they tend to be concentrated in the lowest paid and lowest status jobs in the sector. We need to continue to work towards gender equality in tourism and empower women through investing in their education, training and entrepreneurship, creating a positive impact of tourism in their lives and the community that surrounds them.



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Chair of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, Former United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women

Tourism is an important industry and a significant employer of women and people in communities. As we emerge out the pandemic, we need to do everything to restore the jobs that we lost during the pandemic. Women were disproportionately impacted and 2/3 of jobs lost were lost by women in part because women are often in unprotected jobs. Further they have no ownership in the businesses. Building back better means we must create protected and decent jobs for women in a thriving industry. And further women must be in decision making and have ownership of the businesses. Their hard work and contribution to the industry must be incentivised.



Lilly Ajarova, Chief Executive Officer, Uganda Tourism Board

Tourism is everyone's business and a means to economic, environmental, social-cultural, political, and technological advancement. To empower women, we need to push for their active involvement in the industry. Gender equality will see more women rise to leadership positions in the industry.



Estherine Fotabong, Director of Programme Innovation and Planning, AUDA-NEPAD

This International Women's Day we celebrate the strength and resilience of African women as cornerstones of the Tourism industry. At the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD, we continue to redress the marginalisation of women both institutionally and in the implementation of our programmes. DOING is better than SAYING, let's SHAPE today with Women for a BETTER tomorrow.



Nomasonto Ndlovu, Executive Manager, Tourism, Heritage & Hospitality Transnet

Women play an important role in the tourism sector and make up a significant workforce, however much has not been done to elevate more women to leadership positions to commensurate their 54% workforce. As we celebrate this important day, it is my hope that a formalized mentorship program be instituted to encourage more women to take up leadership positions. It is therefore incumbent on tourism organizations to develop women-friendly policies that align with women's responsibilities and their realities.

Ugandan conservationists leverage technology to save Mountain Gorillas

A pioneering initiative to protect Uganda's mountain gorilla population has officially been launched, leveraging technology to create sustainable sources of non-trekking revenues to fund conservation.

RoundBob and The Naturalist, Ugandan conservation enterprises working with Uganda Wildlife Authority, have launched My Gorilla Family, a subscription-based mobile application that allows users to join a gorilla family and contribute to saving this endangered species by indulging in activities that a user would with their own family. This was coupled with the launch of My Gorilla Family Festival, an event that will see local and international artists performing in Kisoro this coming May.

For as little as \$2 per month, users will receive an all-access pass to the Bwindi/Mgahinga Conservation Areas, home to more than 50% of the world's remaining mountain gorillas. Follow their daily excursions and family migrations through virtual trekking, celebrate their birthdays and new births, and receive updates from the rangers who protect and know them best.

You can follow as many gorilla families as you wish, knowing that your subscription is going towards protecting these glorious creatures and building the local communities around them.

The launch, held at Protea Kampala Skyz in Naguru, was attended by notable conservationists and others in the tourism industry. Panelists included Lily Ajarova, CEO of Uganda Tourism Board, Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, founder and CEO of Conservation Through Public Health, and Stephen Masaba, Director Tourism & Business Development, Uganda Wildlife Authority.

Fidelis Kanyamunyu, reformed poacher, Honorary Wildlife Officer with Uganda Wildlife Authority and Co-Founder of Home of the Gorillas, is a passionate advocate for the conservation of gorillas and the communities that live around them. It was his idea to come up with new ways to generate revenue to support both conservation efforts and to give back to local communities.

"As a child, I went hunting in the forest and grew into a poacher when the conservation areas were carved out," Kanyamunyu says. "I am now known as an advocate for conservation and continue to champion community awareness."

Home of the Gorillas Initiative, in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority, seeks to commercialize activities that generate non-trekking revenues through leveraging technology to enable global community engagement with the gorillas, thereby achieving alternative channels to fund conservation.

David Gonahasa, Co-Founder of Home of the Gorillas, further explained the importance of this initiative. "In addition to the subscription-based application My Gorilla Family, the Home of the Gorillas initiative will launch the first conservation limited NFT collection linked to the 200 habituated individual mountain gorillas in the wild."

Expressing why individuals and corporate organizations need to appreciate and be more concerned about prevalent global challenges, Terence Chambati, Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer, Home of the Gorillas, shared how they are contributing towards improving awareness and ownership. "We all need to be conservationists, regardless of our background or physical location. By leveraging technology, we are making more people aware of this natural capital we are blessed with, resulting in more mountain gorilla ambassadors globally."

Lily Ajarova, Chief Executive Officer of, Uganda Tourism Board, commended the initiative, saying, "Uganda is absolutely ready for an application and a festival like this. It is time for the world to come and see how much more Uganda has to offer."

As a leading scientist and conservationist at the forefront of gorilla conservation efforts in East Africa, Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka emphasized the importance of community inclusion. "It is important to note the investment opportunities presented by conservation."

Sam Mwandha, Executive Director, Uganda Wildlife Authority, "UWA is mandated to ensure sustainable management of wildlife resources. We are proud to work with our partners to ensure this, but also to educate local communities and people from all over the world about the value of protecting these majestic animals, and keeping them for future generations."



Radisson Hotel Group projects strong growth in 2022 with key focus on lifestyle business

Radisson Hotel Group continued its ambitious growth and development plan with nearly 200 signings in 2021. The group plans to add 400 new signed hotels in 2022 in EMEA and Asia.

In 2022, Radisson Hotel Group will continue the strong expansion plan of its popular luxury lifestyle Radisson Collection brand with many openings in key gateway destinations. Key 2022 openings include the highly anticipated and recently renovated Radisson Collection Hotel, Berlin in an unparalleled location in Berlin-Mitte, Mansard Riyadh, A Radisson Collection Hotel designed as an homage to the signature Parisian Haussmann style of the mid 1800s, the Radisson Collection Resort, Galle in the popular seaside destination of Sri Lanka and the Radisson Collection Hotel, Gran Via Bilbao, conveniently located in the heart of the city, within minutes of Bilbao's iconic attractions.

In 2021, the Group celebrated the opening of key Radisson



Collection properties in popular destinations such as Seville, Venice, Milan, Bodrum, Nanjing, and Shanghai, bringing the brand portfolio to 45 hotels in operation and under development. Radisson Individuals, the Group's conversion brand established in 2020, will welcome more than 13 new destinations in 2022 with properties in Russia, UK, India, Belgrade, Athens, Paris, and Istanbul.

In 2021 the Group's resorts portfolio added around 20 new signings, bringing the total resort's portfolio to over 100 properties in operation and under development. As borders continue to open and leisure travel returns, Radisson Hotel Group will be expanding its lifestyle resort portfolio with more than nine hotels in key resort destinations such as Dubai and Vietnam with the opening of Radisson Resort Dubai Palm Jumeirah and Radisson Blu Resort, Hoi An.

Marriott International partners Baraka Lodges to open First Luxury Safari property in Africa

Marriott International, Inc. has today signed an agreement with Baraka Lodges Ltd to enter the safari segment in Africa. JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge will be located within the Mara National Reserve, one of Africa's most renowned wildlife conservation and wilderness regions. Offering discerning travellers an unparalleled setting, the elegant retreat expects to welcome guests in 2023.

Overlooking the famed banks of the River Talek and on the edge of the reserve, JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge's prime location will offer guests a distinctively elevated camp from which to discover the Masai Mara National Reserve, its stunning vistas, abundant wildlife, and endless plains. Plans for the new-build lodge feature 20 private tents, including one presidential canvas-topped pavilion and two interconnecting canopied suites, ideal for families, each with a private terrace overlooking the river. Shared spaces will include a restaurant, lounge bar, spa, and a large outdoor terrace with fire pits that will play host to traditional Masai dance performances in the evening.

The untamed landscape will offer guests the opportunity to observe the "Big Five" that Masai Mara is home to: lions, leopards, buffalos, rhinoceros and elephants. Between June and September, the reserve is also host to the annual great wildebeest migration, when more than 10 million animals travel a distance of 1,800 miles from the Serengeti in neighbouring Tanzania.

"As a brand rooted in mindfulness, we cannot think of a more perfect retreat for the mind, body, and soul than the Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya," said Bruce Rohr, Vice President and Brand Leader, JW Marriott, Marriott International. "JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge will offer guests a luxurious backdrop to make once-in-a-lifetime



memories as they connect with nature and wildlife as never before. We are thrilled that the JW Marriott brand will be welcoming adventure travellers, including families, to this breath-taking part of the world."

Conservation of the land and its inhabitants will be at the heart of JW Marriott Masai Mara. The safari lodge aims to employ up to 50 locals from the Masai community and will offer robust learning opportunities for guests looking to immerse themselves in the destination.

"The signing of JW Masai Mara Lodge is a milestone in Marriott International's growth in Africa as the company enters the luxury safari segment. This landmark project is in response to travellers' growing desire for experiential offerings that enable them to build a deeper connection with their chosen destination. JW Marriott encourages guests to be mindful and present, which perfectly lends itself to meaningful safari holidays," said Jerome Briet, Chief Development Officer, Europe, Middle East & Africa, Marriott International.



• Asif Mughal

Hyatt South Africa's new Star chef Asif Mughal promises full immersion

Hyatt South Africa's culinary experience across its three properties will ensure taste buds are in for a treat as newly appointed specialty chef, Asif Mughal, took over all restaurant specialty cuisine offerings commencing this month.

Mughal who was previously based at the Park Hyatt Dubai Creek will be responsible for re-engineering the menu, creating authentic food experiences as well as training chefs and kitchen staff at Hyatt Regency Cape Town, Hyatt House Johannesburg Sandton and Hyatt House Johannesburg Rosebank.

The 35-year-old Pakistan born Mughal started out his chef career at an Islamabad hotel in 2007 and then moved to Dubai where he worked in the restaurant space for five years before being offered a position at the Park Hyatt Dubai Creek, where he enjoyed a four-year stint leading to him joining the hotel chain's operations in South Africa.

"I'm living my dream," expressed Mughal, shortly after landing in South Africa this weekend.

"I am so excited for this opportunity as I believe the potential to create mouth-watering and authentic food experiences fits the overall objectives of what the Hyatt in South Africa is trying to achieve in the food and beverage space."

Mughal's destiny with delicious food spans three decades of observing his family roots.

"My grandfather was a chef and owned a restaurant in Pakistan. My father and two of my uncles followed in his footsteps and now I'm doing the same and continuing with their legacy," said a proud Mughal. Mughal specializes in Indian, Pakistani, Arabian and Thai cuisine.

"Working with food is my passion, and I really want to differentiate on taste and experience while I am here in South Africa and want people to eat only the best when they come to our restaurants," explained Mughal.

Mughal's move to South Africa has been welcomed by Hyatt South Africa's cluster General Manager, Asif Raza.

"With the Hyatt brand in South Africa growing and more people starting to visit and get used to our properties, it's important that we maintain excellent standards in our food and beverage offerings."

"Having the calibre of chef like Asif in our set up, will only enhance what we are already doing and will add further value with the training he will provide to our chefs and trainees in the kitchen," added Raza.

Mughal has already gone into work mode in preparing and ideating Hyatt South Africa's soon to be launched Ramadan offerings which will see all three properties offering guests who are observing fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, a suhoor and iftar menu at the hotel restaurants.



WTM London unveils new brand identity for its travel & hospitality tech event

WTM London – the leading global event for the travel industry – has redesigned and renamed its co-located travel & hospitality technology show.

Previously called Travel Forward, it will become WTM Travel Tech and offer more features for exhibitors and visitors at WTM London 2022 (7-9 November 2022).

Show organisers are planning two theatres in the WTM Travel Tech zone – one to showcase new products and the other to host seminars, debates and presentations.

The product showcase theatre will offer exhibitors more options to present their new services and innovations to visitors.

WTM Travel Tech will also have an updated brand positioning to reflect the way it has evolved from Travel Forward, as well as a dedicated section within the WTM London website.

The changes have been made as a result of findings from in-depth research conducted among buyers, exhibitors and visitors.

The survey was conducted shortly after the respondents had attended WTM London 2021 and Travel Forward, which took place in a hybrid format for the first time, featuring a live show on 1-3 November 2021 and an online event on 8-9 November 2021.

The poll found a strong preference for Travel Forward to be closely integrated with WTM London.

Vasyl Zhygalo, WTM Portfolio Director, said: "We received very positive feedback from delegates who attended both events last year and there was great support for our new hybrid format.

"Our post-show research also indicated to us that our travel tech offering will benefit from close integration with the main WTM London event, along with more content to show how travel & hospitality technology is a core element of the wider travel industry.

"The world of travel is constantly evolving, and WTM evolves too – meaning the enhanced WTM Travel Tech will offer a unique opportunity for professionals in the fast-moving technology market to come together, face-to-face, to showcase their innovations and services to a global audience.

"Exhibitors from more than 100 countries attended WTM London in person last year, and this year's event will be even bigger and better as the sector's recovery gathers pace – meaning WTM Travel Tech will present unrivalled opportunities for exhibitors, sponsors, buyers and visitors to meet, do business and network.

"Over the past few years, our travel tech partners have been recognised brands such as Amadeus, Sabre, Mastercard and Oracle. Technology will be fundamental to the short-term recovery and long-term future of the travel industry, and the WTM Travel Tech is 100% committed to helping all stakeholders connect the dots."

Minor Hotels looking to further African expansion



• Amir Golbarg, Senior Vice President, Operations of Middle East and Africa at Minor Hotels

After years of establishing presence in parts of Southern and East Africa, Minor Hotels is looking to grow its base in Africa even wider across the continent.

In doing so, the hospitality group is prospecting for key and strategic markets such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana. This was disclosed by Amir Golbarg, Senior Vice President, Operations of Middle East and Africa at Minor Hotels for the VA Tourism Podcast in Johannesburg.

He said Minor Hotels identified the prospects in the African market at an early age.

“Interestingly enough, Minor was one of the early investors in Africa in hospitality. We saw the potential in Africa back in 2008, 2009, and 2010. So on the whole, we have 29 operating assets which we own and manage. And so for us Africa has always been an important component. We are very heavily invested in experiential travel that’s part of our DNA and I think Africa, I mean if you talk about experiences, if you talk about bringing back to nature and a lot of components we see in the other parts of the world, Africa has it all.”

The Senior Vice President said although they are already visible on the continent, there are still key markets they want their footprints in.

He stated: “We have covered a lot of the key locations, however when I look at the connectivity now South Africa is a big focus for me. We don’t have yet a footprint in South Africa. We have 29 strong hotels but all of them are connected through South Africa.”

South Africa is a connection point for me to Botswana, for me to go to Namibia, Zambia and a lot of these locations you have to go through Johannesburg. So I am looking at that as a very important location that we are now that is one of the reasons why I am spending a lot of time here looking at development opportunities for us to grow further into Africa.

Another big important area in East Africa is Nairobi. We have a lot of lodges, Masai Mara, and other parts but we

do not have Nairobi which is a very important hub in East Africa. The same goes for Nigeria where we have a lot of travel from Nigeria to our hotels across the world but we don’t have a hotel yet operating in Nigeria and we know that the economy is very strong. We know Abuja and Lagos and other areas are very important areas for us. And in West Africa, we are looking at more of Ghana, Accra, and other parts as well. So we see a lot of potential in Africa.”

Golbarg also revealed that business at some of the hotel chain’s facilities are returning to pre-Covid levels, adding that the use of technology has helped to streamline the way the hotels do business within the current period.

“What has changed and seen a great catapult is technology. We have been able to adopt a lot of new technological advancements that may have taken five years to do; we did it now in two years. Everything is now remote, so we have apps now for them.”

“The apps are so interactive you can do everything on them without going face to face or you can choose the face to face model. So I think the technological advancements are about moving now and the post-Covid era has advanced ten folds versus what they were before the pandemic. And I think it is going to help us from a business perspective and to tailor up more of the experiences,” stated.

Minor Hotels is an international hotel owner, operator and investor, currently with a diverse portfolio of over 530 properties designed intelligently to appeal to a variety of travellers, serving new passions as well as personal needs. Through its Anantara, Avani, Elewana, Oaks, NH Hotels, NH Collection, nhow and TIVOLI properties, Minor Hotels operates in 50+ countries across the Asia Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, the Indian Ocean, Europe and South America.

With dynamic plans to expand its existing brands and explore strategic acquisitions throughout opportunistic markets, Minor Hotels pursues a vision of a more passionate and interconnected world.

Millat Investments Committed to Expanding its Tourism Portfolio

The COVID-19 pandemic is arguably one of the biggest hits the tourism sector has had to grapple with. Many countries and businesses struggled to attract tourists due to restrictions and limitations to travel as a result of the pandemic.

While many investors pulled out or cautiously managed to maintain their investments in the tourism sector, Millat Investments, a family business which focuses on Leisure spaces, saw this as an opportunity to consolidate and grow its investment in the sector.

As Hamza Farooqui, CEO of Millat Investments puts it “As much as there has been pain and challenges, we have a significant opportunity. The last two years have seen us accelerating in investment significantly. There has been a time when people have walked away from the sector, we have seen it as a time to enter the sector in a bigger way and build on our existing presence and build on our learning over the last ten years and grow scale.”

Millat Investments opened three hotels, including partnerships with global brands, in the last 14 months in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Typically, such investments will be at the planning stages after an agreement has been signed, especially considering the near collapse of the tourism sector due to the pandemic. Hamza however in an interview with VoyagesAfric explained “Many Global operators say hotel owners on the African continent sign the deal and open their hotels in seven years. We have actually signed and got everything opened and operating in the last two years which I think speaks to the opportunity and also speaks to our intent. We are over excited but there is lots more hard work to do.”

And we are excited about the steps of recovery which are being taken out.

Hamza believes tourism is a super sector which can absorb jobs especially for Youth and women.

“Youth and women are some of the people who are easily employable. You don’t need complicated training. The ability to serve human beings is naturally innate in us you just need to rear, build, and direct that. The tourism sector is one which has the least barrier to entry on job placements and for Africa that is valuable, for countries like South Africa that is even more important”.

“I am very confident that Africa as a continent is going to be the next frontier of growth, but it has to be done right. It can’t just be theoretical. Owners and developers need to understand the perception that Africa is problematic. Now is the time to go out and change that to make things happen. The days of hotel owners just sitting at the back and letting global brands do their business is gone.

If this continent is to succeed and the most under represented continent with hotel products is to succeed it is not from money, it is not from the capital. It is by having the right breed of owners who pay attention to the



• Hamza Farooqui, CEO, Millat Investments

business, who pay the right attention to the type of product and actually get it done. That is very important. For too long Africa has been seen as a nice optional value market. That needs to change” Hamza Farooqui, CEO said.

Hamza however admits investing during the pandemic has not been easy stating “You know in adversity, there is always opportunity. But very few can actually make it happen because there are challenges. We have been fortunate that it has happened; we have seen the opportunities, we have applied a lot of entrepreneurship spirit, but we have been focused and given a lot of attention to our businesses.”

The company hopes to continue investing as the tourism sector recovers from the shocks of the pandemic as people begin to travel and patronize available products and services.

Millat Investments is a private family office that uses its own balance sheet to bring entrepreneurial solutions to complex commercial problems. The group has a strong investment portfolios which includes real estate, direct investments, and private equity holdings. It owns flagship assets in South Africa and internationally.

The Investment Group currently has the Hyatt House Johannesburg Rosebank, Hyatt House Johannesburg Sandton, and the Hyatt Regency Cape Town amongst its key hospitality portfolio It deploys its capital and know-how on assets and sectors it deeply understands. Its range of expertise include real estate, hospitality, technology, and financial services.



JANJANBUREH KANKURANG FESTIVAL Promotes Gambian Heritage, Boosting Tourism

Bringing people together and preserving a unique heritage inspired local youth leader Omar Jammeh and other young people from Janjanbureh in The Gambia to revive the Kankurang Festival five years ago.

The Kankurang masquerade is a Mandinka tradition and an integral part of the rite of passage of young boys. The Kankurang is a protective spirit and guarantor of order that shields the boys as they learn about cultural practices, social norms and the environment. The town of Janjanbureh is widely seen as the birthplace of the Kankurang, which was listed by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage in 2008.

Back in 2018, the International Trade Centre (ITC), through the European Union-funded Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), partnered with the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC), and the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard) to support young people in Janjanbureh to bring back the festival. The initiative is part of a wider effort to boost inclusive and sustainable tourism, thereby creating new economic opportunities for young people in rural Gambia.

With its unique cultural heritage, history and rich biodiversity, Janjanbureh offers great experiences for tourists. The Kankurang Festival is an important cornerstone for this destination, while preserving its cultural heritage on the island. Following the success of the maiden edition in 2018, many young Gambians leveraged on the revenue-generating opportunities that hospitality services, souvenirs sales and tour guiding offer.

Today, the festival has become an inherent part of the country's cultural calendar. Presiding over the official opening ceremony held on 29 January 2022, Vice President Isatou Touray said, "the support by YEP has been a big boost and the Janjanbureh Festival has grown to be one of the most anticipated festivals in the year. The participation of the community, partners and featured masquerades is



of crucial relevance to the development of tourism in The Gambia."

Ngoneh Panneh, ITC's Programme Officer for Tourism and Creative Industries highlighted that, "ITC embraces tourism as a tool for economic development that can benefit everyone. The festival widens the scope of opportunities and provides equal opportunities for both men and women".

Over recent years, the EU and ITC through its Youth Empowerment Programme have supported the young people of Janjanbureh in fostering community-based tourism (CBT), improving their skills in hospitality and tour guiding and developing new products and experiences that could help write a new chapter in the island's rich history.

The next edition of the Kankurang Festival will coincide with the 200th anniversary of the settlement when the first freed slaves landed in Janjanbureh. The Minister of Tourism and Culture, Hamat NK Bah added, "the Government attaches great value to this festival and the land of Janjanbureh. Next year, we will reconvene here to celebrate the Kankurang Festival with the remembrance of our history and long road to freedom".

No more PCR test for fully vaccinated visitors entering Seychelles

Seychelles shifts its gears and allows visitors to enter the destination without having to present a negative PCR test.

Effective March 15, 2022, visitors over 18 years, having received the first two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine including a booster dose after 6 six months since completing the primary series, were considered fully immunised. Full immunisation for visitors aged 12 to 18 years, necessitate the completion of only two vaccine doses.

All fully immunised visitors are therefore exempted from pre-travel PCR test requirement, while unvaccinated or partially vaccinated visitors will be required to present a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours or a rapid antigen test done in a certified laboratory within 24hrs before departure to Seychelles.

Potential visitors having tested positive to the COVID-19 virus -between 2 to 12 weeks prior to travel – are also exempted from pre-travel COVID-19 testing upon provision of proof of infection and recovery.

Only one year after the destination reopened its borders to all visitors around the world irrespective of their vaccination status, this fundamental move aims at making Seychelles more accessible and competitive as a destination.

As a safe tourism experience remains essential, all visitors will still require having a travel insurance in addition to their medical insurance cover and are encouraged to book their stay at a certified accommodation.

Moreover, it is mandatory that all visitors apply for a Travel Authorization prior to travel.

The Principal Secretary for Tourism Mrs. Sherin Francis states that the new measures taken by the country are necessary at this stage of the recovery of the industry.

"The exemption of the PCR test for fully vaccinated visitors is certainly excellent news for Seychelles. With restrictions being removed and many destinations reviewing their PCR requirements for entry it was a necessary step for us as a destination to retain the interest of our potential visitors. As an industry, we are keeping our commitment towards safe tourism and we should not be complacent and remain vigilant to protect our population and our visitors," said Mrs. Francis.

The country has also recently eased other restrictions including the removal of the overnight curfew and closing time for entertainment services such as bars and casinos which became effective on March 1, 2022.

Mauritius Drops Pre-Arrival PCR Test Requirement for Visitors

The Republic of Mauritius has dropped the requirement for all incoming visitors to present a negative PCR test before being allowed into Mauritius.

Previously, fully vaccinated passengers had to present a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours before departure. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has dropped this requirement as of 12 March 2022.

This move will make it much easier for business and leisure travellers to visit this Indian Ocean Island and is being warmly welcomed by the travel and hospitality industry in Mauritius.

Demand from tourists and business travellers has soared following the reopening of its borders to international travels since last October, which coincided with the loosening of travel restrictions in many of Mauritius' key markets.

Travellers are choosing Mauritius for its beaches, mountains, lagoons and business opportunities but also for its safety and security. As it stands, 90% of Mauritius' adult population is fully vaccinated and the booster dose campaign is at full swing.



Arvind Bundhun, Director of Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, said: "We are delighted that the Ministry of Health and Wellness has reviewed the sanitary protocol for visitors to Mauritius. Automatically this renders the experience of travelling to Mauritius far easier and more streamlined. We expect a further boost to tourism numbers as demand for travel to Mauritius is currently ramping up."



Uganda scraps mandatory COVID-19 test for travellers

Travellers to Uganda will no longer be required to undergo a mandatory COVID-19 test at the country's points of entry.

The East African country's Ministry of Health on Wednesday, February 16, said in a communique that "mandatory COVID-19 testing of all incoming travelers at Entebbe International Airport upon arrival has been stopped."

The decision which took effect immediately follows a cabinet decision on Monday, 14, February, 2022, the statement adds.

The Ugandan officials cite the general decline in number of COVID-19 positive cases recorded at the airport and reduction in global threat of new variants of concern as reasons for the directive.

Uganda by this, joins a handful of the countries globally who are returning to normal travel protocols before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kenya lifts remaining Covid-19 restrictions

Kenya lifted its remaining COVID-19 restrictions on Friday, 11th March 2022 including a ban on large indoor gatherings such as religious services and a requirement to present a negative COVID-19 test for arriving air passengers.

"Though Kenyans should continue heeding public health measures such as handwashing and social distancing, face masks are no longer mandatory in public and all quarantine measures for confirmed COVID-19 cases are halted with immediate effect," Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe told a news conference.

For the past month the East African country's COVID-19 test positivity rate has remained below 1%, he added, attributing this to the rising number of Kenyans opting to get vaccinated.

In November, the government announced that proof of vaccination would be required by Dec. 21 to access schools, transport, state offices, hotels, bars, restaurants, national parks and wildlife reserves.

Namibia fazes out mandatory COVID-19 test for vaccinated travellers



The Southern African country is the latest of a growing number on the continent that are discontinuing the practice of requiring travelers to present a negative PCR test result at their airports and other points of entry.

Health Minister Kalumbi Shangula made the announcement during the 37th COVID-19 update.

He said, "Fully vaccinated travellers are no longer required to produce a negative Covid-19 test result upon arrival at a Namibian Points of Entry, but instead required to present an authentic, valid vaccination card."

Other restrictions eased include the upward adjustment of the number of people at public gatherings from 500 to 1000.

Shangula added that although masks are not mandatory, they remain effective to curb the spread of the virus; hence, people are encouraged to still wear them.

He said Namibia has a track record of overcoming pandemics, and is therefore sure the country can overcome Covid-19.

The Health Minister said the new measures are valid from March 16 to April 15 but remain amendable if the situation changes.

A flag, an anthem, and an airline

by Sean Mendis

As African countries attained their independence in the 1950s and 1960s, a common joke was that the three symbols of their newfound sovereignty were a national anthem, a national flag and a national airline.

Indeed, the following decades saw the rise and fall of numerous national and multi-national airlines throughout the continent, almost exclusively funded by national treasuries and controlled by state appointees. Unfortunately, the turn of the century found many of these businesses unable to compete in an increasingly globalised industry, resulting in them being forced to suspend operations and even liquidate in many cases. The early 21st century saw a trend of private-public partnerships between African governments and private investors to resurrect the national airlines. While in concept a sound strategy, the execution was often flawed due to conflicting priorities between the key stakeholders, and these too were often doomed to failure within a few years.

One silver lining through this period has been the evolution of a liberalised regulatory regime for air transport in Africa. The Yamoussoukro Declaration (1988) and its successors, the Yamoussoukro Decision (1999) and more recently SAATM (Single African Air Transport Market - 2018) have enabled cross-border ownership of airlines. This is done via changing the criterion for a country to designate an airline to avail of its bilateral traffic rights away from the legacy "substantial ownership and effective control by citizens" test, to the modern "principal place of business within the country" test. This has allowed smaller countries in Africa to become more active players in the aviation sector without necessarily having to rely on what is often limited domestic capital and skills.

SAATM also provides a robust framework for regulation of anti-competitive activity by the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC). As documented in Annex 5, AFCAC has the power to investigate and levy sanctions against signatory states who engage in a range of forbidden practices including restricting market access and providing illegal subsidies. Unfortunately, despite several seemingly obvious violations of these provisions, not a single investigation or enforcement action has been initiated by AFCAC as of 2021.

Subsidies provided by governments to their preferred airlines, often state-owned and loss-making, is one of the main reasons why African aviation has developed slower than expected. A government funded airline often must deal with conflicting priorities of the business unit and the shareholder, resulting in commercially sub-optimal decision making. That in turn requires additional government funding to backstop the losses, creating a vicious circle. Governments also turn towards protectionism in attempt to boost the fortunes of their subsidised offspring, thus further depressing market competition.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted some of the more egregious culprits, as national treasuries have been called upon to provide additional funding to these entities with basket cases for business cases. Senegal, which is currently attempting to make a success of its fifth national airline in three decades, had to provide nearly 70 million Euros in bailouts during 2020 to an airline that was barely two years old. Rwanda spends nearly 10% of its annual budget on subsidies to its loss-making national airline, Rwandair. From Cote D'Ivoire to Kenya to South Africa, we have seen state-owned carriers bailed out by taxpayer funds that have already been stressed by pandemic related expenditures.

African aviation needs to stop celebrating commercially unsuccessful airlines wrapped in the flag of nationalism if it wants to develop. There is an effectively infinite level of demand for air travel within the continent at the right price point, but actions taken to prop up failed carriers not only raise the cost basis to provide transportation but also discourage innovative and disruptive private sector players from entering the market. SAATM provides the framework for these suppressive actions to be overcome, and it is imperative that the signatory states find the political will to implement it.

Sean Mendis has two decades of experience in senior management roles within the aviation sector in Africa. He is presently based in Malawi, where he offers executive level consulting and intelligence to aviation stakeholders.



Qatar Airways Resumes Services to Windhoek, Namibia

Qatar Airways will resume its service to the Namibian capital, Windhoek from 25 June 2022 as part of its largest ever African schedule. With more than 200 weekly flights to 31 gateways across Africa following this launch, the Windhoek route will offer seamless connectivity for passengers to almost 150 destinations in the airline's extensive global network, including gateways in Europe, such as Germany, France, Spain, the U.K. and India.

The national carrier of the State of Qatar will operate three weekly non-stop flights to and from Windhoek via the World's Best Airport, Hamad International Airport (HIA), flown by the state-of-the-art Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner offering 22 seats in Business Class and 232 seats in Economy Class.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "This resumption demonstrates the strong ties between Doha and Namibia, with Qatar Airways enjoying an increasingly robust presence across the African continent, supporting economies and the ongoing recovery of the travel industry in the region".

"Reinstating flights from Windhoek to Doha will not only ensure Qatar Airways is best-placed to meet the increasing demand for travel in Southern Africa, it will also enable an even greater number of our valued passengers in Africa to experience our signature five-star service on board."

From the sand seas of the Namib Desert where the tallest dunes in the world reside, to the awe-inspiring Fish River Canyon, Namibia holds an array of gravel plains, rolling hills and diamond-rich coastal deserts. The country is also known for its stunning landscapes offering passengers the chance to explore some of the most impressive geographical features in Africa, including the Skeleton Coast which is one of Namibia's largest national parks.

Qatar Airways flight QR1373, will depart from Hamad International Airport at 01:45, arriving at Hosea Kutako International Airport. Qatar Airways flight QR1374, will depart from Hosea Kutako International Airport at 13:20, and arrive at Hamad International Airport at 23:00.

A multiple award-winning airline, Qatar Airways was named 'World's Best Airline' in the latest World Airline Awards, managed by the international air transport rating organisation Skytrax. The airline's hub, HIA, was recently recognised as the 'Best Airport in the World 2021', ranking at number one in the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2021.

In addition to this, Qatar Airways has become the first global airline in the world to achieve the prestigious 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating by Skytrax. This follows the success of Hamad International Airport (HIA) as the first airport in the Middle East and Asia to be awarded a Skytrax 5-Star COVID-19 Airport Safety Rating. These awards provide assurance to passengers across the world that the airline's health and safety measures are subject to the highest possible standards of professional, independent scrutiny and assessment. For full details of all the measures that have been implemented on board and at HIA, please visit qatarairways.com/safety.



Ethiopian Airlines resumes operation of Boeing 737 MAX



Ethiopian Airlines has returned its B737 MAX back to the skies with the airline's Board Chairman and Executives, Boeing Executives, Ministers, Ambassadors, government officials, journalists and customers onboard the first flight.

Commenting on the return of the B737 MAX to service, Ethiopian Group CEO Tewolde GebreMariam said, "Safety is the top most priority at Ethiopian Airlines and it guides every decision we make and all actions we take. It is in line with this guiding principle that we are now returning the B737 MAX to service not only after the recertification by the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), EASA of Europe, Transport Canada, CAAC, ECAA and other regulatory bodies but also after the fleet type's return to service by 36 airlines around the world. "In line with our initially stated commitment to become among the last airlines to return the B737 MAX, we have taken enough time to monitor the design modification work and the more than 20 months of rigorous recertification process and we have ensured that our pilots, engineers, aircraft technicians and cabin crew are confident on the safety of the fleet. The airline's confidence is further showcased by flying the top executives and the board chairman and other top government officials on the first flight."

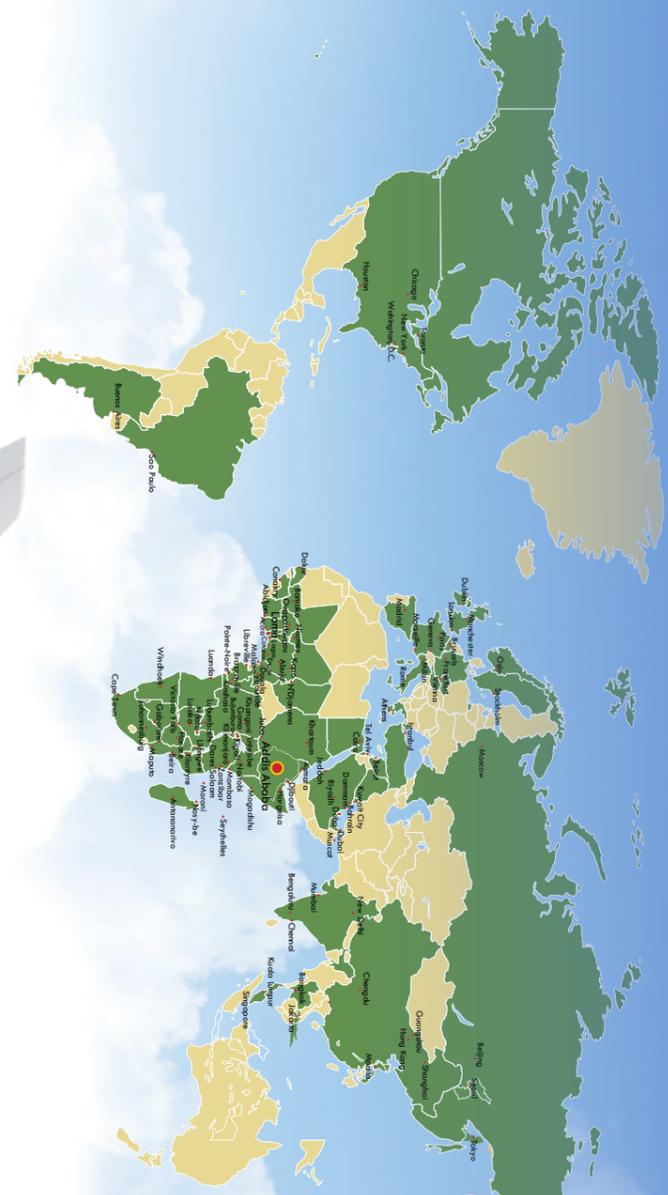
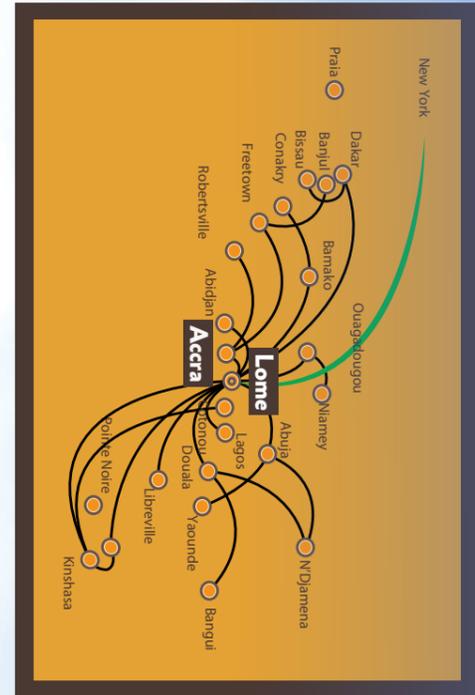
The B737 MAX has accumulated more than 349,000 commercial flights and close to 900,000 total flight hours since the resumption of its operation a year ago. Ethiopian Airlines always follows rigorous and comprehensive processes to ensure that every plane in the sky is safe. The airline always prioritizes passengers' safety and is confident that its customers will enjoy the onboard safety and comfort that it has been known for.

Ethiopian Airlines has four B737 MAX in its fleet and 25 on order, some of which it will take delivery of in 2022.

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