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# VoyagesAfriq

ISSUE 034 | May 2025 Edition

Africa's Leading Travel and Tourism Magazine



## **Zurab's African Tourism Footprint:** *Reflecting on the Impact, Shaping the Future*

ISSN 2550-3405



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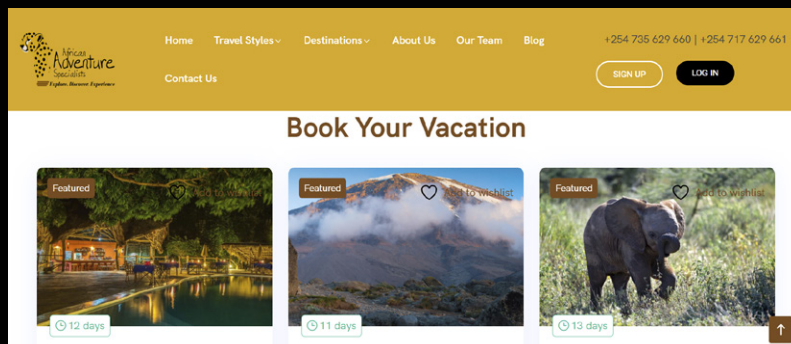
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Travel and Tourism Magazine

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**Photo Credit**  
Gilbert Amankwah Ampofo  
Prince Charles Affum  
Kamal Baghirli  
UN Tourism  
Moses Mtonga Creatives  
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**Graphic Designer**  
Nana Yaw Ofosuhene

**Publisher**  
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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the May 2025 edition of *VoyagesAfric*, Africa's most trusted source of travel and tourism insight. In this milestone issue, we reflect on a pivotal moment for global tourism – and more importantly, for Africa's place within it.

The numbers tell a powerful story. In 2024, Africa recorded 74 million international arrivals – 7% higher than in the pre-pandemic year of 2019. This rise is more than a rebound; it is a resurgence. It is proof that Africa is no longer on the fringes of the global tourism map – it is becoming one of its most dynamic centres. From the dunes of Namibia to the shores of Zanzibar, from Kigali's innovation corridors to Ghana's cultural festivals, Africa's appeal is as diverse as it is profound.

This issue celebrates that momentum. At the heart of it is the strategic and steadfast leadership of UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili. His commitment to inclusive growth, innovation, and education has helped to reposition tourism not merely as leisure but as leverage for development. From UN Tourism's Africa Regional Gastronomy Forums driving culinary tourism



Kojo Bentum-Williams



on the continent, UN Tourism's Academy projects in Africa training the next tourism professionals, to the Best Tourism Villages initiative that is transforming rural livelihoods, the continent is no longer asking to be included – it is shaping the global narrative.

We are especially inspired by the strides made through South-South cooperation, as demonstrated at the 2nd UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit held in Livingstone, Zambia. These growing ties between Africa and Latin America show that the future of global tourism will be built on mutual learning, shared heritage, and collaborative solutions. Enhanced connectivity, increased investment, and joint training programmes point to a future where the Global South leads from the front.

This edition also marks a historic chapter in African leadership with the inauguration of Namibia's first female president, H.E. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah. Her election is more than symbolic – it is a signal that

progress in governance must go hand in hand with progress in tourism. We further amplify the voices of female leaders across the continent, especially through the Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WiTLAC), who continue to shape a more equitable and resilient industry.

At **VoyagesAfriq**, we see our role not just as reporters but as convenors and connectors. This magazine is a space to showcase excellence, inspire new ideas, and forge the collaborations that will drive African tourism forward.

Tourism in Africa is not just a journey – it is a transformation. Let us continue to invest in it, be innovative about it, tell its stories the best way we can, and ensure it remains a force for dignity, prosperity and progress for all.

Enjoy this edition of your authoritative **VoyagesAfriq**.

With Compliments,

**Kojo Bentum-Williams**

*Managing Editor, VoyagesAfriq Magazine*



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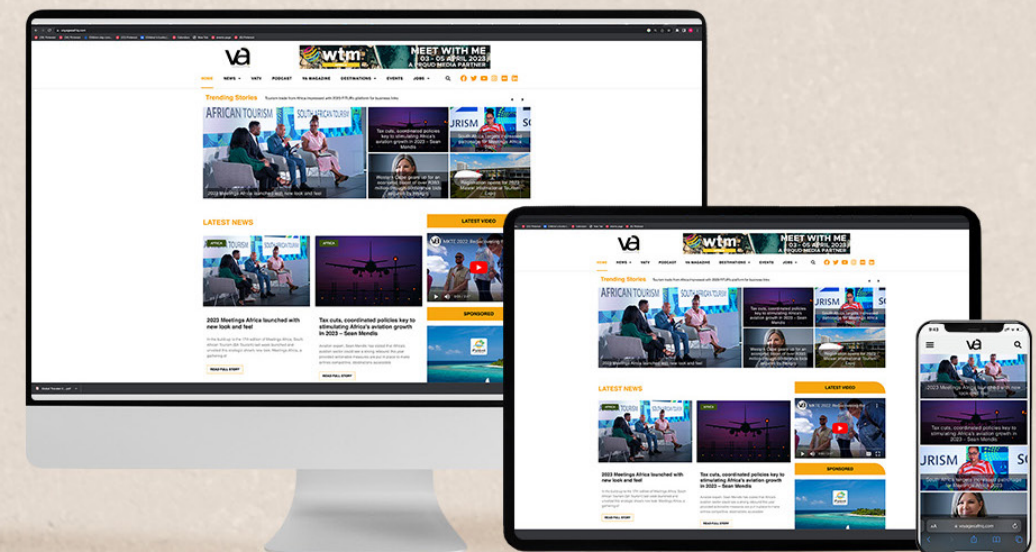


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## South-South Cooperation for Tourism Development Advances at 2nd UN Tourism Africa & Americas Summit

UN Tourism has advanced South-South cooperation in tourism development, putting into action the aims of the Punta Cana Declaration signed by its Member States from Africa and the Americas. Building on the success of the inaugural event, the 2nd UN Tourism Africa & The Americas Summit outlined concrete plans for achieving shared goals, focused on innovation, Technical Cooperation, enhanced connectivity, tourism investments and tourist confidence through security.

According to UN Tourism's data, both regions have bounced back from the impacts of the pandemic: in 2024, Africa welcomed 74 million international arrivals, 7% more than in 2019, and 12% more than in 2023. The Americas, meanwhile, welcomed 213 million, or around 97% of pre-pandemic arrivals. The Summit made clear the strong links between the two regions, both in terms of visitors between and within regions, as well as investment source markets and recipients.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "This Summit is proof of the enduring commitment of Africa and the Americas to cooperate across borders and oceans. Our roadmap will advance inclusive growth and ensure that tourism remains a driver of shared prosperity. Above all, by focusing on training and skill-building, we're giving people, especially youth, the means to succeed in today's competitive world."

This Summit is proof of the enduring commitment of Africa and the Americas to cooperate across borders and oceans



Zurab Pololikashvili, UN Tourism Secretary-General

The Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, Mutale Nalumango, stressed the importance of "shared connectivity" and cooperation in the face of shared challenges. In remarks delivered by Minister of Tourism Rodney Sikumba, she said: "The diversity of experiences and perspectives here today represents a treasure of knowledge which, if collectively harnessed, will enhance our capacity to advance the resilient tourism sector we envision."

### South-South Development through Investments

Growing and directing investment into tourism is one of the key pillars of the Punta Cana Declaration. In Zambia, UN Tourism shared its achievements in this priority area. To date, 18 editions of the "Tourism Doing Business Guidelines" for investment have been published for destinations across Africa and the Americas. A further 10 are in development.



Rodney Sikumba Minister of Tourism of Zambia

The Guidelines highlight the enormous potential for tourism investment within and between the regions. Between 2019 and 2024, Africa invested around USD 3.9 in 36 projects in the Americas, while Latin America and the Caribbean invested the same amount in 34 projects in Africa. With the aim of raising these levels, UN Tourism announced plans to organise a Biennial Africa-Americas Tourism Investment Conference. The Conference will bring together governments, financial institutions, private sector actors and development partners with the aim of boosting cross-continental investment flows and target investment around shared priorities.

### A shared future: Growth through education

With over 50% of the tourism workforce under 25, the sector offers vast opportunities for young people, particularly in Africa – the world's youngest continent – and the Americas.



**“ This Summit is proof of the enduring commitment of Africa and the Americas to cooperate across borders and oceans. Our roadmap will advance inclusive growth and ensure that tourism remains a driver of shared prosperity. Above all, by focusing on training and skill-building, we're giving people, especially youth, the means to succeed in today's competitive world. ”**

To put the education-focused aims of the Punta Cana Declaration into action, UN Tourism is advancing training in both regions. In Zambia, delegates were brought up-to-date with work in the Dominican Republic, where a collaboration with MIREX will provide training on diplomacy and tourism, to be launched this year.

Also at the Summit, delegates were given an update on the status of the planned Academy in collaboration with UN Tourism in Livingstone. The Academy will serve as a hub for specialist education and join UN Tourism's growing network of education centres. These include the International Academy for the Culinary Arts in Zimbabwe and a planned centre in the Dominica Republic, in collaboration

Innovation” challenge will seek out enterprises ready to address challenges in the areas of sustainability, inclusivity and digital transformation, with a focus on local communities.

Investment will also serve as the main aim of the first UN Tourism Thematic Office in Morocco. The Office will serve as a hub for innovation, with acceleration programmes for regional start-ups, research and development and for celebrating new talent through Tourism Tech Adventures.

### Enhanced connectivity and tourist safety

The Punta Cana Declaration aims to address challenges hindering tourism growth through limited air connectivity. In Guatemala, UN Tourism has partnered with INGUAT to begin a joint Work Plan aimed at linking industry players to boost links. Alongside this, a planned 2nd Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa will be held in Angola in July, with a focus on AI and innovation for connectivity.

The Africa & Americas Summit also platformed UN Tourism's progress in elevating safety standards for tourists and so boosting confidence in travel to both regions. In Livingstone, delegates were brought up-to-date with progress in the Safety of Destinations Initiative (SAFE-D), designed to boost public-private collaboration and promote crisis preparedness.

### Innovation to shape future of African-American tourism

Hand-in-hand with education, the Punta Cana Declaration places innovation at the centre of South-South cooperation for tourism development. In Livingstone, UN Tourism announced the pending launch of a first Start-Up Competition for the regions. The “Bridges of



The emblem of Zambia, "the Eagle" was unveiled

A family photo of the 2nd CAF-CAF Summit







Carlos Peguero, Vice Minister of Tourism- Dominican Republic



Natalia Bayona, Executive Director- UN Tourism



Elcia Grandcourt, Regional Director for Africa- UN Tourism



Constance Muleabai Nalishebo, Mayor of Livingstone City



Gustavo Santos, Regional Director for the Americas- UN Tourism



Rebecca Maino- Cabinet Secretary for Tourism &amp; Wildlife, Kenya



Namibia, with its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant wildlife, and rich cultural heritage, has long been a top destination for travellers. Under the slogan "The Best Get 100% Better," the Namibia Tourism Board is enhancing its country's tourism offerings, emphasizing safety, peace, and sustainable development to provide a world-class experience for every visitor.

A significant milestone in Namibia's progress is the election of Hon. Ndemupelila Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah as the country's first female president. Her leadership will bring a new era of political stability, inclusivity, and good governance. By prioritizing transparency, Namibia continues to build trust among its citizens and international visitors. This peaceful political climate contributes to the country's growing reputation as one of Africa's safest and most welcoming destinations. Safety and peace are top priorities for the Namibia Tourism Board, and the government is committed to ensuring that tourists feel secure while exploring the country. Whether visiting the desert dunes or remote wildlife parks, travellers can enjoy Namibia's wonders with peace of mind.

In addition to its dedication to security, Namibia continues to enhance the quality of services available to tourists. From luxury lodges to local tours, the country's tourism industry has undergone significant improvements in training and development. Namibians are known for their warm hospitality, and visitors are increasingly treated to exceptional service at every level.

Namibia is also at the forefront of sustainable tourism. The country's commitment to protecting its natural environment is clear, with eco-friendly initiatives and community-based conservation projects. Visitors can enjoy Namibia's pristine landscapes, from the giant Namib Desert to the wildlife-filled Etosha National Park, all while supporting efforts to preserve the country's rich biodiversity.

As Namibia continues to grow, it remains committed to offering a safe, peaceful, and sustainable destination for travellers. With a strong political foundation, a focus on security, and a dedication to improving services, Namibia's tourism offerings are truly getting 100% better. Whether you're an adventurer seeking thrills or someone looking for peace and tranquillity, Namibia guarantees an unforgettable experience.



Namibia Tourism Board

[www.visitnamibia.com.na](http://www.visitnamibia.com.na)



# Zurab's African Tourism Footprint:

## Reflecting on the Impact, Shaping the Future

Tourism has long been a force for economic growth and cultural connection. But for Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, it is also a tool for equity, innovation, and transformation – especially in Africa.

Since assuming office in 2018, Pololikashvili has made it clear: Africa is not an afterthought; it is a priority. With its unmatched natural beauty, cultural vibrancy, and entrepreneurial

energy, the continent is central to his vision of a reimagined global tourism landscape. Under his leadership, Africa is not just participating in the tourism renaissance – it is helping shape it.

From rural tourism initiatives in the Sahel to digital innovation hubs in Southern Africa, Pololikashvili has placed the continent front and centre. With 17 official visits and partnerships spanning the public and private sectors, he has walked the talk. “Tourism is the

bridge,” he says. “And Africa must not be left behind.”

In the view of Albert Aochamub, Namibia's Ambassador to France, Spain, and UN Tourism, Pololikashvili's leadership came at a time of unprecedented challenge, offering tangible hope and partnership. “Let the record show that straight after the pandemic, the first place Zurab went to in the world was the African continent,” he stated. “We have no reason to

doubt that Zurab is probably the best candidate Africa could put forward as its candidate for a repeat at this job.”

### Africa's Tourism Renaissance

Africa has been a major priority for UN Tourism. From the launch of regional forums to high-level state visits, Pololikashvili has demonstrated a personal and institutional commitment to helping the continent unlock its vast tourism potential.

### Diversifying Africa's Offerings

For decades, Africa's tourism narrative has centred around safaris and wildlife. While important, this has overshadowed the continent's rich cultural, culinary, and sports tourism opportunities.

UN Tourism has worked with member states to broaden their offerings, supporting the rise of gastronomy tourism, heritage travel, and sports-led experiences.

A key milestone was the inaugural Regional Gastronomy Forum for Africa, held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in 2024. The event empowered destinations to elevate their culinary heritage into marketable tourism products.

### Rural Tourism and the BTV Initiative

Rural communities are often where the most authentic tourism experiences lie. To bring these destinations into the spotlight, UN Tourism launched the Best Tourism Villages (BTV) initiative. This programme recognises villages where tourism:

- Preserves cultural and natural heritage;
- Promotes community-based tourism and traditional lifestyles;

### Drives economic opportunity.

To date, dozens of African villages have received the BTV Label, which has helped them attract investment, visibility, and sustainable infrastructure support.

### Building Investment Pathways

Access to clear, transparent investment information has long been a barrier in African tourism. The UN Tourism

The Secretary General joined Zambia's Tourism Minister Rodney Sikumba to break the ground for the UN Tourism Academy Affiliated Mikuni College





The Secretary General in conversation with delegates of the first Global Youth Tourism Summit in Sorrento, Italy in 2023

“Tourism must be seen not as leisure but as leverage for development,” Pololikashvili often emphasises. “We are aligning the sector to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in real, measurable ways.”

Investment Guidelines, introduced under Pololikashvili, are helping to change this.

The guidelines offer:

In-depth country profiles for investors;

- Information on tourism-specific incentives and financing options;
- A roadmap for investing in priority projects.

Six African countries – Mauritius, Algeria, Cabo Verde, Morocco, Zambia, and Tanzania – have already launched national versions of the guidelines, with more in development.

#### Leadership in Action: African Engagements

Since 2018, Pololikashvili has made 17 official visits to Africa, engaging with 15 heads of state, vice-presidents, and senior officials. His work with



UN Tourism SG shows the Chinese version of the Investment Guidelines to President H.E. Haikande Hichilema of Zambia



Secretary General and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda



Secretary General and Didier Drogba

the Commission for Africa (CAF) has resulted in a comprehensive 10-point agenda to realign tourism strategies with the SDGs.

The agenda includes goals such as:

- Advocating for “Brand Africa”;
- Facilitating regional connectivity and visa openness;
- Strengthening tourism statistics and research;
- Expanding training and capacity building;

- Driving innovation, investment, and resilience.

Echoing this sentiment, Hon. Vera Kamtukule, Malawi’s Minister of Tourism, stressed the Secretary-General’s connection to the soul of the continent. “Zurab is good for Africa. That’s the first thing I would say. This is a continent well-endowed, yet it has some of the poorest people on Earth. But Zurab believes in Africa. He knows the uniqueness of every country he is working with. We cannot change him as Secretary-General; we must ensure he continues his legacy.”

#### Influencing Through Icons

Through the Special Ambassadorial Programme, UN Tourism has engaged over 20 global personalities to promote tourism’s potential. Africa proudly counts four among them:

- Aliko Dangote (Nigeria) – Business magnate and philanthropist;
- Didier Drogba (Côte d’Ivoire) – Football legend;
- Fatmata Binta (Sierra Leone) – Renowned chef and culinary innovator;
- Magic System (Côte d’Ivoire) – Internationally acclaimed music group.

“Zurab’s leadership has been truly transformational in unlocking the vast potential that sports and tourism hold for young people, particularly across Africa,” says former Chelsea FM star



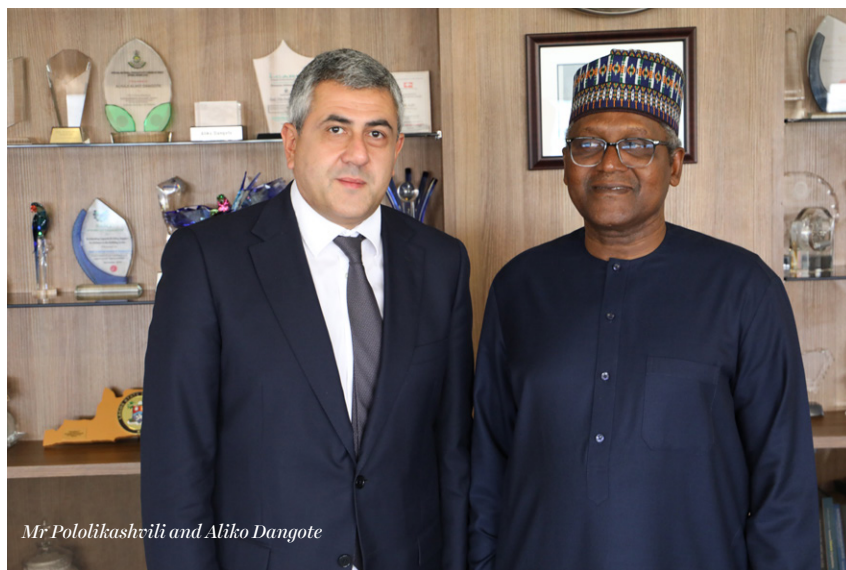
Secretary General was installed King, Joseph by traditional leaders during his official working visit to Cote D'Ivoire



and UN Tourism Responsible Tourism Ambassador, Didier Drogba. “He has played a key role in creating meaningful opportunities for many young Africans, using tourism as a powerful force for good.

“Since retiring from football, Drogba continues, “I’ve been honoured to explore new paths beyond the pitch, and tourism has offered me a platform to make an impact in other spheres. Being appointed as an ambassador has reinforced my commitment to giving back to my continent in every way I can. Zurab’s vision closely aligns with the mission of the Didier Drogba Foundation – to empower youth, uplift women, and create sustainable jobs across Africa. Together, we share a deep belief in building a stronger, more vibrant, and united continent.”

Africa’s richest man, according to Forbes, Aliko Dangote also noted how Pololikashvili’s encouragement made him look closely at how tourism could improve lives in Africa. “Although I’m not directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the tourism sector, I was truly inspired by the



Mr Pololikashvili and Aliko Dangote

announcement made by UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili as an Ambassador for UN Tourism during the early days of his tenure. It prompted me to explore ways in which my enterprise and UN Tourism can collaborate to unlock entrepreneurial opportunities for Africa’s youth within the tourism industry. Zurab’s passion for supporting tourism SMEs is truly

commendable. Partnering with him to launch initiatives that drive greater investment and support for small-scale businesses in this sector is a vital step toward reshaping the future of tourism in Africa. This commitment to empowering local enterprises has the potential to be a defining force for sustainable growth and meaningful change across the continent.”

These ambassadors amplify tourism’s message, especially to young Africans, positioning the sector as one of opportunity and innovation.

### A Modern Vision for Global Tourism

While Africa may be a focal point, Pololikashvili’s broader vision for global tourism remains pivotal. His reform of the UN’s global tourism agency has been both structural and philosophical. He has shifted UN Tourism from a traditionally bureaucratic body into a dynamic, development-focused organisation.

Key to this transformation has been an emphasis on:

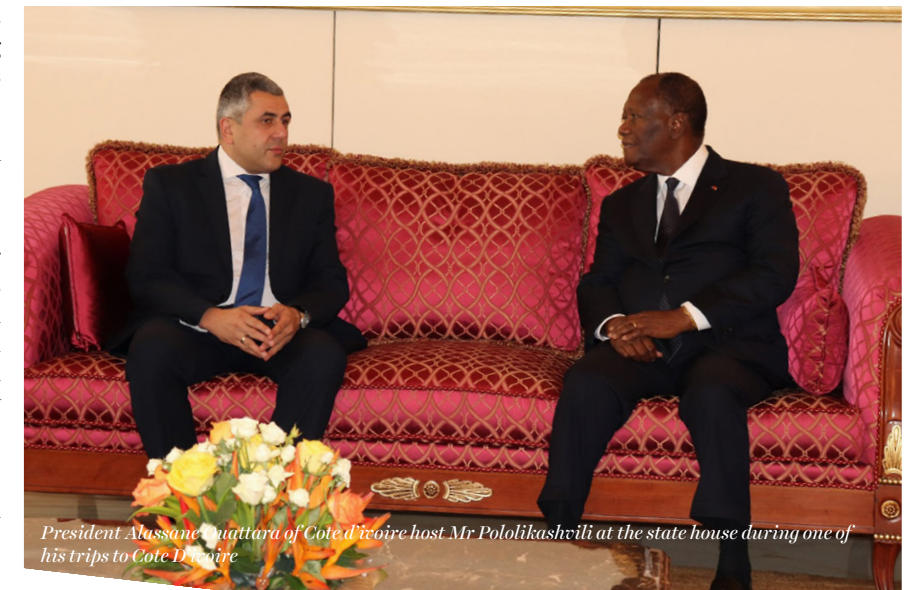
- Harnessing innovation and technology to modernise tourism operations;
- Investing in education and skills development to prepare the workforce of the future;
- Building robust public-private partnerships that leverage expertise and funding;
- Championing gender equality and women’s empowerment, recognising tourism’s unique gender dynamics.

“Tourism must be seen not as leisure but as leverage for development,” Pololikashvili often emphasises. “We are aligning the sector to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in real, measurable ways.”

### Driving Innovation and Technology

Technology is at the core of Pololikashvili’s reform agenda. Recognising that digital tools can make tourism more seamless, accessible, and efficient, UN Tourism has launched a suite of digital transformation initiatives.

Through innovation programmes, tech start-ups and youth entrepreneurs have received support to develop cutting-edge travel solutions – from AI-powered tour recommendations and smart travel platforms to data analytics that help destinations understand visitor behaviours and trends.



President Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire host Mr Pololikashvili at the state house during one of his trips to Cote d'Ivoire



Secretary General Zurab and Philip Isidor Mpango, Vice-President, United Republic of Tanzania



A meeting of UN Tourism Secretary General and WHO DG Tedros during the covid-19 pandemic



# Best Tourism Villages 2023 Ceremony

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For many emerging economies, these tools have been game-changers – providing low-cost yet high-impact solutions to upgrade competitiveness.

## Education: Addressing the Skills Gap

Despite being one of the world's fastest-growing industries, tourism has long suffered from a shortage of formal

training structures and clear career pathways. UN Tourism is working to fill this gap.

Achievements include:

- Establishing tourism education centres in Zambia and Zimbabwe, offering specialised training in culinary arts and tourism business

skills;

- Developing tailored training programmes for professionals and entrepreneurs;
- Strengthening partnerships with academic institutions to modernise tourism curricula and promote industry-led research.

## Rebranding and Strategic Partnerships

One of the most visible shifts under Pololikashvili has been the rebranding of the organisation to UN Tourism. Far from a cosmetic change, this reflects a deeper mission: to position tourism as a priority sector for national governments and a central actor in economic transformation.

This new identity has also enabled the organisation to forge

partnerships with global corporations, including:

- Google – Supporting digital destination marketing;
- Meta (Facebook) – Enhancing online branding and digital presence;
- Amazon – Exploring AI applications in travel;



Morocco's Minister of Tourism, Handicrafts and Social and Solidarity Economy, Fatim-Zahra Ammor and UN Tourism SG at the official signing ceremony of the hosting agreement of the Thematic



President Emerson Mnangagwa shares a moment with UN Tourism Secretary-General



IATA Chairman, Willie Wash and UN Tourism Secretary General



Didier Drogba with the UN Tourism SG at the Global Youth Tourism Summit



### Women in Tourism: From Participants to Leaders

While women make up 54% of the tourism workforce, they remain under-represented in leadership positions and continue to earn less than their male counterparts. UN Tourism, under Pololikashvili, has taken a firm stance on addressing these disparities.

The Women in Tourism Leadership Committee, led by female ministers, is a landmark initiative focused on:

- Creating mentorship and professional development programmes;
- Advocating for inclusive policies within tourism governance;
- Supporting women entrepreneurs to scale their businesses.

### Conclusion: A New Era for Global Tourism, Anchored in Africa

Under the steady leadership of Zurab Pololikashvili, UN Tourism has redefined what a tourism development agency can be. It is no longer a passive observer but an active architect of economic transformation. And nowhere is this more evident than in Africa.

Through innovation, education, equity, and strategic partnerships, Pololikashvili is helping African countries unlock the immense potential of tourism. His personal commitment and institutional focus are ensuring that Africa is not merely catching up with the world—it is becoming a leader in shaping the future of tourism.

The journey is far from over. But with this renewed vision, tourism is no longer just about travel. It is about transformation. And Africa is where the transformation begins.



Nasser Bourita, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, & Moroccan Expatriates



UN Tourism SG & Nigeria's Former President H.E. Muhammadu Buhari during a reception held in his honour at the HQ in Madrid



Mr. Pololikashvili exchanged pleasantries with President Mnangagwa and the First Lady



UN Tourism SG and Namibia's Late President Dr Hage Geingob in an elbow shake during the days of Covid-19



UN Tourism SG and Rwanda's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Olivier Nduhungirehe



## Namibia's University of Science and Technology honours Zurab Pololikashvili for his leadership

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) has conferred an honorary doctorate on Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, recognizing his contributions to the global tourism sector and his leadership in advancing sustainable tourism. The announcement was made during a public lecture on Sustainable Tourism in Africa, held on March 20, 2025, where the university underscored its commitment to fostering knowledge

**“Mr. Pololikashvili's leadership has been instrumental in shaping a resilient tourism sector, and his dedication to the African continent, especially Namibia, is evident in his continued engagements with the country. It is an honour for us to recognize his contributions with this award”**

exchange in tourism development.

Vice-Chancellor of NUST, Prof. Eroid Naomab, highlighted Pololikashvili's role in elevating tourism within the international development agenda, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Under his leadership, UN Tourism has gained significant visibility within the United Nations system, advocating for tourism as a driver of economic recovery and sustainability.

“Mr. Pololikashvili's leadership has been instrumental in shaping a resilient tourism sector, and his dedication to the African continent, especially Namibia, is evident in his continued engagements with the country. It is an honour for us to recognize his contributions with this award,” said Prof. Naomab.

Namibia has hosted the UN Tourism Secretary-General on four separate occasions, reflecting his sustained engagement with the country's tourism

sector. His visits have focused on strategies to strengthen Namibia's tourism revival efforts and promote sustainable tourism models that benefit local communities.

In his response, Pololikashvili expressed gratitude for the recognition, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in shaping a robust and sustainable tourism industry across Africa. He reiterated UN Tourism's commitment to supporting Namibia and other nations in advancing policies that drive investment, job creation, and community empowerment through tourism.

The official conferral ceremony will take place in April 2025 during the NUST graduation ceremony. The university's decision to bestow this honour aligns with its broader vision of integrating tourism education with industry leadership, ensuring that tourism remains a key pillar of Namibia's economic strategy.



## Zambia Deepens Global Ties in Tourism, Education, and Investment

A major diplomatic occasion unfolded at Zambia's State House as UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili led a distinguished delegation to meet President Hakainde Hichilema, marking a crucial step in Zambia's ambition to become a hub for tourism, education, and investment.

Accompanied by tourism ministers, global investors, educators, and innovators, the session spotlighted Zambia's growing influence on the international tourism stage – ushering in discussions on sustainable development, South-South cooperation, and Afro-descendant heritage.

### Carlos Peguero: "I am African by heart"

Carlos Peguero, Vice Minister for Tourism of the Dominican Republic, struck an emotional chord during the engagement.

"It is a great honour to be here in Zambia, for the first time in Africa, but as I said last night, it is not my first time in Africa, as my heart feels that I have always been here," he said.



"You can see my skin colour and understand that I am African by heart, and that I have full commitment to fostering cooperation between the Dominican Republic and Zambia."

As co-founder of the Africa-Americas Tourism Conference, Peguero stressed

the historical and cultural ties connecting Africa and Latin America.

"We have a debt as Latin Americans to Africa. The first pillar we built was to strengthen cultural heritage and, ultimately, the history that binds Latin America and Africa together."



***"We need Zambia to be a hub of education for the entire African continent... there is a huge demand"***

He reaffirmed his government's commitment to afro-descendant identity and exchange.

"For the Dominican Republic, afro-descendance is a strong priority... It is my mission as Vice Minister to reinforce cooperation and build new bridges between our two regions."

Peguero also shared his country's tourism achievements, noting, "In 2023, we achieved 10 million visitors," and in 2024, "we reached 11.3 million." Looking ahead, he stated, "Our goal for 2025 is 12 million. We want to share with Zambia the experiences that have led to our tourism success. Count on the Dominican Republic: a small country with a big heart."

**Zurab Pololikashvili: "Zambia must become a hub for education"**

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili placed a strong emphasis on education, envisioning Zambia as a future leader in tourism learning.

"We need Zambia to be a hub of education for the entire African continent... there is a huge demand," he said.

Pololikashvili reminded President Hichilema of a shared commitment: "Last year, we laid the foundation stone for the Hospitality Academy... In a few years, we will have the leading educational institution under our umbrella, with you in Zambia."

He added, "We will continue developing

education, workshops, training, and capacity building in Zambia – from school level through to master's degrees."

Pololikashvili also highlighted investment as a key pillar of cooperation: "Two years ago, we began drafting the investment guideline for Zambia. The country holds immense potential for attracting foreign direct investment, and we are here to guide and support investors."

He further announced, "Zambia is the first country for which UN Tourism



Zambia's Tourism Minister Rodney Sikumba





has published investment guidelines in Chinese. This was done specifically for Zambia, to facilitate dialogue with Chinese investors."

On air connectivity, he emphasised: "We are working towards increasing direct flights to Zambia. It is essential."

Regarding infrastructure and branding, he concluded, "We want Zambia to become a trendy destination. Visibility will be crucial, and I am confident we will see positive results."

#### Minister Sikumba: "We must empower our youth"

Zambia's Minister of Tourism, Rodney Sikumba, echoed these themes, underlining the importance of local efforts to bridge the skills gap in hospitality.

"Just to indicate, Mr President, that this afternoon, together with my colleague the Minister of Education, we shall officially open the third edition of the Education Summit, aimed primarily at bridging the skills gap in the hospitality sector."

He stressed the need to empower young Zambians: "As much as we seek to increase tourist arrivals, it is equally vital to train and empower the many young boys and girls who are looking for opportunities in the hospitality sector."

Sikumba recalled a landmark moment in Livingstone: "Not long ago, you and I were hosting visitors discussing the establishment of a new hotel in

Livingstone. Through UN Tourism, we also conducted a groundbreaking ceremony for a new hospitality school."

Looking towards regional partnerships, he added: "We are heading to Livingstone for the second edition of the Commission for Africa and the Commission for the Americas. We aim to deepen South-South cooperation, recognising that what separates Africa and Latin America is merely water – our cultures are deeply intertwined."

#### President Hichilema: "We are land-linked, not landlocked"

President Hakainde Hichilema warmly welcomed the delegation and reiterated Zambia's outward-looking approach.

"Allow me to begin by welcoming our Secretary-General of UN Tourism and your distinguished delegation, along with my ministerial colleagues and senior officials. We are grateful for your decision to visit our country, our capital Lusaka, and the State House, and for hosting this important conference here."

Acknowledging the shared heritage raised by Vice Minister Peguero, he said: "Thank you for highlighting our historical connections, which are vital. Tourism is about person-to-person interaction, culture, and values – we must build on these relationships."

He underlined Zambia's changing self-image: "We no longer say we are landlocked – we are land-linked. An excellent position. You fly to Harare in minutes; to Johannesburg in just one

hour and forty-five minutes. We have significant resource endowment and tourism assets that, in my view, are undervalued."

Speaking on reforms, he added: "This government has made decisions that had been neglected for a long time, such as removing visa requirements for many citizens globally, to foster tourism growth."

On economic resilience, he noted: "Tourism is at the heart of our vision to develop our economy. In a year when we anticipated GDP contraction due to drought, tourism performed strongly, enabling us to achieve 4% GDP growth."

Also present at the meeting were several key international and national figures, including Lai Mohammed, Special Advisor to the UN Tourism Secretary-General; Elcia Grandcourt, UN Tourism Regional Director for Africa; Natalia Bayona, Director of Innovation, Education, and Investment; and Kojo Bentum-Williams, Senior Expert for Communications in Africa.

Zambian participants included Ambassador-designate to France and UN Tourism Representative Dr Christine Kaseba-Sata, Director of Tourism Dr Andrew Chilukya, and Anne Kaoma, Executive Director of the Zambia Institute for Tourism and Hospitality Studies.

The delegation was part of the 2nd Africa-Americas Tourism Conference held in Livingstone from 8–10 April 2025.



Carlos Peguero, Vice Minister of Tourism of Dominican Republic and President Hakainde Hichilema





# A Steward of Africa's Tourism Renaissance: Zurab Pololikashvili Earns Strong Endorsements for a Renewed Mandate as Secretary-General of UN Tourism

At a critical juncture where global tourism governance seeks renewed direction, few names resonate as profoundly with African tourism advancement as Zurab Pololikashvili, the current Secretary-General of UN Tourism. As his second term nears its conclusion in 2025, a growing chorus of endorsements from across the African continent is positioning him as the most suitable candidate for a renewed mandate, praising his deep engagement, vision-driven leadership, and transformative contributions to Africa's tourism sector.

The Secretary-General of UN Tourism is nominated by the Executive Council and subsequently appointed by the General Assembly. Pololikashvili was first elected in 2017 and began his tenure in January 2018. His current term (2022–2025), having been endorsed with overwhelming Executive Council support, has been defined by renewed attention to Africa, strategic investment initiatives, and youth-focused innovation. Although traditionally, leadership of the organization has been limited to two terms, there is no binding restriction in place, and the rules permit a continued tenure subject to member states' support.

Africa has been a central focus of Zurab Pololikashvili's stewardship. His tenure has marked a paradigm shift in how the continent is viewed and supported by UN Tourism. No Secretary-General in the organization's history has engaged more actively and consistently with African nations. From spearheading investment forums to bolstering youth innovation and advocating for regional integration, Pololikashvili has become a defining ally for African tourism aspirations.

Adding their strong voices to this growing endorsement, ministers and tourism leaders across Africa have spoken passionately about Pololikashvili's enduring impact.

In the view of Albert Aochamub, Namibia's Ambassador to France, Spain, and UN Tourism, Pololikashvili's leadership came at a time of unprecedented challenge, offering



Albert Aochamub,  
Namibia's Ambassador to France

tangible hope and partnership. "Let the record show that straight after the pandemic, the first place Zurab went to in the world was the African continent," he stated. "We have no reason to doubt that Zurab is probably the best candidate Africa could put forward as its candidate for a repeat at this job."



Vera Kamtukule,  
Malawi's Minister of Tourism

Echoing this sentiment, H.E. Vera Kamtukule, Malawi's Minister of Tourism, stressed the Secretary-General's connection to the soul of the continent. "Zurab is good for Africa. That's the first thing I would say. This is a continent well-endowed, yet it has some of the poorest people on Earth. But Zurab believes in Africa. He knows the uniqueness of every country he is working with. We cannot change him as Secretary-General; we must ensure he continues his legacy."

Adding to the chorus of support, Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel, Angola's Minister of Tourism, reflected on the practical outcomes driven by Pololikashvili's



Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel,  
Angola's Minister of Tourism

hands-on involvement. "Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili is doing an extremely important job, especially with those countries who have now woken up to tourism. He is helping, he is guiding, and he is facilitating the connection with the bigger hotel groups. He is a bridge between the undeveloped and the developed tourism destinations."



Pindi Chana,  
Tanzania's Minister of Tourism

Further strengthening this groundswell of endorsements, Hon. Pindi Chana, Tanzania's Minister of Tourism, eloquently reflected on Tanzania's engagement with UN Tourism under Pololikashvili's leadership.

"Tanzania stands proud as one of the founding members of UN Tourism, and today we continue to play a significant role within the organization, particularly through our seat on the Executive Council. Our commitment to tourism development in Africa remains steadfast and visible through the strategic engagements we continue to lead and support," she noted.

"In 2022, we had the honor and privilege of hosting the Regional Commission for Africa meeting, which brought together tourism ministers and key stakeholders from across the continent. This landmark event provided a platform to deliberate on Africa's tourism agenda and reinforce collaboration across member states. More recently, we successfully hosted the second Gastronomy Forum—an initiative that aligns with the strategic vision of our Secretary-General. This thematic focus on gastronomy is not only timely but essential in diversifying our tourism offering and creating more inclusive opportunities for communities."

Hon. Chana further reaffirmed Tanzania's support: "We recognize and deeply appreciate the tireless efforts of our Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili, in driving meaningful progress for our continent. As Tanzania, we reaffirm our support for his leadership and the broader mission of UN Tourism. Together, we will continue to grow our sector, improve our member states, and ensure tourism delivers shared benefits for all."



Barbara Rwodzi,  
Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism

Similarly, Hon. Barbara Rwodzi, Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism, underscored the unprecedented visibility and support that Africa has experienced under Pololikashvili's leadership. "Zurab and the team are doing a great job, not only in Africa but globally. I must emphasize that for the first time, UN Tourism is so visible in Africa. I cannot speak for South America, but in our continent, we truly appreciate the unwavering support you have given us," she noted, applauding the bridge-building between Africa and South America championed by Pololikashvili.

Adding her voice to the growing endorsement, Hon. Nabeela Tunis, Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs of Sierra Leone, emphasized



Nabeela Tunis, Minister of Tourism and Cultural  
Affairs of Sierra Leone

the profound impact of Zurab's leadership: "I am deeply pleased to witness Zurab's bid for reelection—a reflection of his distinguished service, visionary leadership, and enduring commitment to advancing an inclusive and dynamic UN Tourism. His tenure has been characterized by integrity, innovation, and a profound dedication to service, qualities that have significantly strengthened the institution's global standing."



Didier M'Pambia,  
Minister of Tourism, DR Congo

Hon. Didier Mpambia, Minister of Tourism for the Democratic Republic of Congo, also added his voice in support, particularly highlighting the Secretary-General's openness to bold ideas and inclusive initiatives. "I think he is someone very open to new initiatives. Maybe some people will not easily accept new ideas—like launching a World Music Festival and linking it with tourism—but he is someone who is forward-looking and visionary. He brings people together, and that is why we are very happy to have him as Secretary-General."

Reinforcing these reflections, Kwakye Donkor, Chief Executive Officer of Africa Tourism Partners, praised the consistency and scale of engagement under Pololikashvili's leadership. "From my perspective, I think he's the best in

terms of contribution of UN Tourism to Africa. He has visited most of the countries in Africa as compared to predecessors. The more he comes to the continent, the more he understands the issues and appreciates them. The collaboration between Africa and UN Tourism has grown exponentially," he said.



Kwakye Donkor, Chief Executive Officer of Africa  
Tourism Partners

Donkor emphasized the consistent involvement of the Secretary-General in continental programs, including the Africa Tourism Leadership Forum and the Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit, which Pololikashvili has endorsed and supported annually, even amidst a demanding global schedule.

Pololikashvili's tenure has not merely been symbolic; it has produced tangible shifts. From pioneering the UN Tourism Investment Guidelines to integrating African nations into global tourism innovation networks, he has fused policy leadership with results. His commitment to building capacity, promoting sustainability, and creating opportunities for African youth and professionals is well documented.

With the next election scheduled for 2025 and the Executive Council set to meet in May to nominate candidates, Africa's resounding endorsements of Pololikashvili are not just symbolic. They are a testimony of trust, of shared vision, and of the recognition that the future of African tourism is best secured through continuity and collaboration with a leader who has shown proven commitment and results.

The case for a renewed mandate, thus, is not rooted in rhetoric but in record. In the words of Africa's top tourism leaders, ministers, and diplomats: Zurab Pololikashvili is not just a Secretary-General; he is a steward of Africa's tourism renaissance.



## UN Tourism Chief urges investment, sustainability & youth empowerment to revolutionise Namibia's tourism

Namibia's tourism sector is at a transformative juncture, as underscored by the Secretary-General of UN Tourism, Zurab Pololikashvili, in a keynote address at a Public Lecture by the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

Speaking on the theme Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Technology, Inclusion and Heritage for a Resilient Future, Pololikashvili lauded Namibia's achievements while urging stakeholders to embrace innovation and inclusivity to unlock the nation's full potential.

"We celebrate Namibia's tourism sector, its extraordinary natural beauty, its culture, and its spirit," Pololikashvili remarked. "At the same time, we look ahead to a new era, one marked by education, innovation, and inclusivity."

### Namibia's tourism successes and future potential

The Secretary-General hailed Namibia's conservation efforts, particularly its community-based conservancies, as a model for sustainable tourism. "These initiatives illustrate how tourism can catalyse economic progress, protect ecosystems, and empower local communities. They are a testimony to a nation that values both its heritage and its future," he stated.

Reflecting on his first visit to Namibia in November 2020 during the pandemic, Pololikashvili recalled his stops in Sossusvlei, Swakopmund, and Windhoek. "What great memories I had despite the context," he said. "I promised myself that

I would come back, and that we would organise something unique. We did just that!"

He cited the 2021 Brand Africa Forum, hosted in Windhoek, as a milestone event that brought together government and private sector leaders to shape Africa's tourism narrative. "It was a true success," he affirmed.

Investment, infrastructure and connectivity Namibia's ongoing efforts to attract investment and strengthen infrastructure were a focal point of Pololikashvili's speech. He praised frameworks such as the National Tourism Investment Profile and Promotion Strategy and the National Sustainable Tourism Growth and Development Strategy, describing them as "powerful roadmaps to expand tourism's role in the economy, welcome new partnerships, and safeguard environmental integrity."

A major development reinforcing Namibia's commitment to open tourism and business is the government's introduction of visas-on-arrival for investors and tourists starting in April. "By streamlining entry, Namibia signals to the world that it is open for discovery and open for business!" he declared.

He further highlighted Namibia's impressive Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) growth, which reached 2.6 billion US dollars in 2023, driven by contributions from China, South Africa, and the UK. "Namibia is diversifying beyond mining into tourism, agriculture, and financial services, marking a new chapter in its economic expansion," he added.

### Innovation & digital transformation

Emphasising the importance of innovation, Pololikashvili pointed to initiatives like the Bloomberg Finance Lab at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. "This is a testament to the transformative power



of data. By using real-time market data, tourism stakeholders can design better strategies, secure funding in a more efficient way, and remain responsive in a highly competitive global environment," he explained.

Aligning with UN Tourism's priorities, he underscored the need for inclusive development, innovative policymaking, and sustainability. "We have a responsibility to ensure that tourism, along with other strategic industries, empowers everyone. From the rural village benefiting from community-led ecotourism to the young person discovering opportunities in data analytics and hospitality entrepreneurship, we must create a shared ecosystem of success," he urged.

### Empowering Namibia's youth for a sustainable future

In a nod to Namibia's youth, Pololikashvili referenced a quote from late President Hage Geingob: 'We must renew our trust in the future – where our youth are the custodians of tomorrow.' Echoing this sentiment, he stressed the importance of building a future where Namibia's young people are at the forefront of innovation and economic growth.

"Our task here is to build not just thriving industries, but an enduring future—one where no dream is out of reach and where Namibia's promise continues to shine as a guiding model for Africa and the world," he concluded.



## UN Tourism opens Regional Office for the Americas in Rio, Brazil

UN Tourism has officially inaugurated its Regional Office for the Americas in Rio de Janeiro.

The new Regional Office will focus on strengthening investment promotion. One of its first key outcomes will be a set of guidelines aimed at boosting green investments, recognizing the importance of biodiversity for tourism in the Americas. The Rio Office will also develop a strategy for the technical training of young people, equipping them with the professional skills needed for the sector's growth throughout the region.

On the occasion of the inauguration, UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili held a bilateral meeting with Brazil's Minister of Tourism, Celso Sabino. The meeting focused on the projects to be carried out at the Regional Office and how it can serve as a hub for tourism development, both in Brazil and throughout the region.

Secretary-General Pololikashvili stated: "The UN Tourism Regional Office for the Americas will support the advancement of the tourism sector not only in Brazil but also across the entire region. Rio de Janeiro will become a veritable centre of leadership and ideas, focusing on growth, securing investments for the sector, and harnessing the power of tourism for sustainable and inclusive development."



Other key initiatives to be led by the Regional Office include women's empowerment, with a dedicated event on the topic set to take place in 2025. Additionally, the Office will advance efforts in indigenous tourism, accessibility, and multi-destination routes in the region, such as the Jesuit Route in South America, among others.

The Regional Office for the Americas strengthens UN Tourism's presence on the ground, bringing it closer to its Members. In addition to its Headquarters

in Madrid, the Organization now has a Regional Office for the Middle East in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and an office in Nara, Japan. A Regional Office for Africa is planned to be opened in Marrakesh, Morocco.

The Regional Offices enable UN Tourism to provide tailored support to its Members in all regions of the world, focusing on priorities such as tourism innovation, investment, and education and training across the sector.





## UN Tourism Hosts José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in Honor of 50th Anniversary Celebrations



UN Tourism SG in a handshake with H.E. Jose Luis Zapatero

UN Tourism has paid tribute to His Excellency Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero for his outstanding work in developing and strengthening the tourism sector during his tenure as President of the Government of Spain (2004-2011). His leadership was key to ensuring sustained growth in tourism and consolidating Spain's position as a global leader in the industry.

In the framework of the 50th anniversary of UN Tourism, Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili highlighted the importance of government support in times of crisis and Mr. Rodríguez Zapatero's commitment to resilience and inclusion in tourism. During his administration, international arrivals to the country increased from 52 to 56 million visitors, a 7% increase, reflecting Spain's confidence and attractiveness as a tourist destination.

His leadership laid the foundation for growth that has continued to this day. He was a true leader in achieving gender equality and accessibility, principles that

are also fundamental to UN Tourism.

Furthermore, the then president promoted key policies to ensure that tourism growth benefited all of society. His landmark Equality Law promoted women's participation in the workforce, including in the tourism sector, where many women now hold leadership positions. Likewise, his focus on accessibility has contributed to making tourism more inclusive for persons with disabilities.

"His leadership laid the foundation for growth that has continued to this day. He was a true leader in achieving gender equality and accessibility, principles that are also fundamental to UN Tourism," Pololikashvili said.

### Tourism recognized as a pillar of peace

Secretary-General Pololikashvili also praised President Zapatero for his tireless work in defense of peace, both in Spain and around the world. Citing the example of Spain, he made it clear that with peace and security comes

prosperity, and how regions like the Basque Country are known for their rich culture and vibrant cuisine.

In recognition of his commitment to tourism and its positive impact on the industry, UN Tourism presented Mr. Rodríguez Zapatero with a commemorative plaque, highlighting his legacy and contribution to a more equitable and sustainable sector.



H.E. Jose Luis Zapatero speaking at the reception at UN Tourism HQ



## Cabo Verde strengthens Partnership with UN Tourism

The Minister of Tourism and Transport of Cabo Verde, Dr. José Luís Sá Nogueira, has paid a working visit to the Secretary-General of UN Tourism at the organization's headquarters in Madrid, Spain. The visit underscored Cabo Verde's commitment to advancing its tourism sector through strategic partnerships and data-driven policy frameworks.

A key focus of the discussions was the development of Cabo Verde's Tourism Satellite Account, an essential tool for accurately measuring the sector's economic impact. This initiative is expected to enhance the country's ability to analyze tourism-related data, providing insights that will inform policy decisions and investment strategies.

Strengthening statistical capacities is a crucial step in demonstrating tourism's contribution to national economic growth and its role in local community development.

The visit also saw the signing of cooperation agreements aimed at fostering investment and improving the business environment for tourism in Cabo Verde. Among these initiatives, the 'Tourism Doing Business: Investing



in Cabo Verde' program is designed to attract private sector participation, support infrastructure development, and promote policies that enhance the competitiveness of the destination.

Cabo Verde has long recognized the economic importance of tourism, with the sector serving as a major driver of employment and revenue generation. Strengthening data frameworks and investment mechanisms aligns with the country's broader strategy of sustainable tourism growth, ensuring

long-term benefits for local communities and the national economy.

This collaboration between Cabo Verde and UN Tourism reflects a shared commitment to leveraging tourism as a tool for economic resilience and development. By enhancing statistical capabilities and fostering investment, the partnership sets a foundation for a more structured and sustainable approach to tourism governance in Cabo Verde.



## “Invest in tourism for peace”: UN Tourism Unites Ministers Around Shared Vision at ITB Berlin

UN Tourism has returned to ITB Berlin 2025, placing the need for investments and the sector's role as a vehicle of peace high on the agenda of the world's biggest travel trade show.

As it celebrates its 50th year, the United Nations specialized agency is reaffirming its founding vision of tourism for peace and security whilst also looking ahead to a more resilient and inclusive sector underscored by investments and innovation. At Messe Berlin, a UN Tourism Affiliate Member, UN Tourism again served as the bridge between public and private leaders and for the first time hosted a high-level summit featuring Ministers of Tourism from 23 countries.

Officially opening ITB Berlin 2025, UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “As we have in Berlin and in many other parts of the world, when people can travel freely and when everyone can benefit from tourism, they are more likely to back peaceful resolutions and work together. And peace and security allow us to achieve our vision for the future. Our focus on education, innovation, and investment is ensuring that tourism is not only a driver of economic growth but also a vehicle for empowerment and sustainability.”

Secretary-General Pololikashvili also congratulated His Excellency Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania, for



overseeing his country's remarkable growth as a destination. Albania, the host country of ITB Berlin 2025, was the top-performing country in Europe in 2024 in terms of increase in arrivals since before the start of the pandemic. It also hosted UN Tourism's Regional Commission for Europe in 2024 and is a leading destination in tourism investments, as highlighted in the newly updated UN Tourism Investment Guidelines for the country.

### Landmark first Ministers Summit focuses on investment and peace

In Berlin, UN Tourism and ITB celebrated a landmark first with a High-Level Ministerial Discussion on “Enhancing Investment, Ensuring Peace: Harnessing Growth, Shaping the Future.” Joining Ministers of Tourism and high-level representatives of 23 countries were Julia Simpson President and CEO of

the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), from the UN Tourism's global Affiliate Members Network, the International Air Transportation Association (IATA), and, the Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The leaders focused on the vital need for peace and security to attract investments, on the importance of public-private partnerships, and on good governance to ensure that investments deliver benefits for the sector as well as for host communities, showcasing good practice from destinations worldwide.

During ITB Berlin, the UN Tourism leadership seized the chance to hold high-level meetings with several of its Member States. In Berlin, bilateral meetings were held with Ministers or other top representatives of Armenia, Cambodia Croatia, Indonesia, Poland, Montenegro and Venezuela.



## UN Tourism Secretary General Joins African Leaders to Celebrate the Historic Investiture of Namibia's First Female President

The people of Namibia celebrated a historic moment with the inauguration of Her Excellency Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah as the first female president of the Southern African nation. Having won the national presidential elections in November 2024, President Nandi-Ndaitwah became only the second elected female head of state in Africa.

This landmark event signified a new era for the country's democracy and served as a powerful inspiration for girls and women across Africa to break the glass ceiling. Among those joining in the celebration was the Secretary General of UN Tourism, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili. Making his unprecedented fourth official visit to Namibia, Mr. Pololikashvili has long praised the country as one of Africa's most promising nations in utilizing tourism to create opportunities, particularly for its youth.

During the occasion, the Secretary General took the opportunity to personally convey his support to President Nandi-Ndaitwah and reaffirm UN Tourism's ongoing commitment to assist in developing Namibia's tourism sector, which is a central pillar of the



country's economic priorities. "It was an honor and privilege to witness the historic inauguration of Namibia's First Female President, H.E. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah. Congratulations to the people of Namibia and Africa on this incredible milestone! UN Tourism remains committed to supporting the continent's growth," Mr. Pololikashvili shared on his official X account shortly

after the inauguration.

In addition, the UN Tourism Secretary General held brief discussions with several heads of state, including the Presidents of Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and former Presidents of Tanzania, as well as other leaders of international organizations, to reiterate his dedication to advancing Africa's tourism sector.





## UN Tourism welcomes Ghana's new Tourism Minister



Zurab Pololikashvili, UN Tourism's Secretary General welcomed Ghana's new Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, Dzifa Gomashie during a bilateral meeting in Livingstone, Zambia and pledged an enhanced cooperation between the West African nation and the UN Tourism agency.

The meeting held on the sidelines of the 2nd CAF -CAM Summit saw the two leaders embrace the spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

Receiving the Ghanaian Minister, Mr Pololikashvili conveyed his congratulatory message to Ghana's

President John Dramani Mahama and reiterated UN Tourism support to his government to grow the country's tourism sector. He recalled the organization's maiden Regional Congress on Women Empowerment in the Tourism Sector. – Focus on Africa which Ghana hosted and its role in the structure of the organization.

He said, "We are one family and in spite of Ghana's Candidate Amb Adam for the upcoming secretary general position, I am here to offer the maximum support to consolidate the growth and eye new novelties in Ghana's tourism sector."

On her part, Minister Dzifa Gomashie thanked the Secretary General for the reception and lauded his work thus far.

"So as far as Ghana belong to the UN Tourism, we will collaborate to unlock and harness the full potentials of the tourism sector for Ghana and Africa.

"As I court support for my candidate Ambassador Adam for the SG position, I will equally wish you the best in the contest and will be happy to work with you in the future," the Minister said.

Ghana is a founding member of UN Tourism and currently, an Executive Council member.

## Secretary General assures President Daniel Chapo of UN Tourism's support

The Secretary General of UN Tourism Zurab Pololikashvili has assured the President of Mozambique H.E Daniel Francisco Chapo of the organization's support for his government to develop the tourism sector.

Mr. Pololikashvili on the sidelines of the investiture of Namibia's President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah in Windhoek spoke with President Chapo and

congratulated him on his electoral victory.

President Chapo welcomed the gesture and indicated his commitment to continue to make tourism one of his government's key pillars.

Mozambique has been a long standing member of the UN Tourism and presently sits on the Executive Council of the organisation.



## Patricia de Lille Rallies Support for Tourism Ahead of G20 Summit

In November 2025, South Africa will host the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg, marking the first time the summit takes place on African soil. Against this historic backdrop, the country is advancing a deliberate agenda to place tourism at the heart of the G20 discourse. Led by Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille, South Africa's presidency of the G20 offers a pivotal opportunity to align global attention with Africa's development ambitions through the lens of travel and tourism.

The G20 Summit, scheduled for 22-23 November 2025, will be the culmination of a year-long cycle of meetings and thematic engagements, including the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting set for 12 September 2025 in Mpumalanga

Province. Recognizing the sector's cross-cutting impact, Minister Patricia de Lille is championing tourism as an essential pillar in fostering inclusive growth, job creation, and sustainable development.

"This is Africa's moment, and we must make tourism count," she said during one of her engagements, signaling a clear intention to integrate the sector within the core deliverables of the summit. "South Africa becomes the first African country to host the G20 meeting, and as part of activities, tourism has been penciled as a major economic sector."

The Minister's position has found strong resonance among global tourism actors. In a bilateral meeting with UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili,

held on the sidelines of the 2nd CAF-CAM Summit, Minister Patricia de Lille expressed appreciation for the organization's consistent engagement. Secretary-General Pololikashvili affirmed their commitment: "Count on UN Tourism for all the support, and we will be with our team to ensure we seize the moment to bring Africa's tourism to the main discussions." He also provided an update on the forthcoming Tourism Doing Business and Investment Guidelines for South Africa, expressing hope that the publication will be finalized before the end of the year.

At the centre of South Africa's G20 tourism agenda is the alignment with the summit's overarching theme: Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability.





# Accelerate Action: Women in Tourism Leadership share inspiring messages on IWD



As the world celebrated the 2025 International Women's Day on 8th March under the theme **"Accelerate Action,"** women leaders in Africa's tourism sector are adding their voices to the global call for progress. In this special feature, VoyagesAfriq presents a compilation of messages from influential women across the industry, sharing their insights, aspirations and commitments toward driving positive change. Their words serve as a powerful reminder of the vital role women play in shaping a more inclusive and resilient tourism sector for Africa and beyond.

## Ms. Eleia Grandcourt, Director, Regional Department for Africa, UN Tourism

"Women are the pulse of Africa's tourism—visionary change-makers and resilient leaders who break boundaries, challenge norms, and forge sustainable futures. Their strength ignites progress, empowers communities, and inspires generations to rise and lead a more inclusive industry for all."

## H.E. Ms. Nabeela Farida Tunis, Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Republic of Sierra Leone

"Aligned with this year's theme, the Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WiTLAC) is dedicated to advocating for equal opportunities for women in tourism. We urge all stakeholders to commit to addressing key issues such as economic empowerment and leadership representation, and push for decisive action at the African Union where Member States must create opportunities that allow women to fully engage in and benefit from the tourism sector."

## H.E. Ms. Rebecca Miano, Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife, Republic of Kenya

"From hospitality to heritage preservation, women drive Africa's tourism forward. Empowering them strengthens communities, fosters innovation, and ensures a more inclusive and resilient industry."

## H.E. Ms. Vivian Dewa, Minister of Tourism and Crafts, Republic of Madagascar

"Through their strength and creativity, women are transforming African tourism into authentic, sustainable experiences. Their equality and empowerment are the keys to a more inclusive and prosperous future."

H.E. Ms. Fatim-Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism, Handicrafts and Social and Solidarity Economy, Kingdom of Morocco

"Tourism in Africa has evolved through bold initiatives and destinations reimagining themselves, where women are stepping up, bringing innovation and leadership to shape a resilient and inclusive future."

## H.E. Ms. Hannatu Musa Musawa, Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism, and Creative Economy, Federal Republic of Nigeria

"African women are at the heart of tourism, shaping experiences and preserving cultures. Their contributions are essential to inclusive tourism industry, gender equality and empowerment, which are key to overcoming global challenges and building resilient communities."

## H.E. Ms. Patricia de Lille, Minister of Tourism, Republic of South Africa

"The tourism sector is well representative of women but as workers and not as much on a senior leadership or ownership level. Women must get equal pay for equal work. We must do more to achieve gender equality on all fronts in the tourism sector. Governments must also create legislation and policies to give effect to the UN Conventions they have signed to ensure gender equality and real empowerment of women."

## H.E. Ms. Pindi Hazara Chana, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, United Republic of Tanzania

"We recognize the remarkable contributions of women in the tourism sector who are shaping the future through their innovative approaches, equality and empowerment to embrace opportunities that foster sustainable growth."

## H.E. Ms. Heather Sibungu, Deputy Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism Republic of Namibia

"Women are the backbone of Africa's tourism sector, driving sustainable growth and cultural preservation. Empowering them ensures inclusive development and resilience in the face of global challenges."

## Ms. Natalia Bayona, Executive Director, UN Tourism

"Women's leadership ignites social innovation, transforming community-based tourism and thriving startups. Together, we empower change, inspiring young leaders to shape a better and inclusive future."

## H.E. Ms. Abla Dzifa Gomashie, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts-Republic of Ghana

"Empowering women in tourism enriches and preserves the culture of societies, thereby strengthening economies, driving hospitality and determining travel experience."

## Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic, Executive Director, UN Tourism

"Tourism helps to ensure rights, equality and empowerment for women and girls across Africa and around the world. Now more than ever we need to keep up our work to make gender equality in tourism a reality for ALL."

## H.E. Ms. Marie France Lydie Hélène Pongault, Minister of Cultural, Tourism, Arts and Leisure Industries, Republic of Congo

"On this International Women's Day, let us celebrate the strength, resilience and talent of those who, through their commitment, shape a more just and equitable future. In the tourism sector, their creativity and leadership are helping to enhance our heritage and develop a more inclusive, sustainable future. Let's continue to support and promote their essential role."

## H.E. Ms. Vera Kamtukule, Minister of Tourism, Republic of Malawi

"When women thrive in tourism, communities flourish, economies grow, and cultures are preserved. From entrepreneurs driving innovation to storytellers shaping our global narrative, the impact of women in tourism extends far beyond the industry—it transforms nations. This Women's Day, we celebrate the resilience, creativity, and leadership of women who make tourism a powerful force for inclusive development."

For us it shall always be: Everything. Everyone. Tourism."

## Chef Fatmata Binta, UN Tourism Ambassador

"Women are the heartbeat of African tourism, storytellers, custodians, and trailblazers. Empowering them fuels a future rich in heritage and opportunity."

*These words serve  
as a powerful  
reminder of the vital  
role women play  
in shaping a more  
inclusive and resilient  
tourism sector for  
Africa and beyond*



## Ghana and South Africa Forge Strategic Partnership to Unlock Tourism Growth, Connectivity & Cooperation

The South African Tourism Ministerial Outreach Program, hosted by the South African High Commission in Ghana on 27 March 2025 at the Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City, marked a pivotal moment in advancing tourism collaboration between Ghana and South Africa.

The gathering brought together tour operators, government officials, and industry leaders from both nations at Breakfast Meeting to deliberate on strategies for unlocking the full potential of their tourism sectors under the theme “Building Partnerships to Unlock Tourism Growth Between South Africa & Ghana.”

The discussions focused on identifying opportunities for bilateral cooperation, addressing existing challenges, and formulating strategic interventions that would drive mutual prosperity in the tourism landscape. The event underscored the importance of enhancing connectivity, simplifying travel processes, and fostering deeper engagement between the two nations.

Dr. Geoffrey, Director of Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation at Ghana's Ministry of Tourism, represented the Minister of Tourism and provided compelling insights into the growing appeal of South Africa as a destination for Ghanaian travelers. He highlighted a remarkable 140% increase in Ghanaians visiting South Africa, a statistic that underscores the strengthening travel ties between the two countries.

However, he noted the necessity of reciprocating this trend by making Ghana equally attractive to South African tourists. To achieve this, he outlined three key initiatives: a joint tourism campaign to promote both destinations, streamlining visa processes to ease

travel between the two countries, and improving flight connectivity to enhance accessibility. These measures, he emphasized, are crucial to unlocking new avenues for economic growth and cultural exchange.

Mrs. Alisa Osei-Asamoah, President of the Tour Operators Union of Ghana (TOUGHGA), reinforced Dr. Geoffrey's vision by emphasizing the need for sustained bilateral cooperation. She acknowledged Ghana as a strong source market for South African tourism, with increasing numbers of Ghanaians traveling to South Africa annually.

“Ghana offers a wealth of attractions—forts and castles, pristine beaches, museums, and a rich cultural heritage—that should be actively marketed to South African travelers,” she stated. She urged South African tour operators to increase promotional efforts for Ghana and called for improved air connectivity to support rising tourist demand. Mrs. Osei-Asamoah also highlighted TOUGHGA's ongoing participation in South African roadshows, which have been instrumental in strengthening business relationships and marketing Ghana's tourism potential on an international scale.

In her address, Hon. Patricia De Lille, South Africa's Minister of Tourism, provided critical insights into South Africa's tourism performance and reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening tourism ties with Ghana. She cited data from the Visa Waiver Agreement introduced in 2022, which revealed that 36,000 Ghanaians had traveled to South Africa under the initiative, contributing significantly to the country's tourism figures. Additionally, South Africa recorded 8.92 million visitors from across the African continent last year, solidifying its position as a leading regional hub.

Despite these achievements, Hon. De Lille acknowledged an imbalance in tourist flows, with Ghana ranking third among South Africa's African source markets for international travelers, while the number of South African tourists visiting Ghana remained comparatively low. “We are committed to working



closely with our Ghanaian counterparts to reverse this trend,” she affirmed.

To support this agenda, she announced plans to help facilitate seamless travel and stimulate tourism growth for both countries, including the possibility of South African Airways increasing its flights scheduled to Ghana. The Ministerial Outreach Program concluded with concrete takeaways that will shape the next phase of Ghana-South Africa tourism relations: Joint Tourism Campaigns, Visa Process, Enhanced Air Connectivity and Cultural Exchange and Promotion.

The South African Tourism Ministerial Outreach Program underscored the shared commitment of Ghana and South Africa to deepening their tourism partnership. By implementing the strategic interventions outlined during the event, both nations stand to benefit from increased visitor flows, enhanced economic contributions, and a thriving tourism sector.

“The discussions focused on identifying opportunities for bilateral cooperation, addressing existing challenges, and formulating strategic interventions that would drive mutual prosperity in the tourism landscape.”



## Zambia Summit Reaffirms Education as the Cornerstone of Africa's Tourism Transformation



As the curtains fell on the 3rd Travel, Hospitality & Tourism Education Summit held at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka, one message rang loud and clear: Africa's tourism future hinges on how seriously it invests in education.

The three-day event, which brought together tourism ministers, global development leaders, educators, and private sector players, offered a focused lens on the future of workforce development in Africa's tourism and hospitality sector. With the theme “Bridging the Human Capital Gap in Africa's Tourism Industry: Aligning Learning to Industry Development in the AfCFTA Era”, the summit didn't merely spark conversations - it ignited a shared commitment to action.

### A Call to Action From the Top

In his opening keynote, UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili set the tone by placing education squarely at the center of tourism development. He highlighted that while Africa is the world's youngest continent - boasting a population where over 60% is under 25 - this demographic advantage could be lost if not matched with structured, inclusive, and future-ready education pathways.

“Our task here is to determine how education can serve as both an entry point and an engine for a resilient, inclusive tourism sector,” he said. “The industry is evolving, and so too must our systems of education and training.”

Pololikashvili emphasised that tourism currently accounts for just 4.9% of employment in Africa - a number with significant growth potential if strategic investment is directed toward education reform and skills development.

He pointed to collaborative efforts like the Mukuni International Academy for Tourism and Hospitality, a partnership between UN Tourism and the Zambia Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Studies (ZITHS), as a template for scalable, impactful solutions rooted in local realities and global standards.

### Education as Economic Infrastructure

Zambia's Minister of Tourism, Honourable Rodney Sikumba, echoed the urgency in his address, declaring education not just as a social service but as economic infrastructure. “The future

of tourism is education,” he said, drawing attention to Zambia's own strides in aligning education with industry needs. A proud moment for the host country was the integration of travel and tourism as a subject pathway in the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework - a result of cross-ministerial collaboration.

“Educators at different levels need to identify opportunities to supply high-quality graduates with labour market-relevant skills,” he said. “The hospitality industry globally is continually looking for skilled labour.”

Sikumba's remarks also acknowledged the summit's role in catalysing national policy shifts since its inception in 2023. He noted that the summit has evolved into a platform not just for Zambia but for the continent to foster multisectoral dialogue and action on workforce development in tourism.







Rodney Sikumba, Minister of Tourism



Zurab Pololikashvili, UN Tourism Secretary-General



Evans Muhanga, PS- Ministry of Tourism, Zambia

### Multilateral Engagement and Ministerial Consensus

The summit also benefitted from high-level endorsements by Zambia's Minister of Education, Hon. Douglas Siakalima, and Hon. Carlos Andrés Peguero, Deputy Minister of Tourism for International Cooperation of the Dominican Republic. Their presence underscored the increasingly cross-sectoral nature of tourism development - one that spans education, labour, commerce, and international cooperation.

Speakers across sessions stressed the importance of institutional collaboration. Representatives from the European

Union Delegation, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and Permanent Secretaries from Zambia's Ministries of Tourism and Commerce all emphasized a shared responsibility to build systems that ensure education, industry, and policy are in sync.

### From Dialogue to Delivery: Highlights from the Panels

The summit's program included targeted panel discussions and workshops that offered tangible insights and proposals.

In the session "Integrating Industry Needs and Innovation in Tourism Education", panellists including Swiss education leaders and African

academic institutions unpacked how the disconnect between theory and industry practice can be closed. The call was for 70% practical learning, enhanced by digital tools, entrepreneurship training, and stronger industry-academia collaboration.

Another panel, "Bridging Education and Industry in Tourism and Hospitality", explored how mentorship, public-private partnerships, and the ethical use of AI could help reimagine hospitality education. Panellists stressed the need to change societal perceptions about tourism careers and emphasised the importance of continuous professional development, including for educators themselves.



Mulumwa Moongwa, Chairperson, ZITHS



Natalia Bayona- Executive Director, UN Tourism



Elcia Grandcourt, UN Tourism Regional Director for Africa

### The Four Big Takeaways

As the summit concluded, four major outcomes stood out:

- Education must lead tourism development. Investing in education is not optional—it is the foundation for sustainability, quality, and competitiveness in the sector.
- Innovation is non-negotiable. From digital classrooms to AI-driven service tools, the tourism workforce must be future-proofed through adaptive, tech-enabled education systems.
- Investment must match ambition. Infrastructure, curriculum reform, and educator training all require substantial, consistent investment—from governments, donors, and the private sector alike.
- Collaboration is key. No single actor can close the skills gap alone. Governments, educators, employers,



and communities must co-design the path forward.

### Looking Ahead

In his closing remarks, Secretary-General Pololikashvili urged delegates to turn conversation into commitment. "Let this summit be a platform not only for dialogue but also for decisive steps forward," he said. "Through collaboration, we can ensure tourism remains a powerful driver of progress, dignity, and opportunity across Africa."

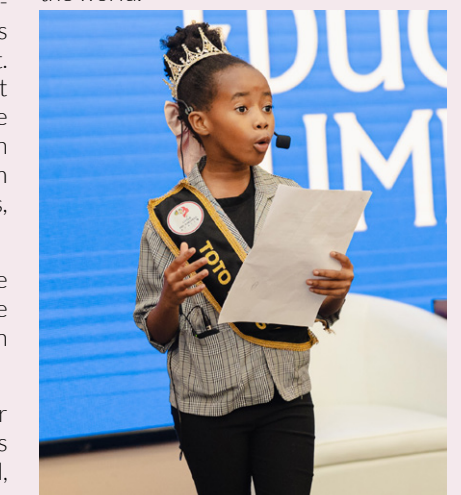
Minister Sikumba echoed this call: "We are not just training workers; we are shaping the future stewards of African tourism."

As delegates returned to their respective countries, one thing was clear: the summit may have ended,

but the work has just begun. And if the momentum from Lusaka is sustained, the future of Africa's tourism workforce will be brighter, smarter, and ready for the world.



Anne Kaoma, Executive Director- ZITHS





## Seychelles Nature Trail Challenge returns with Exciting New Features

Tourism Seychelles has announced the return of the highly anticipated Seychelles Nature Trail Challenge, set to take place on 9th August 2025. In a press conference held on 19th March 2025, officials outlined plans for the second edition of this international trail running event, which aims to reinforce Seychelles' standing as a premier eco-tourism and sports tourism destination.

Bringing together participants from around the world, the challenge will take runners on a journey through Seychelles' diverse terrains, from lush forests to rocky paths and coastal trails, offering an unforgettable adventure. The event is expected to attract both international and local participants, offering an exciting opportunity to highlight Seychelles' unique beauty and eco-tourism offerings.

The Principal Secretary for the Tourism Department, Mrs. Sherin Francis, welcomed the event, emphasising its importance in bolstering Seychelles' position as a premier destination for nature-based sports. She noted that the competition would not only promote Seychelles' natural beauty but also strengthen the island's commitment to sustainable tourism. "We are eager to host the Seychelles Nature Trail Challenge for the second time, providing an unparalleled opportunity to showcase the diverse and unspoiled environment that Seychelles offers to the world," said PS Francis.

Echoing this enthusiasm, the Director General for Destination Marketing within the Tourism Department, Mrs. Bernadette Willemijn, expressed her excitement about the event, stating, "The Seychelles Nature Trail Challenge is an important step in our journey to elevate Seychelles as a leading destination for eco-tourism. We look forward to welcoming participants from around the globe, and we are committed to promoting sustainability while offering an unforgettable adventure through our island's natural landscapes."

The press conference also highlighted the collaborative efforts of key partners and sponsors, including the Seychelles

Police Force, SKYCHEF, Constance Ephelia, the Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority, the National Sports Council, Nouvobanq, Cable & Wireless, Pascual, SCOA, the District Administrator for Grand Anse Mahé and Val Riche. Their support is crucial in ensuring the event runs smoothly, reinforcing Seychelles' status as a top destination for outdoor sports and eco-tourism.

Notable attendees at the press conference included Superintendent James Tirant, from the Seychelles Police Force; Ms. Sharon Botchoix, Sales and Marketing Manager at SKYCHEF; Ms.

Marlene Powell, Communications and PR Manager at Constance Ephelia; Ms. Kelsy Barra, Coordinator for Forestry and National Parks at the SPGA; Ms. Carinne Houreau, PR, Events, and Sponsorship Executive at CWS; Ms. Retania Leon, District Administrator for Grand Anse Mahé; Mr. Raymond Florantine from SCOA; Ms. Wryna Cadeau, Sales and Marketing Manager at SKYCHEF; Ms. Maria Boniface from SKYCHEF; Mr. Christophe Edmond, CEO of Nouvobanq; Mr. Francis Remie

from the National Sports Council; and Ms. Mutie Reix from Pascual.

The 22-kilometre course will take runners through iconic locations such as Cap Ternay, Anse Major, and Mare aux Cochons, offering both a physical challenge and an immersive journey through Seychelles' rich biodiversity.

Adding to the excitement, a cultural event, 'Fun Fair-A', will be held at the Grand Anse Mahé playing field, where participants will celebrate the rich Creole traditions of Seychelles. This cultural showcase provides an opportunity for visitors to engage with the local community and further enrich their experience of the island.

Through events like the Seychelles Nature Trail Challenge 2025, Seychelles continues to attract global attention as a premier destination for both luxury and adventure tourism. With the Seychelles Nature Trail Challenge and other initiatives in the pipeline, the Seychelles Tourism Department is committed to strengthening the island's position on the world stage and fostering long-lasting international partnerships.



## Madagascar National Tourism Board launches

### "Madagascar Uncharted: Beyond the Baobabs" campaign

The Madagascar National Tourism Board is launching its brand-new online communication campaign, "Madagascar Uncharted: Beyond the Baobabs." This initiative aims to showcase the richness of Madagascar through the eyes of ten international content creators who had the opportunity to explore the island and capture unique moments through immersive videos and photos.

From Morondava to Tuléar, passing through Antsirabe, Fianarantsoa, Andringitra, and Isalo Ranohira, their journey is narrated through cinematic videos shared on social media. Each creator presents a unique and personal perspective of their experience, offering an authentic and captivating glimpse into the landscapes, cultures, and traditions of the Great Island.

In December 2024, these ten international talents—content creators, artistic directors, filmmakers, and influencers from Europe, America, the Emirates, Africa, and Australia—embarked on a road trip along the legendary RN7. They had an extraordinary experience, discovering



Madagascar's unique tourism offerings. through the ten creators' communities.

While the iconic baobabs remain emblematic symbols of the country, this campaign goes far beyond them. It highlights the destination's unparalleled diversity and beauty, actively contributing to strengthening its presence in the global tourism market. This adventure was carried out in collaboration with the agency Where Is This, ensuring international visibility

This project is part of ONTM's innovative strategy to position Madagascar as a must-visit tourist destination, promote the island as a prime location for international productions, and create a visual content bank (photos and videos) for tourism professionals. The goal is to enhance the destination's attractiveness, particularly among priority markets and key players in the tourism sector.





## Africa Showcase Latin America: Expanding Africa's Reach into New Markets



Africa Showcase Latin America has brought a renewed focus on Africa's potential as a sought-after destination for Latin American travellers. Organized by On show Solutions in partnership with Sariri Terra, the event has traversed key markets, including Santiago, Buenos Aires, and now São Paulo, fostering deeper connections between African tourism stakeholders and Latin American trade partners.

For the first time, Africa Showcase Latin America has ventured into Chile, a decision that has yielded promising engagement. "It's not often that we enter new markets, as we typically revisit strong source markets for Africa," noted Jacqui Reynolds, co-owner of On show Solutions. "Being in Santiago has been dynamic. There is an evident need for destination awareness, but also significant opportunities for Africa in this region."

The event has underscored a growing enthusiasm for African travel, with Andrea Landaeta, founder of Sariri Terra, emphasizing that demand for Africa among Latin American travellers is increasing. "For the first time, I am seeing Africa being placed at the top of people's travel lists. However, a lack of knowledge about the continent remains a challenge," Landaeta stated. The perception of Africa as solely a safari destination persists, whereas the continent's diverse cultural, historical, and gastronomic offerings remain underrepresented.

One of the key barriers identified

during the showcase is the need for enhanced trade education. African tourism stakeholders must strengthen their training efforts, not only through in-person engagements but also by increasing access to online educational tools. "Training sessions, online courses, and familiarization trips are crucial," Landaeta stressed. While some familiarization trips are available, the cost of flights remains a constraint for many trade professionals, limiting their firsthand exposure to African destinations.

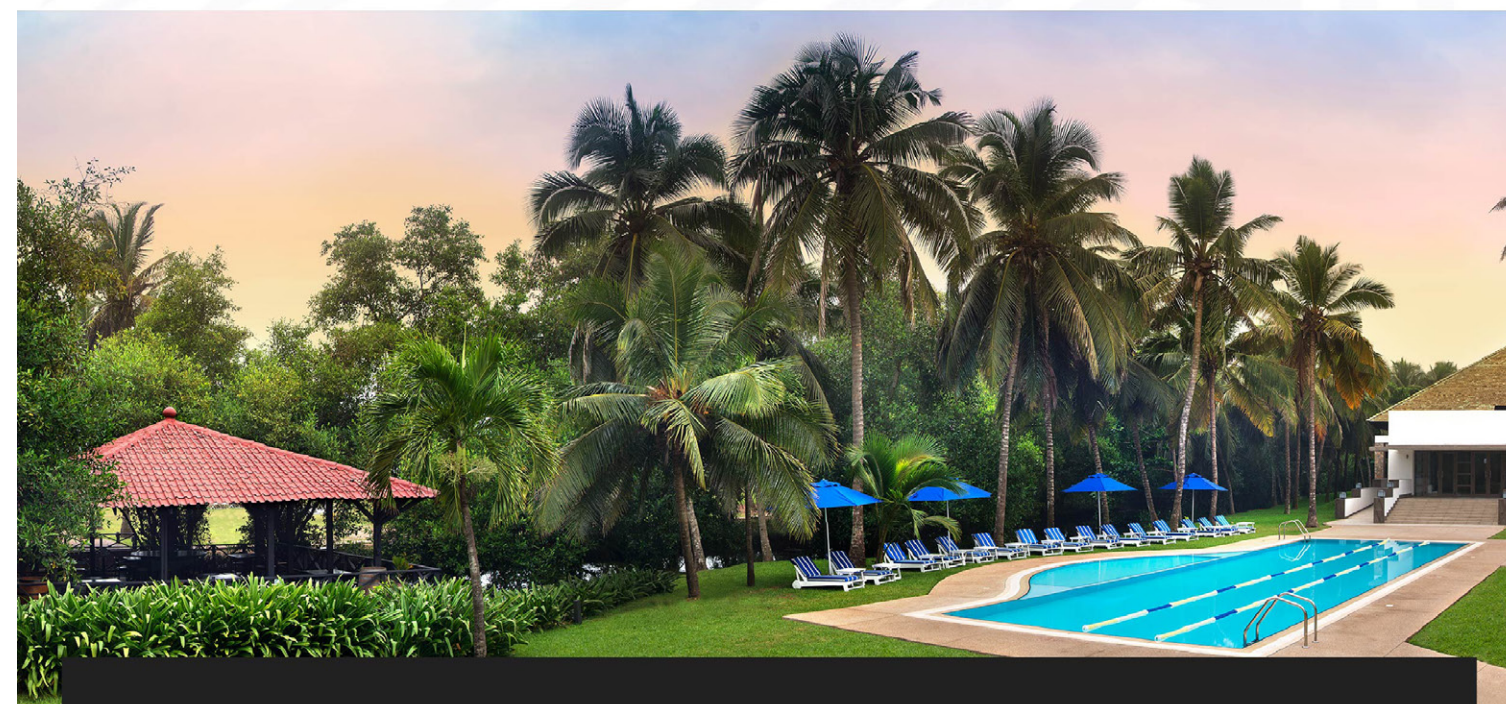
Language has also emerged as a significant factor influencing the penetration of African products into Latin American markets. Many agents and tour operators prefer materials in Spanish and Portuguese, making multilingual product presentations essential. "Our exhibitors have worked hard to integrate Spanish and Portuguese into their presentations. Even small efforts help buyers better understand the offerings," Reynolds observed. Additionally, compelling imagery and emotive visuals have been leveraged to bridge language gaps and convey Africa's appeal.

Connectivity remains another focal point. While links between Latin America and Africa have improved with South African Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, TAAG Angola, and Royal Air Maroc providing services, challenges persist in broadening routes beyond existing hubs. Currently, Brazilian travellers primarily head to South Africa, with limited direct access to other African

destinations. "We need to expand air access to ensure a seamless connection for Latin American travellers beyond Johannesburg," Landaeta remarked.

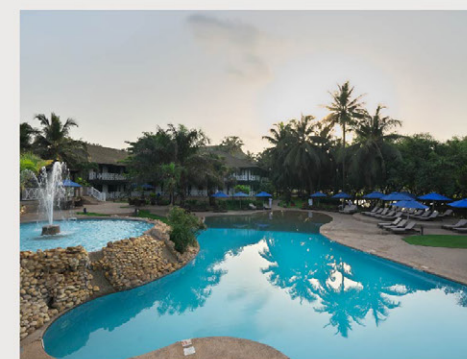
As Africa Showcase Latin America enters its final stretch in São Paulo, the demand for Africa is evident. The event in Brazil has been tailored to include VIP meeting sessions with key tour operators, followed by a broader trade event for travel agents. "This approach mirrors what worked successfully in Mexico last year, allowing us to engage both top operators and a wider travel trade audience," Reynolds stated. The response has been overwhelming, with agencies on a waitlist to attend, highlighting the region's strong appetite for African travel.

As the showcase concludes, the key takeaways remain clear: Africa has a firm place in the Latin American market, but sustained efforts in education, language accessibility, and improved connectivity will be instrumental in deepening its presence. The groundwork laid by Africa Showcase Latin America offers a pathway for continued collaboration and growth between the two regions.



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# Angola bets on “Green Oil” as tourism takes centre stage in economic diversification drive

Angola is making a decisive push to transform its economy, pivoting away from its reliance on oil and embracing tourism as its new “green oil.” This ambitious strategy was outlined by Angola’s Minister of Tourism, Márcio De Jesus Lopes Daniel, in an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfriq at the recent UN Tourism Africa and Americas Tourism Summit held in Zambia.

Daniel revealed that the government has implemented a clear two-year tourism development strategy, underpinned by a five-year vision with specific targets and goals. He emphasized the nation’s commitment to diversifying its economy, stating, “Angola, now has put aside tourism as the green oil to economic diversification. We have started the process of moving from an oil-dependent economy to a vibrant economy in terms of diversification, especially with tourism.”

Acknowledging Angola’s significant tourism potential, the minister highlighted the government’s strategic prioritization. “We have a lot of tourism potentialities, but we have to establish the priorities that we can mark easily and more efficiently achieve the goals that we are proposing. One of them is beach and sand tourism - we have more than 1 million km of coast, so we’ve got to take advantage of that.”

A cornerstone of this strategy is a Public-Private Partnership model. The government will take responsibility for developing essential infrastructure in key tourist areas, including roads, power/electricity, water, and telecommunications. This groundwork will then pave the way for private sector investment in the construction and management of hospitality facilities.

Daniel announced that the government, with the support of UN Tourism, is actively engaging with major international hotel companies. “We are now, with the support of UN Tourism, approaching the biggest hotel companies in the world, and they are being seduced by Angola’s strategy. So, the government is willing to prepare

the areas with basic infrastructure... and then invite these companies to build the hospitality facilities. And we think they are receiving well the invitation coming from the Angolan government.” He specifically mentioned that prominent entities such as Hilton, Radisson, and Tui have been approached and are currently in various stages of engagement.

Furthermore, the Angolan government is strategically engaging with financial institutions to secure the necessary investment for tourism development. The tourism minister revealed a significant step in this direction: “The other side in our strategy is with the financial institutions. What we are doing to approach them correctly and efficiently is using the UN Tourism’s Doing Business in Angola Guidelines. We signed this agreement a month ago with UN Tourism.”

He believes that these guidelines will provide a comprehensive “one-stop shop” for financial institutions, offering crucial information on the tax environment, business regulations,

“Angola, now has put aside tourism as the green oil to economic diversification. We have started the process of moving from an oil-dependent economy to a vibrant economy in terms of diversification, especially with tourism”

and the overall political and economic landscape of Angola. This streamlined approach aims to encourage investment by providing clarity and reducing perceived risks.

He highlighted ongoing discussions with institutions like the African Export-Import Bank (Afrieximbank), which has a dedicated line of credit for tourism-related construction and development. “So, we have the potential in Angola, and we have the approach to the big hotel groups, and we have the financial institutions ready to finance. So, this will be the point of transformation of having a huge potential to becoming a very strong tourism country,” he emphasised.

Márcio De Jesus Lopes Daniel, Minister of Tourism, Angola



# Malawi ushers in new era for tourism with landmark legislation



In a significant move aimed at revitalizing its tourism sector, Malawi has enacted a groundbreaking new tourism law, establishing the Malawi Tourism Authority and the Malawi College of Tourism. The announcement, made by Minister of Tourism Vera Kamtukule in an exclusive interview with VoyagesAfriq during the UN Tourism Africa and Americas Tourism Summit in Zambia, signals a decisive shift towards modernizing and professionalizing the nation’s tourism landscape.

For decades, Malawi’s tourism industry operated under a law dating back to 1968, a relic that proved increasingly inadequate in addressing the dynamic demands of the modern travel market.

“In terms of tourism in Malawi, we are still using an archaic law that was enacted in 1968, so that was creating a lot of problems because it didn’t have a lot of provisions that need to be looked into,” Kamtukule explained. “As you may be aware, the tourism sector is an ever-changing sector – you need to move with the times, but the law was unable to do that, so it was impeding on the growth of the sector.”

The new legislation, the 2025 Tourism Act, represents a pivotal step in aligning Malawi’s tourism framework with

contemporary standards and best practices. A key component of the Act is the establishment of the Malawi Tourism Authority, a dedicated body tasked with driving product development and destination marketing. This separation of functions from the Ministry of Tourism will allow the Ministry to focus on policy and strategic direction, streamlining the sector’s governance and fostering greater efficiency.

“With the Authority now with the Ministry, there’s going to be a lot of division of functions, where the Ministry is now going to be at the policy and strategy level and all the issues with product development, destination marketing is going to be the functions of the Tourism Authority from now on,” Kamtukule stated.

Furthermore, the Act introduces the Malawi College of Tourism, a significant upgrade from the existing Malawi Institute of Tourism. This development underscores the government’s commitment to enhancing the skill level and professional capacity within the sector. “We have the Malawi Institute of Tourism that was providing skills at the lower level, but with a college now, it’s going to upgrade the profile and the skills within the sector,” the Minister elaborated.

“With the Authority now with the Ministry, there’s going to be a lot of division of functions, where the Ministry is now going to be at the policy and strategy level and all the issues with product development, destination marketing is going to be the functions of the Tourism Authority from now on”

This focus on professional development aligns with President Lazarus Chakwera’s vision, who has identified tourism as a critical driver of Malawi’s structural transformation. “You may also be aware that the President isolated tourism as one of the key sectors for our structural transformation, but we couldn’t do what he wanted us to do with an archaic law,” Kamtukule acknowledged.

The new legislation is expected to unlock the vast potential of Malawi’s tourism sector, positioning the country to capitalize on its natural beauty and cultural heritage. By addressing the limitations of the outdated legal framework, the 2025 Tourism Act paves the way for sustainable growth, increased investment and enhanced visitor experiences.



## Namibia's Tourism Industry Poised for Growth Under New Leadership



### A Vision for Expansion

Namibia's tourism sector is on the cusp of transformation under the leadership of Sebulon Chilio Chicalu, the newly appointed CEO of the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB). With the country generating an impressive 14.3 billion Namibian dollars from tourism post-COVID and supporting nearly 60,000 jobs, Chicalu is determined to elevate Namibia's position on the global tourism map.

In an interview with *VoyagesAfriq Media*, he expressed his enthusiasm for propelling Namibia's tourism forward:

"Namibia as a tourism destination is a mature destination in terms of all the infrastructure that it has. You have all the infrastructure: the hotel infrastructure, of course, and the sub-hotels, as I call them, the lodges, the guest houses. There are a lot of places to stay but also other tourist facilities. So now, where we are, really, is we want to expand in terms of our source markets that are coming in."

### Building a MICE Powerhouse

A major priority for NTB is the growth of the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector. Recognising its potential, Namibia established the Namibia Convention Bureau in July 2023 to professionalise the industry. This initiative aims to bring structure to the sector by identifying service providers, developing vocational training programmes, and addressing skill gaps.

Chicalu is optimistic about Namibia's potential to become a MICE hub:

"What we are doing now is profiling service providers within that particular sector or subsector. That's what we're doing. Secondly, we will capacitate ourselves. Capacitate ourselves means

we're speaking to the right institutions, like the training institutions, to introduce what you call courses and unit standards in the event tourism sector. So, unit standards will be introduced. We are working with the Namibia Tourism Authority, which is responsible for producing unit standards for vocational training. I've done audits," he explained.

Plans for a new convention centre in Windhoek are already in motion, with a proposed capacity of at least 5,000. Chicalu highlighted its significance:

"This is in partnership with the Namibia Institute for Development and Agency and the City of Windhoek. We're looking at a timeline of 24 months to get something started. It will also include a hotel and other supporting initiatives to improve the overall capacity of hotels in the capital city."

### Streamlining Travel with a MICE Visa

To make Namibia a seamless destination for business travellers, NTB has collaborated with the Ministry of Home Affairs and other stakeholders to introduce a MICE visa. This initiative simplifies the entry process for international delegates, ensuring travel logistics do not become a barrier to business tourism.

"The response has been overwhelming," Chicalu noted. "Within just days of launching, we received over 3,000 applications. This tells us that there is a strong demand for Namibia as a business event destination."

### Enhancing the Visitor Experience

Beyond the MICE sector, NTB is looking to improve the overall tourist experience by working with aviation and airport authorities to ensure smooth arrivals and departures, from visa processing to baggage handling.

NTB also plans to roll out a comprehensive training programme for hospitality and transport staff to maintain high service standards across the tourism industry.

"To ensure the visa process remains efficient, NTB is engaging regularly with immigration authorities, refining processes, and addressing any bottlenecks. We are taking them through the visa processes while they are coming through. But we will have direct intervention with them, which is stakeholder engagement. After launching, we will assess what is happening, identify challenges, and ensure

continuous improvement. They are key stakeholders for feedback and input," he added.

### Tackling Seasonality with Year-Round Tourism

One of Namibia's challenges is seasonality, with fluctuations in visitor numbers at different times of the year. To counter this, NTB is partnering with airlines, hotels, and tour operators to develop special packages that attract tourists even during off-peak periods.

"We don't want tourism to be something that peaks and dips drastically. Namibia has something to offer in every season, and we want to showcase that," Chicalu explained.

"We launched a programme where, together, we'll say, fine, we have the high season sorted. Now, we have the low season, and we are looking at packages and probably some reductions in prices during that time. But, more importantly, we are targeting other markets that travel during our low season. This will be a national-level initiative led by NTB, but we will take a stakeholder approach. We hope that in the next three years, we'll flatten the pattern of seasonality and establish Namibia as a year-round tourism destination. Depending on the season, visitors will always find something of interest in Namibia: both for domestic and international travellers."

This initiative will also boost domestic tourism.

"We are encouraging Namibians to explore their own country. There's so much to see and do, and we want to make it affordable and accessible for locals as well," he added.

**“A major priority for NTB is the growth of the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector. Recognising its potential, Namibia established the Namibia Convention Bureau in July 2023 to professionalise the industry. This initiative aims to bring structure to the sector by identifying service providers, developing vocational training programmes, and addressing skill gaps”**

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### Quality Assurance Through a Grading System

To maintain high standards in the hospitality sector, Namibia is introducing a star grading system for accommodation facilities.

"We're launching a star grading programme for accommodation: but with a new approach. Establishments will be able to apply for specific star ratings, ensuring transparency for visitors. When a client books a five-star hotel, they should know exactly what to expect. The same applies to four-star or three-star accommodations," Chicalu explained.

"We believe that by introducing the star grading model, we will help maintain high

service standards while providing checks and balances for hotels. This will enhance the overall experience for visitors."

### A New Era for Namibia's Tourism

With a clear roadmap for growth, Namibia's tourism industry is set for a new era of prosperity. From infrastructure development and streamlined travel processes to a stronger MICE sector and year-round tourism, NTB is focused on positioning the country as a top-tier destination.

Chicalu highlighted the board's strategy for increasing visibility:

"We'll be more visible. We'll be working with our partners in the media and trade sectors. Secondly, we will expand into a

few new markets that haven't traditionally been strong for us. This will bring in new visitor numbers, and we expect to reach and even exceed pre-COVID figures within the next year.

Additionally, we are advancing digitalisation within our services. As an institution, we must be well-capacitated for the future."

Looking ahead, Chicalu reaffirmed NTB's long-term vision:

"We are not just thinking about the present;

we are laying the groundwork for the future. Namibia is ready to take its place on the global tourism stage, and we are excited for what lies ahead."

## Professor John M. Lamola, appointed Group CEO of SAA

South African Airways has welcomed Professor John M. Lamola's appointment as Group Chief Executive Officer, following approval by Minister of Transport, Ms. Barbara Creecy.

The Board is confident that Professor Lamola's appointment marks a turning point for SAA's long-term financial health, who has the skill, track record, leadership skills, insight, and vision to guide the national carrier in its continued growth, ensuring that SAA remains a viable regional, continental, and global aviation operator.

Professor Lamola has been at the helm at SAA as interim CEO since May 2022. He is deeply conversant with the airline's past and has been intimately involved in planning its future. His proven leadership will ensure stability and continuity in SAA's governance and operations.

SAA Board Interim Chairperson, Mr Derek Hanekom says: "The SAA Board is delighted to be able to appoint a solid and dedicated leader well versed in SAA's fortunes and eager to continue overseeing its take-off into better skies. We wish Professor Lamola and SAA safe flight into an even brighter future."

In his position as interim CEO, Professor Lamola ensured SAA's return to profit-making status. In the 2022/23 financial year, SAA reported a net profit of R252-million, marking its first profitable year since 2012. Revenue in the same year was R5.7-billion, up from R2-billion in the previous financial year (2021/22).

The airline has steadily added national, continental, and global routes, flying to 16 destinations by January 2025, in contrast with six destinations in 2021. It has expanded its fleet from six aircraft to 20 in the same period, including the addition of two Airbus A330s. Since 2021, SAA has increased its workforce from 800 to approximately 2 000 (November 2024), including 140 pilots, at group level.

The airline's financial discipline and health continue to improve, and Professor Lamola's appointment confirms the Board's confidence in his leadership and aligns with the government's vision for a commercially viable and globally competitive SAA.

"Professor Lamola can now continue growing SAA with confidence, knowing that he has the full support of the SAA Board and its shareholders," Hanekom says. "We congratulate him on his appointment and wish him well in his leadership of SAA."

According to a study SAA commissioned from Oxford Economics Africa, a London-headquartered consulting leader in global economic forecasting and econometric analysis, SAA's gross value add (GVA) to South Africa's GDP in the 2023/24 financial year is R9.1-billion. Oxford Economics Africa projects that the airline's GVA to South Africa's GDP will rise to R32.6-billion by 2029/30.

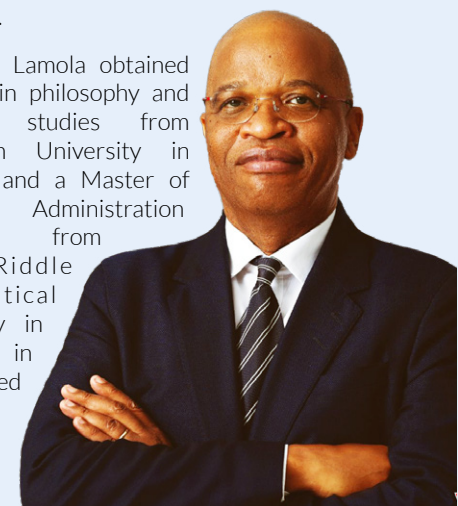
The same report estimates that SAA is a powerful job creator for the South

African economy. It projects that SAA's impact on the economy, through, for example, bringing tourists to South Africa and facilitating international trade with the country, will take off, sparking the creation of direct and indirect jobs, from 25 200 jobs in 2023/24 to 86 700 by 2029/30.

SAA activities are anticipated to generate government revenue of R1.1-billion (actual) in 2023/24, rising to R4.4-billion (projected) by 2029/30.

Professor Lamola has solid experience in the aviation industry, having built and managed a proprietary private equity investment portfolio that included holdings in aviation and internet technologies. He was CEO at Denel Aviation between 1996 and 2001 and served on the Board of the Airports Company South Africa between 2012 and 2017.

Professor Lamola obtained his PhD in philosophy and religious studies from Edinburgh University in Scotland and a Master of Business Administration degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida in the United States.







## Essence of Africa Heads to the Kenyan Coast for 2025 Edition

Following the successful inaugural event in Nairobi last year, Essence of Africa has announced its second edition will take place at Diamonds Malindi on the pristine Kenyan Coast from 7-9 October 2025, marking an exciting chapter in the event's journey across East Africa.

The move, driven by valuable industry feedback, reinforces the event's original vision of showcasing diverse African destinations and further supports the growth of coastal tourism across the continent.

Curated by On Show Solutions and ATTA® Events, Essence of Africa is dedicated to showcasing the continent's diverse tourism offerings to the global market.

"Essence is truly on the move," says co-founder Amanda Margison. "By bringing this forum to Kenya's coast, we're expanding horizons and creating new opportunities for both buyers and sellers in Africa's tourism sector."

The 2025 edition will maintain its core focus on facilitating meaningful business connections through:

- Pre-scheduled meetings between international buyers and African suppliers
- Immersive networking events
- Educational seminars



- First-hand destination experience
- "We will continue to lead with thought-provoking content sessions that deliver actionable insights to support tourism growth throughout Africa," says Chris Mears, co-founder.

Malindi's postcard-perfect beaches, Swahili heritage, and thriving marine biodiversity provide an ideal backdrop for tourism professionals to experience firsthand the unique offerings of East Africa's maritime tourism while conducting business in a spectacular setting.

Registration details will be announced in due course, with favourable early bird rates. Stay tuned for more updates as we prepare to bring Essence of Africa to the Kenyan Coast.

### About Essence of Africa

Essence of Africa is a private sector-led initiative designed to connect international buyers with African tourism suppliers. The event features pre-scheduled meetings, networking events, educational seminars, and familiarisation trips, providing a comprehensive platform for business development and collaboration.

## TIFA 2025 to Catalyze Tourism Investment in Africa's Emerging Destinations

The 2025 edition of the **Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA)** is scheduled to take place from **27th to 29th August 2025 in Richards Bay/City of uMhlatuze**, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. As an increasingly recognized pan-African platform for structured tourism investment dialogue, TIFA is set to convene public and private sector leaders to advance investment in tourism and related sectors across the continent.

Positioned under the theme **"Unlocking Growth Through Strategic Impact Investment in Tourism and Related Sectors,"** TIFA serves as an impactful engagement platform for African destinations to position themselves as bankable investment environments. The forum enables these destinations—particularly emerging and secondary regions—to profile tourism projects, engage potential investors, and tap into broader trade and economic opportunities.

"TIFA resonated strongly with our mandate," said **Mpuni Ngubane**, Acting Head of the KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau. "For the tourism sector to thrive, there must be deliberate investment in the entire value chain—hotels, retail, infrastructure, and beyond. As much as we promote KwaZulu-Natal for leisure and film, driving business events into the region has proven to be a powerful catalyst for economic and tourism growth."

Built on the principle of **"a global platform for local action,"** TIFA spotlights secondary and tertiary cities—such as Richards Bay—as key growth areas for sustainable tourism investment. The forum offers a curated space where tourism authorities, government leaders, financial institutions, and private investors convene to explore collaboration, showcase projects, and unlock capital flows.

According to **Miller Matola**, CEO of Millvest Advisory and TIFA Convenor, "TIFA is all about connecting investors and project owners in practical ways. Our ethos is simple: create a global conversation that results in local action. That's why we chose Richards Bay—a second-tier city brimming with potential—as the host for 2025. We want to shine a light on areas that are often overlooked but rich with investable opportunities."

As a catalyst for regional development, TIFA fosters both sector-specific and cross-sector investment. Its framework aligns well with Africa's broader economic development strategies, ensuring that investment in tourism contributes

meaningfully to job creation, infrastructure expansion, and value chain diversification.

Ngubane further emphasized the strategic rationale behind KwaZulu-Natal's bid:

"Driving geographic spread is central to our work. While Durban remains the gateway, it's crucial that regions like Richards Bay and Northern Zululand are profiled as capable hosts with world-class infrastructure. Our goal is to convert business event delegates into long-term leisure tourists—ensuring the entire province benefits."

The 2025 Tourism Investment Forum Africa will pursue the following core objectives:

- 1. Raise Awareness and Showcase Investment Opportunities.** To highlight the destination's investment climate and promote high-priority tourism and related-sector projects to attract credible investor interest.
- 2. Position Destinations as Prime Investment Hubs.** To elevate the global competitiveness of host and participating regions by profiling them as preferred locations for sustainable investment.
- 3. Connect Projects with Investors.** To facilitate direct engagement between project owners and prospective investors through well-packaged and bankable investment proposals.
- 4. Foster Business and Institutional Relationships.** To enable meaningful interactions among government entities, private enterprises, and funding institutions—laying the groundwork for partnerships and funding agreements.
- 5. Promote Trade and Knowledge Exchange.** To create space for sharing insights on investment trends and emerging opportunities in tourism, hospitality, travel services, infrastructure, and supporting industries.

The Forum will feature a comprehensive program over the three days, including:

- A two-day conference dedicated to exploring investment trends, sectoral opportunities, and tourism demand dynamics.
- A high-level roundtable dialogue designed to facilitate the exchange of insights and collaborative approaches to inclusive economic development.
- Presentations of market-ready investment projects specific to the City of uMhlatuze and the broader KwaZulu-Natal region.



Miller Matola

- On-site field visits to local tourism sites and infrastructure projects, allowing investors and stakeholders to directly assess project feasibility and contextual value.

Reflecting on the growth trajectory of the forum, Matola noted,

"From our early days in the Northern Cape to hosting alongside major trade shows, we've learned that focusing on connecting real projects with serious capital—especially in underrepresented regions—is what creates true value."

Attendance at TIFA 2025 is by invitation or through formal online registration. Participation is free of charge, though the number of seats is limited to ensure quality engagement. Registered delegates will be granted access to all conference sessions, networking events, the welcome reception, gala dinner, and field visits.

Confirmed participants are expected to commit to attending the full forum agenda, ensuring optimal use of the opportunity for collaboration, business networking, and policy dialogue.

"TIFA may be hosted in Richards Bay, but its benefits are intended for the entire province," Ngubane stated. "We're ensuring wide participation—from SMEs and large-scale developers to emerging entrepreneurs—all of whom can leverage this forum to scale their ambitions."

As Africa's tourism sector regains momentum and repositions itself within the global investment landscape, forums such as TIFA have become indispensable. They provide a dedicated avenue to match investor capital with market-ready opportunities—while encouraging policy coherence, regional cooperation, and local economic transformation.



# Hallpax Marketplace: Transforming Africa's MICE Industry Through Digital Innovation

Africa's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector is experiencing significant growth, fueled by economic expansion, urban development, and increasing investments in hotels and conference facilities. Yet, despite these strides, critical barriers continue to hinder the industry's full potential. Mahi Tadesse, Founder and CEO of Hallpax, is at the forefront of addressing these challenges.

In a conversation with Kojo Bentum-Williams on the VA Tourism Podcast, she shared her insights into the sector's growth, the barriers limiting intra-African collaboration, and how Hallpax's innovative marketplace aims to transform event planning across the continent.

## Africa's Expanding MICE Sector

Over the course of Mahi Tadesse's more than 15-year career in the MICE sector, Hallpax has expanded from a modest Addis Ababa-based event company to a significant force in Africa. Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mauritius, Seychelles, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Ghana are among the 14 nations where Hallpax operates.

Reflecting on the evolution of the sector, she said:

"The continent is doing wonderful. There's growth in every sector, and that means it's great for the MICE industry. Cities are growing, hotels are being built, conference centers are being built across the continent. So that general growth helps a lot of us in the MICE industry thrive."

Despite the notable expansion that has helped the sector advance, Mahi underlined that difficulties still exist, especially with regard to accessibility and travel throughout Africa.

## Challenges in Africa's MICE Industry

### Limited Intra-African Travel Accessibility

For African business travellers, visa restrictions and costly, indirect flights remain a significant obstacle. Mahi emphasised the sharp disparity between intra-African mobility and how the continent welcomes foreign tourists:

"Most of the marketing that we do in Africa is for outside of the continent. The continent is not yet welcoming to itself. As an Ethiopian traveling across Africa, it is significantly harder for me compared to someone holding a European or an American passport. It's extremely challenging."

### Lack of Local Promotion & Information

While African destinations promote themselves aggressively to international audiences, they often neglect marketing to their regional neighbors. This lack of intra-African engagement stifles cross-border business opportunities.

"Even the little marketing that we do, it's focused outside the continent. African governments need to wake up and ask, why are we discriminating against each other when it comes to travel?"

### Difficulty in Finding Local Suppliers

Finding trustworthy suppliers for printing, audiovisual, and transportation needs is a logistical headache for event planners. The problem is not that there aren't any good service providers; rather, it's that they aren't present on digital platforms or have a sufficient database of services available.

"It is insanely difficult to find good suppliers. It's not that they aren't there: African suppliers are significantly more responsive and service-oriented; but they don't promote themselves. Most businesses that are successful in their country do not have a website, making them nearly invisible to event planners looking for services."

## Hallpax Marketplace: A Game-Changer for Africa's MICE Industry

Understanding these difficulties and having a well-defined plan to resolve this dilemma, Hallpax has created a digital solution called the Hallpax Marketplace. The marketplace is intended to simplify MICE event planning throughout Africa by serving as a one-stop shop for suppliers, vendors, and event planners.

### How the Marketplace Works

According to Mahi, the site is similar to Facebook or LinkedIn for vendors, but it differs slightly from social media

platforms in that it allows companies to set up organised profiles that highlight their offerings.

"What we're creating is essentially a service catalog. If you're a printing vendor, you'll be able to showcase your products; whether it's business cards, backdrops, or banners. Unlike a Facebook page, which is built for social media content, our platform is structured specifically for businesses to highlight their services clearly."

Since the marketplace is a web application, even companies with no technical know-how can use it. Using a mobile device, vendors can communicate with customers, update service details, and manage their profiles.

### A CRM Tool for MICE Vendors

Beyond being a marketplace, the platform also integrates a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This allows vendors to collect and manage leads, respond to quotation request and track business performance in comparison to competitors.

"A printing vendor in Accra, for example, will be able to see how many leads they've received compared to the best-



performing vendor in the city. They won't see the competitor's name, but they'll know if they're falling behind or leading in their category. It's a great benchmarking tool."

### City-Specific Pages for Event Planning Resources

The platform's city-based navigation is another distinctive feature. Essential materials for event preparation will be available on the pages dedicated to each major city:

"Accra will have its own city page, Cape Town will have its own, Nairobi will have its own. These pages will feature vendor listings, event calendars, and even practical information like visa requirements and government contacts. Essentially, we are filling a gap that convention bureaus should be addressing but haven't yet."

### SME Inclusion and Future Rollout Strategy

Enabling Small and Medium Businesses (SMEs) to compete on an even playing

field is one of the platform's main goals.

"The biggest businesses will always find a way to get noticed. But smaller vendors: who often deliver the best service; are the ones struggling with visibility. Our platform ensures they are found easily and have equal access to business opportunities."

Hallpax is implementing a phased rollout strategy, onboarding businesses city by city to ensure a seamless experience.

"We're starting with a strong focus on key cities before expanding further. Our goal is to make this platform the go-to place for event planners in Africa."

### A Bold Vision for Africa's MICE Future

Hallpax has already made significant strides in attracting interest and getting more people to sign up for the platform. Mahi enthused,

"We started mid-March, so it's been just over two weeks now. The great thing

is that we haven't encountered a single business saying, 'Oh, I don't want to be on the platform.'

It's been overwhelmingly well received, especially by the small businesses we're approaching. One reason is that it's completely free: we're not charging them to be on it, and we don't take a commission from their earnings. People can choose to work with them directly and handle their own transactions."

Hallpax is poised to transform Africa's MICE sector by addressing the visibility gap for African suppliers, streamlining the intra-African event planning process, and providing a centralised digital marketplace.

Looking ahead, Hallpax aims to build on its success and expand its reach, bringing more businesses on board ahead of its launch.

"We are launching in the third week of June. By then, our goal is to have 1,000 vendors onboarded on the platform."

# Botswana to Host the 2026 World Athletics Relays : A Historic Milestone for African Athletics



Botswana has secured a momentous achievement, earning the right to host the 2026 World Athletics Relays in Gaborone. This marks the first time the country will stage a World Athletics Series event, solidifying its growing reputation as a key player in global athletics.

Scheduled for 2-3 May 2026, the event will not only showcase Botswana's sporting capabilities, but also provide a significant boost to sports tourism, attracting elite athletes, international media, and visitors from around the world.

Announced during the 237th World Athletics Council Meeting in Nanjing, China, this selection underscores Botswana's increasing influence in the athletics sphere. The country's capital has already demonstrated its ability to host high-profile competitions, including the

Botswana Golden Grand Prix, a World Athletics Continental Tour Gold event.

### A Vote of Confidence from World Athletics

World Athletics President Sebastian Coe lauded Botswana's commitment to the sport, stating:

"I am delighted that Botswana's commitment to athletics, both through their elite athletes and their event hosting capabilities, has led them to hosting the World Athletics Relays next year. This is the fourth World Championship event Africa has staged over the last decade, in addition to the Diamond League and Continental Tour Gold events, and we are seeing a real increase in experience, expertise, and skills."

The 2026 World Athletics Relays in Gaborone will be a historic occasion that will further establish Botswana as a top international athletics destination and highlight Africa's ability to host top-tier athletic events.

### Global Stage for Botswana's Sporting and Tourism Potential

With the event set to draw thousands of

spectators and extensive media coverage, Botswana stands to gain significant international exposure. Beyond the competition, this is an opportunity to highlight the nation's vibrant culture, renowned hospitality, and breathtaking landscape to a global audience.

As anticipation builds, all eyes will be on Gaborone in May 2026, when Botswana steps onto the world stage as a proud host of one of athletics' most prestigious events.





## Seychelles Readies To Make History as First African Nation to Host FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup



President Wavel Ramkalawan

Seychelles is set to carve its name into the annals of international sport as the first African nation to host the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup by welcoming 16 of the world's top beach soccer teams to its sun-kissed shores from May 1 to 11, 2025.

In a moment of pride and pageantry, the official draw for the tournament was held on April 4 at the International Conference Centre of Seychelles (ICCS) in Victoria, the nation's capital on the island of Mahe. Attended by government officials, FIFA delegates, representatives from competing nations, and media from around the globe, the ceremony laid the groundwork for what promises to be a thrilling and transformative global sporting event.

Making their tournament debut as host nation, Seychelles was drawn in Group A, where they will face formidable opponents from Japan, Guatemala, and Belarus. The full group lineup for the tournament is as follows:

- Group A: Seychelles, Japan, Guatemala, Belarus
- Group B: Brazil, Portugal, Oman, Mexico
- Group C: Iran, Spain, Tahiti, Argentina

- Group D: Senegal, Colombia, Italy, USA

The draw was conducted by FIFA Director of Tournaments, Jaime Yarza, who praised Seychelles for its commitment to hosting the event with flair and professionalism. "This is not just another edition of the Beach Soccer World Cup," Yarza stated. "It is a historic one – an African first – and we are delighted to bring this dynamic sport to such an inspiring setting."

FIFA President Gianni Infantino,

speaking at the draw via video link, described the 2025 edition as "a tournament of many firsts".

"It is the first FIFA tournament to be staged in Seychelles and the first FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup to be held in Africa. This idyllic country will provide a stunning backdrop for players, coaches, officials, and fans from around the world."

Infantino praised the collaborative efforts of the Seychelles authorities, particularly the Seychelles Football



President Wavel Ramkalawan and Jaime Yarza, FIFA Director of Tournaments



Official Mascot "TIKAY" with participants at the draw



Bernadette Willemin, DG Destination Marketing, Seychelles and PS of Tourism Department Sherin Francis

**"This is a great day for Seychelles and a great day for Africa. As the world watches, we invite you not only to enjoy the competition but also to discover the many treasures of our islands."**

Federation, led by President Elvis Chetty, for their dedication to the planning and execution of the event. He also spotlighted FIFA's sustainability agenda, highlighting a unique infrastructure approach that will leave a lasting legacy for the host nation.

"In keeping with FIFA's commitment to sustainability, we will use the same stadium as we did in Dubai. This structure has been transported by sea to Seychelles, positively impacting the tournament's carbon footprint, and will remain in Seychelles for public use as part of the legacy."

For Seychelles, this global tournament is more than a sporting showcase—it's a bold declaration of national unity, resilience, and forward-looking

ambition. President Wavel Ramkalawan, who graced the ceremony, expressed his pride and excitement at this historic achievement.

"This is a great day for Seychelles and a great day for Africa. As the world watches, we invite you not only to enjoy the competition but also to discover the many treasures of our islands."

"This event represents more than just a tournament. It symbolises the unity, the strength of spirit, and the resilience of our nation, as well as our commitment to promoting the global game of football in all its forms," H.E. Ramkalawan noted.

The event is expected to draw thousands of visitors – including athletes, officials, fans, and global media – bringing with it unprecedented exposure and economic opportunity for the archipelago nation. The Local Organising Committee, in collaboration with Tourism Seychelles, has crafted a calendar of cultural showcases, culinary festivals, and eco-tourism excursions to ensure that visitors experience the depth and diversity of Seychellois life beyond the matches.

Bernadette Willemin, Director General for Marketing at Tourism Seychelles, called the tournament "a golden opportunity" to reposition Seychelles as more than a luxury destination. "This event allows us to tell a different story about Seychelles – one that includes our passion for sport, our cultural richness, and our commitment to sustainable tourism," she said.

As the countdown to kickoff continues,



the excitement is palpable. The eyes of the sporting world will soon turn to this archipelago of Indian Ocean islands, where crystal-clear waters and white sand beaches will provide the most stunning stadium the sport has ever seen.

With a unique blend of elite competition, cultural expression, and global connectivity, Seychelles is not just hosting the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup – it's redefining what a host nation can be.



Taniah and Elisha performed the official song Boom sese





A group photo of the award winners

## Seychelles Advances Sustainable Tourism with Enhanced Recognition and Certification Framework

The Seychelles tourism sector has made a significant stride in its commitment to sustainability with the continued expansion of the Sustainable Seychelles Recognition and Certification (SSRC) Program. The recently concluded certification ceremony, held at the Eden Bleu Hotel, underscored the nation's strategic vision for responsible tourism by recognizing outstanding achievements across accommodations, restaurants, and tour operators.

The event, graced by key industry stakeholders, celebrated the exemplary dedication of tourism enterprises to environmental conservation, social responsibility, and economic viability. Sherin Francis, Principal Secretary of the Seychelles Tourism Department, provided valuable insights into the evolution of the program, highlighting its role as a structured framework designed to institutionalize sustainability practices across the sector.

The SSRC initiative has undergone a significant transformation since

its inception. Initially introduced as a sustainable tourism label over a decade ago, it became evident that the industry required a more structured and supportive framework to foster meaningful and measurable progress in sustainability. Recognizing this need, the initiative evolved into a tiered program, allowing businesses at varying levels of sustainability implementation to be acknowledged and supported in their journey.

Sherin Francis remarked on this shift, stating, "To encourage tourism stakeholders to embark on the sustainability journey, we must celebrate incremental progress rather than focus solely on end goals. By providing structured recognition, we offer both motivation and guidance, ensuring sustainability becomes an operational standard rather than an aspirational concept."

To facilitate this structured progression, the program now features three distinct recognition levels—Blue, Bronze, and

Minister of Foreign Affairs &amp; Tourism, Sylvester Radegonde



Sherin Francis, Principal Secretary of the Department of Tourism, Seychelles

Silver—each serving as a milestone towards full certification. Certification, which represents a higher commitment to sustainability, is valid for two years and requires properties to undergo reassessment to demonstrate continued improvement.

The ceremony marked a pivotal moment in the program's history with the introduction of the Platinum Certification, an honor reserved for tourism enterprises that have fully embedded sustainability principles into their operational framework.

The inaugural recipient of this prestigious distinction, Constance Ephelia, set a benchmark for sustainability in the Seychelles hospitality industry. In recognizing this achievement, Francis noted, "Certification alone does not fully encapsulate the depth of commitment demonstrated by this property. Sustainability is no longer a checklist—it is embedded in the corporate culture, reflected in every aspect of operations, and embraced by staff and guests alike."

The Platinum Certification reinforces the program's commitment to rewarding excellence beyond compliance, positioning Seychelles as a leader in sustainable tourism within the African and global tourism landscape.

The Sustainable Seychelles Recognition and Certification Program has also extended its scope beyond accommodation providers to include restaurants and tour operators. This expansion underscores the government's commitment to fostering an integrated and comprehensive approach to sustainability within the tourism value chain.

At the most recent ceremony, five

restaurants were formally recognized for their sustainability initiatives. Additionally, future ceremonies are expected to acknowledge tour operators, further broadening the program's reach. "We aim to eventually cover the entire tourism industry, ensuring that sustainability becomes a shared responsibility across all sectors," Francis affirmed.

A core tenet of the SSRC initiative is the principle that sustainability is a continuous process rather than a static achievement. Certified properties are required to undergo reassessment after two years, demonstrating measurable improvements to retain their status.

During the latest certification cycle, six properties successfully completed the recertification process, bringing the total number of certified properties to 25. This milestone reflects the growing commitment of the Seychelles tourism industry to sustainability, a process that has taken nearly a decade to solidify.

Francis emphasized the significance of this achievement, stating, "Sustainability is a journey, not a destination. The recertification process ensures that entities remain at the forefront of best practices, continuously refining their approach to align with evolving environmental and social standards."

The Sustainable Seychelles Recognition and Certification Program extends beyond mere acknowledgment; it provides structured guidance, resources, and incentives to support

businesses in their sustainability endeavors. Participants gain access to technical expertise, industry best practices, and strategic support to navigate the complexities of sustainable operations.

In a further effort to align Seychelles' tourism industry with global sustainability benchmarks, Francis announced the integration of additional incentives for certified entities. These include alignment opportunities with Series 10-Certification and Slow Life Experiences, frameworks designed to enhance industry standards and competitiveness on the international stage.

The success of the SSRC initiative offers valuable insights for other nations seeking to balance tourism growth with sustainability imperatives. By fostering inclusivity, celebrating incremental progress, and maintaining rigorous standards, Seychelles has established a model that can serve as a blueprint for sustainable tourism development across Africa and beyond.

As Francis aptly stated, "Sustainability is not just about preserving our natural assets—it is about securing a legacy that benefits businesses, communities, and future generations."

With 94 properties now recognized and 25 fully certified, the program exemplifies how a structured, incentive-driven approach can drive systemic change in tourism sustainability.





## Namibia Wildlife Resorts Appoints Epson Kasuto as Acting Managing Director

The Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR) Board has announced a leadership transition, marking a new phase for the state-owned hospitality entity. Effective 1 April 2025, Epson Kasuto assumes the role of Acting Managing Director following the expiry of Dr. Matthias Ngwangwama's fixed-term contract on 31 March 2025.

Kasuto, a seasoned professional with extensive experience in the tourism and hospitality sector, will oversee the organization's operations for a two-month interim period, from 1 April to 31 May 2025, as the recruitment process for a substantive Managing Director commences. His appointment signals the Board's commitment to ensuring operational continuity and strategic direction during this transition.

Dr. Ngwangwama departs after serving as NWR's substantive Managing

Director since April 2020, having previously held the position in an acting capacity from April 2019. His tenure was characterized by a focus on financial sustainability, operational efficiency, and strategic growth. Prior to his appointment as Managing Director, he was NWR's longest-serving Chief Financial Officer and later served as Chief Officer for Strategy and Projects, playing a pivotal role in shaping the company's long-term vision.

NWR's Board and management recognize the need for a seamless transition, ensuring that ongoing projects, service delivery, and stakeholder engagements remain uninterrupted. Employees and stakeholders have been encouraged to extend their full support to Kasuto as he steers the organization during this interim period.



The tourism industry, which remains a cornerstone of Namibia's economic development, relies on strong leadership to navigate evolving market dynamics and drive sustainable growth. As NWR embarks on this transition, the focus remains on maintaining operational excellence, enhancing visitor experiences, and positioning the company for long-term success.

## Morocco Unveils Targeted Tourism Drive to Leverage AFCON 2025 Spotlight

As anticipation builds toward the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), Morocco is positioning itself not only as a host nation but as a tourism partner to the continent. Through a structured and market-oriented approach, the Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNTOT) has unveiled a multi-phase promotional strategy aimed at leveraging the tournament's continental reach to reinforce Morocco's presence in Africa's travel landscape.

From April 2 to 6, MNTOT is rolling out one of its most targeted initiatives to date—a familiarization trip for key African travel professionals, supported by two pan-African workshops. These sessions bring together Moroccan operators and representatives from

priority markets such as Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Ghana, and Angola. The objective: to lay the groundwork for co-created AFCON-specific travel packages that extend beyond matchdays and tap into the country's wider tourism offering.

At the core of this strategy is a drive to move beyond passive destination marketing. The B2B workshops are designed not only to sell Morocco but to listen—to respond to market realities with adaptable, high-impact tourism solutions. With each participating market bringing its own consumer behaviors and travel preferences, the initiative signals a shift toward dynamic collaboration over static promotion.



In tandem with its Africa-facing efforts, MNTOT is also preparing to launch a European roadshow targeting countries with significant African diaspora communities. This next phase will involve linking Moroccan operators with diaspora-focused travel agents, emphasizing AFCON 2025 as a platform for homecoming experiences and cultural reconnection.

What distinguishes Morocco's strategy is its dual intention—to consolidate regional influence while extending global visibility. The combination of B2B matchmaking, co-created travel products, and market-specific messaging reflects a deliberate recalibration of how the country engages its audiences.

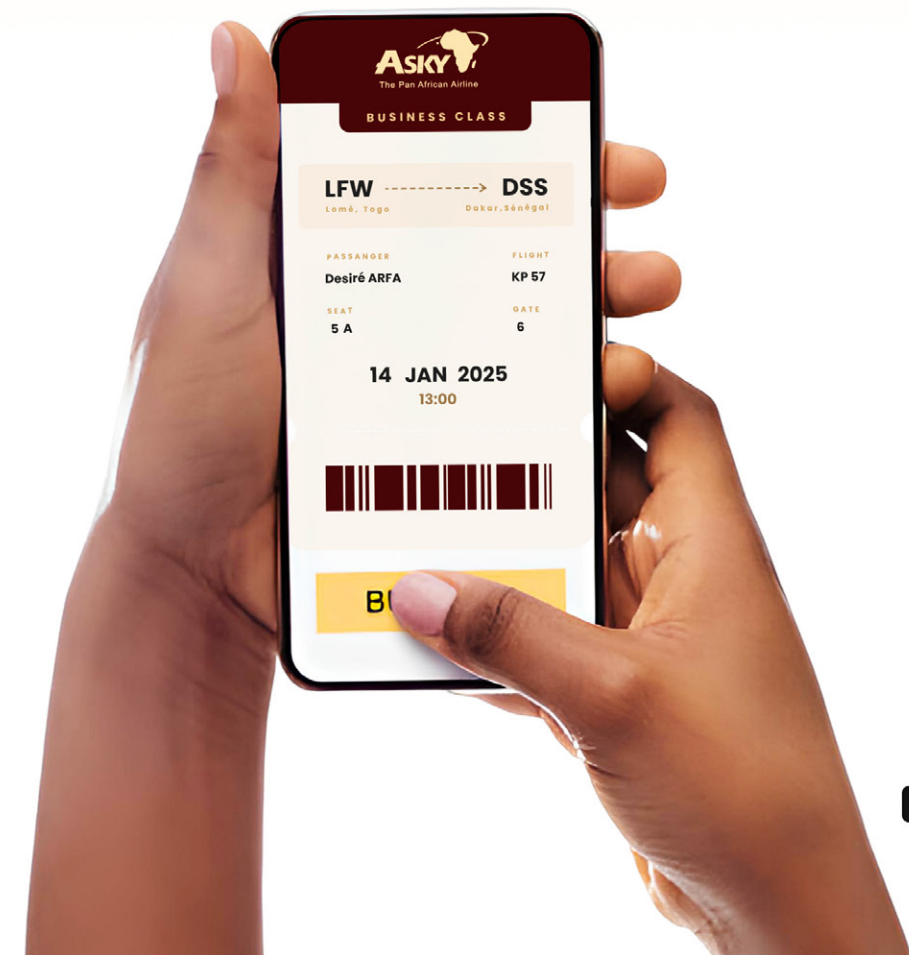
By treating AFCON not only as a football spectacle but as a strategic tourism catalyst, Morocco is reinforcing its long-term ambition: to be a continental hub not only for events but for shared growth within Africa's tourism economy.



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## Hotel development booms in Africa, boosted by Egypt and Marriott

This year's Hotel Development Pipeline Report, the definitive study of international hospitality development projects in Africa, reveals record activity. There are 577 hotels and resorts, with 104,444 rooms, in the development pipeline, up by 13.3% on 2024, way ahead of the single digit pipeline growth reported globally by the leading international chains.

The report, compiled by Lagos-based W Hospitality Group, with data from 50 international and regional hotel chains, shows that development activity has been growing impressively in North Africa, which saw a 23% year-on-year increase, compared to a 6% increase in sub-Saharan Africa. Over the past five years, the hotel development pipeline has grown at an annualised rate of 4% in sub-Saharan Africa, 12% in North Africa and 7% overall.

Egypt continues to lead the way in terms of development, with 143 hotels and 33,926 rooms in the pipeline there. This is almost four times the number of rooms in second-placed Morocco, which has 8,579 rooms in 58 hotels. The following eight countries, ranked by number of rooms, comprise Nigeria, 7,320; Ethiopia, 5,648; Cape Verde, 5,565; Kenya, 4,344; Tunisia, 4,336; South Africa, 4,076; Tanzania, 3,432; and Ghana, 3,125. International hotel chains have deals signed in 42 of Africa's 54 countries.

Despite its clear leadership in the absolute pipeline numbers, Egypt has fewer than 50% of rooms under construction, a significantly lower proportion than second-placed Morocco, with over 72%. Of the top 10 countries, Ethiopia has the highest ratio of rooms "on site", followed by Morocco and Ghana. Cape Verde, Nigeria and Tanzania have some of the lowest percentages. However, "under construction" does not necessarily mean that there is activity and progress towards completion and opening – many of the sites in Nigeria and Ghana, for example, have been closed for several years, with hardly a hard hat in sight.

A more granular analysis, looking at the location of planned properties, reveals an extraordinary boom in Cairo, with

17,757 new rooms projected in over 70 hotels. The contrast with the second-placed location, Sharm El Sheikh, is dramatic, where 4,231 rooms are planned in fewer than 10 properties. The cities and resorts with the next largest pipelines by number of rooms are Lagos, 3,709; Boa Vista, 3,650; Addis Ababa, 3,369; Casablanca, 2,939; Accra, 2,652; Abuja, 2,570; Zanzibar, 2,523; and Dakar, 2,334.

The growth is being driven strongly by the major international hotel chains, with Marriott International leading the way, 165 hotels with 29,639 rooms. It is followed by Hilton, 93 hotels with 17,040 rooms; Accor, 73 hotels with 15,013 rooms; IHG, 40 hotels with 7,951 rooms; Radisson Hotel Group, 32 hotels with 6,346 rooms; TUI Hotels&Resorts, 11 hotels with 2,954 rooms; Barceló Hotels&Resorts, 7 hotels with 2,193 rooms; The Ascott, 15 hotels with 1,897 rooms; Kerten Hospitality, 13 hotels with 1,881 rooms and Wyndham Hotels&Resorts, 7 hotels with 1,706 rooms.

In the race for dominance, Hilton added slightly more rooms to its African pipeline last year than Marriott International and achieved a higher percentage growth. Barceló Hotels&Resorts recorded the largest percentage growth, more than doubling its pipeline to 2,193 rooms, with three large resort signings in North Africa.

Below the headline numbers, there are three notable trends. First, the actualisation rate (actual openings vs. expected openings), which has nearly doubled from 21% in 2023 to 38% in 2024. While it's substantially less than the 75% actualisation rate achieved in 2019, it shows a continuing recovery from the economic devastation of COVID-19. Of the total 104,444 rooms in the pipeline, over 50,000 rooms (nearly 50%) in 304 hotels are expected to open in 2025 and 2026.

Second, resort projects are increasing much faster than city or airport hotels, both in percentage terms and in absolute numbers, driven by the number of signings and by the larger average size of the developments, 210 keys vs. 170. Also, almost half of the rooms that

opened last year were in resorts.

Third, there is a definite movement by the chains towards the franchise model, with 108 projects representing almost 19% of the total, compared to less than 10% in 2020. A major factor is the emergence of quality, international, white-label operators such as Aleph Hospitality and Valor Hospitality, and some indigenous operators in Nigeria, Kenya and elsewhere, that are increasing confidence that brand standards will be met.

The full report will be discussed at FHS Africa (formerly AHIF) 17-19 June in Cape Town. It is the leading hospitality investment conference in the region, which brings together senior decision-makers to shape the future of the industry. Matthew Weihs, Managing Director of the Bench, which organises FHS Africa, said: "The growth in hotel development across Africa is a testament to the continent's economic and tourism potential. Furthermore, the commitment from the international hotel chains makes it clear that global players see Africa as a strategic opportunity."

Trevor Ward, Managing Director of W Hospitality Group, concluded: "Despite the various trials that the continent faces, the fact that hotel chains signed 125 new deals last year, with 21,000 rooms, is evidence that opportunities for further development abound. According to the Global Cities Institute, by the year 2100, 10 of the world's 16 largest cities will be in Africa, with all but one of them (Cairo) in sub-Saharan Africa. So, one might say that development activity in Africa has barely scratched the surface."



## Ethiopian Airlines Group and African Development Bank sign Letter of Intent for financing of world-class Abusera International Airport



The African Development Bank and Ethiopian Airlines Group have signed a Letter of Intent for the development of the East African nation's planned Abusera International Airport Project. The \$7.8 billion project aims to address increasing passenger and cargo demands, reinforce Ethiopia's position as a leading aviation hub, and stimulate regional economic growth.

Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines Group Mesfin Tasew Bekele signed the Letter of Intent with African Development Bank Vice President for Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery, Nnenna Nwabufu, at the Bank's headquarters in Abidjan on Friday, 14 March.

Bekele was part of the Ethiopian delegation led by Finance Minister Ahmed Shide. Other members were Adamu Tadele, CFO for Ethiopian Airlines Group; Tiguist Fisseha, Senior Advisor to the Finance Minister; Abraham Tesfaye, Infrastructure

Director for Ethiopian Airlines Group; and Berhanu Anbessa, Head of IFIs at the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance.

The new world-class international airport will be situated in Bishoftu, about 40 km from the current Addis-Ababa Bole International Airport.

Multinational transportation is key to improving interconnectedness and free movement between countries and contributes to regional integration, one of the Bank's High Five priorities. The new Abusera International Airport will complement Ethiopia's recently expanded Bole International Airport, which is expected to reach its annual 25 million passenger capacity limit soon. The new infrastructure will enhance Ethiopian Airlines' role in improving intra-Africa connectivity by enabling a more extensive and efficient network, and strengthening connectivity between Africa and the rest of the world.

At a meeting with the delegation, the

President of the African Development Bank Group, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, said, "I'm a great friend of Ethiopia, and of course, Ethiopian Airlines is Africa's pride, a symbol of excellence and resilience. The African Development Bank is fully committed to supporting this transformative flagship project, which will strengthen the continent's aviation leadership and economic integration."

"Today's signing of the Letter of Intent for the new mega airport development project is yet another testament to AfDB's commitment to supporting Ethiopia's ambitious flagship air transport project that will not only reinforce Ethiopian Airlines' competitive edge in passenger and cargo services, but also enhance Africa's global air connectivity and integration, solidifying the continent's aviation hub status," said Finance Minister Shide.

Ethiopian Airlines Group, Africa's largest and most successful airline, is advancing its ambitious 2035 growth strategy, which emphasizes network expansion, infrastructure development, and human capital investment to enhance its global competitiveness.

In the last fiscal year, ending on 30 June 2024, the airline reported record revenues of \$7.02 billion (over 402 billion Ethiopian Birr), reflecting a 14% year-on-year increase. It transported 17.1 million passengers, with 13.4 million on international routes and 3.7 million domestically.





## Angola to Host 2nd UN Tourism & ICAO Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa



Daniel Márcio, Minister of Tourism - Angola



Ricardo Viegas D'Abreu, Minister of Transport



Elcia Grandcourt, UN Tourism's Regional Director for Africa



Peter Alawani, ICAO's Chief of Economic Regulatory Framework Section at the Air Transport Bureau

Angola's capital city will take center stage as the 2nd Ministerial Conference of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) comes to town.

Scheduled for July 22-24, 2025, this high-profile event will bring together African ministers, aviation and tourism stakeholders, and global industry leaders to shape policies promoting regional connectivity and economic diversification.

The conference promises to be a pivotal moment for Africa's tourism and aviation sectors.

Building on the success of the inaugural edition in Cape Verde back in 2019, which drew in over 20 ministers, Angola is now gearing up to host the next installment of this crucial conference. Although the country had initially planned to host the event earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic forced a delay. Now, Angola is poised to take center stage, driving discussions on the vital link between tourism and air transport. The conference will shine a spotlight on innovative strategies to unlock Africa's vast, untapped potential in these sectors.

At a press conference in Luanda on March 27, Angola's Minister of Tourism, Márcio Daniel, and Minister of Transport,

Ricardo Viegas D'Abreu, emphasized the pivotal role of this conference in advancing Angola's tourism and aviation industries. Minister Daniel underscored the significance of tourism in Angola's economic diversification strategy, stating, "Angola has vast potential across multiple tourism segments, including coastal, rural, scenic, and religious tourism. This conference will provide a platform to showcase these opportunities, attract investment, and create employment."

Minister D'Abreu highlighted the intrinsic link between tourism and air transport, stressing that over 50% of tourism activity relies on aviation. "Without connectivity, tourism cannot thrive. Similarly, aviation sustainability depends on a robust tourism industry. Angola is at a crucial phase of infrastructure reform, ensuring that our connectivity strategy aligns with tourism growth," he remarked.

Angola has made significant strides in strengthening its air transport infrastructure.

The government has committed over US\$5 billion to modernize airports, expand national carrier TAAG's fleet, and ensure compliance with international aviation standards. The recent opening of Dr. António Agostinho Neto International Airport stands as a

testament to the country's dedication to enhancing its global connectivity.

UN Tourism's Regional Director for Africa, Elcia Grandcourt, commended Angola's proactive approach in hosting this event, noting the country's efforts in bolstering tourism and aviation capacity. Similarly, Peter Alawani, ICAO's Chief of Economic Regulatory Framework Section at the Air Transport Bureau, emphasized the need for increased African participation in global air travel. "Currently, African aviation accounts for just 2% of global air traffic. This conference presents an opportunity to craft strategies that will strengthen regional and international connectivity," he stated.

The event is expected to attract over 30 African ministers and 500 delegates, including representatives from airlines, tour operators, investors, and policymakers. Discussions will revolve around investment, artificial intelligence in air transport, intra-African air connectivity, and the implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

With Africa accounting for only 5% of global tourism receipts, the conference aims to position the continent as a competitive player in the global tourism and aviation sectors.

## Ethiopian Airlines selects Safran's Z400 Economy seats for its B777-9 Aircraft



Ethiopian Airlines has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Safran for the provision of Z400 economy class seats for 8 Boeing 777-9 aircraft at the Aircraft International Exhibition in Hamburg.

The delivery of these aircraft is set for mid-2027. Each aircraft will be equipped with 383 passenger seats in economy class showcasing Ethiopian Airlines' commitment to expand its fleet and support its growth trajectory.

The Z400 seats chosen by Ethiopian Airlines represent the ultimate choice for long-range operations, offering passengers an improved inflight entertainment experience with the latest generation 13-inch screens, a notable upgrade from the previous 11.6-inch displays. Furthermore, the seats are 12.5% lighter than the

previous generation seats due to fewer components and the use of advanced lightweight materials, ensuring cost efficient operation and sustainability.

Ethiopian Airlines and Safran have cultivated a strong, long-standing partnership over the years, highlighted by the ongoing collaboration to equip their A350 aircraft with business and economy class seatings.

Commenting on the collaboration, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, "We are pleased to have signed this MoU with Safran for the provision of the Z400 seats for our 777-9 aircraft. As a technology driven airline, we are committed to enhancing our passengers' onboard experience through state-of-the-art technology that offer passenger comfort while also ensuring operational efficiency and sustainability."

Victoria Foy, CEO of Safran Seats, commented, "We are delighted to deepen our partnership with Ethiopian Airlines by providing our advanced Z400 seats for their B777-9 fleet. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to innovation and excellence in passenger

comfort, supporting Ethiopian Airlines as it expands its horizons and enhances its inflight services."

### About Safran

Safran is an international high-technology group, operating in the aviation (propulsion, equipment and interiors), defence and space markets. Its core purpose is to contribute to a safer, more sustainable world, where air transport is more environmentally friendly, comfortable and accessible. Safran has a global presence, with 100,000 employees and

sales of 27.3 billion euros in 2024, and holds, alone or in partnership, world or regional leadership positions in its core markets.

Safran is listed on the Euronext Paris stock exchange and is part of the CAC 40 and Euro Stoxx 50 indices

Safran Seats is one of the world's leading manufacturers of aircraft seats, for both crew and passengers. 1 million Safran Seats-manufactured aircraft seats are currently in service with air fleets around the world.

## ICCA Opens ICCASkills Hub in Rwanda

ICCA is excited to announce the launch of a new ICCASkills Hub in Kigali, Rwanda's capital city. The expansion of the ICCASkills programme in the African region supports the enhancement of global capacity-building and brings together industry providers and local authorities.

In partnership with official hosts the Rwanda Convention Bureau and Rwanda Events Group Ltd., ICCA will offer two ICCASkills classes in 2025. The launch underscores Rwanda's commitment to developing talent and strengthening its position as a leading business events destination in Africa.

ICCASkills is a globally recognised certification programme, created by ICCA and industry experts, designed to elevate the skills and expertise of business events professionals. ICCASkills is engaging and interactive with real-world perspective which bridges theory and practice with hands-on professional development.

Rwanda is a hub for professional

development in Africa, making it an ideal location for the ICCASkills initiative for upskilling and developing the regional workforce for the business events industry.

Senthil Gopinath, CEO of ICCA: "ICCASkills has proven to be a successful programme for the meetings and events community, and we're thrilled to expand our educational offerings to the African region. We look forward to working with the many MICE professionals in Rwanda and beyond to upskill and provide valuable resources to our colleagues in the space."

Janet Karemera, CEO, Rwanda Convention Bureau:

"ICCA Skills is a globally recognized certification program that equips the workforce in the Events & Meetings sector with industry-relevant expertise. By investing in professional development through ICCA Skills, we're not just building individual careers - we're strengthening Rwanda's position as Africa's premier MICE destination. This



initiative aligns perfectly with our vision of creating a knowledge-based economy while showcasing Rwanda's capabilities in hosting major international events."

Christian Gakwaya, CEO, Rwanda Events Group: "By hosting the ICCA Skills Hub Africa, Rwanda is leading a pioneering effort to advance the professional MICE industry across the continent. At Rwanda Events, we are honored to be part of this initiative, which aligns with our dedication to equipping young professionals with world-class knowledge, ensuring their continued relevance in an ever-evolving industry. This initiative also builds on the success of our in-house events academy, which has already demonstrated a remarkable impact on our workforce."



## IATA welcomes Morocco's 'Airports 2030 Strategy'

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) welcomes the Kingdom of Morocco's 'Airports 2030 Strategy' aimed at modernizing airport infrastructure, enhancing the passenger experience, and further strengthening the country's position as a major global and regional aviation hub.

Aviation is a key pillar of Morocco's economy. In 2023, aviation (including aviation-related tourism) supported 856,000 jobs and contributed 7.9% (\$11.2 billion) to the Moroccan economy. Additionally, 93% of passengers departing Morocco airports (11.7 million) were bound for international destinations. The country also handled some 77,900 tonnes of air cargo.

"Given the critical and growing importance of aviation to Morocco's economy, the launch of the 'Airports 2030 Strategy' will have a far-reaching and positive impact on Morocco's economic and social development. Aviation contributes 7.9% to Morocco's economy and has grown by 68.1% over the past decade. A comprehensive strategy on airport infrastructure investment will help secure

future growth. Airlines are partners in this growth, and it is critical that they are broadly engaged in realizing the strategy with a sharp focus on cost-efficiency," said Kamil Al-Awadhi, IATA Regional Vice President for Africa and the Middle East.

### Key Priorities for the Moroccan Government

To gain the maximum benefit from investments in airport infrastructure, IATA proposed three priorities for the Kingdom:

- **Cost-Efficiency:** Fair and competitive charges, taxes and fees are essential to foster connectivity as Morocco upgrades its airport infrastructure. The government must ensure collaboration with users and compliance with global best practices to avoid unnecessary financial burden on airlines and passengers.
- **Capacity-Building:** Investments in infrastructure must be coupled with investments in human resources. A skilled workforce is needed to support airport modernization and to meet the expected growth in aviation.
- **Consumer Regulation:** Smart regulation



is essential for aviation to thrive. Ineffective consumer legislation from Europe and the United States should not be imported. The development of the Passenger Rights Law must focus on a framework that reflects global best practices and industry standards.

"It is no coincidence that the 'Airports 2030 Strategy' aligns with Morocco being a co-host of the 2030 FIFA World Cup. Morocco will be on the world stage which is a great incentive to be ready to show off Morocco's growing strength as an aviation hub linking Africa, Europe and North America," said Al-Awadhi.

## IWD: Ethiopian operates All-women functioned flights to six destinations to celebrate the occasion

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest airline in Africa and one of the fastest-growing airline brands in the world, has announced that it has colorfully celebrated the 2025 International Women's Day, March 8, with a series of vibrant events at Skylight Hotel attended by esteemed government officials, distinguished guests and the airline's executives. The event was marked

by flight operations entirely managed by women—from catering, Maintenance, and check-in to lounge services, and flight operations.

These all-women-operated flights depart from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar, Athens, Delhi, Dubai, Windhoek, and Sao Paulo, showcasing a significant milestone in Ethiopian Airlines' ongoing efforts to elevate the presence and participation of women in the aviation industry.

On the program, Ethiopian Airlines CEO, Mesfin Tasew, stated, "We are thrilled to celebrate March 8, as we do every year at Ethiopian Airlines. As an employer of choice, we are deeply committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within the aviation industry and the broader community. In today's modern aviation landscape, women play an indispensable role across all sectors, significantly contributing to the industry's dynamic growth. Today, we honor the remarkable

achievements of women in aviation and beyond, while also inspiring future generations to pursue their dreams without limitations."

Women currently make up around 40% of Ethiopian Airlines' workforce across a range of business divisions, including cockpit crew, cabin crew, aircraft technicians, commercial, managerial roles, and others, significantly contributing their share to the development and the overall achievements of the airline.

In addition to celebrating the incredible achievements of women breaking stereotypes in traditionally male-dominated fields, Ethiopian Airlines' all-women-operated flight program long a hallmark of the airline aligns with the global call for gender equality. It underscores the vital need for support and recognition of female leaders in aviation and other sectors.



## Kinshasa Readies to Host Inaugural World Music and Tourism Festival



DRC's Minister of Tourism Didier Mpambia hands over a replica of the festival shirt to the UN Tourism Secretary General

Kinshasa is gearing up to present a never-before celebratory occasion where rhythms and itineraries meet, as the Democratic Republic of the Congo is preparing to host the inaugural World Music and Tourism Festival from 16 to 18 July 2025.

Under the High Patronage of His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in partnership with UN Tourism, the festival seeks to highlight music as a driving force for travel, cultural exchange, and sustainable economic growth.

Themed "The Rumba Route," the festival leverages the global popularity of Congolese Rumba—a music genre registered on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2021—as a gateway to deeper culture and tourism. By aligning with the UN Tourism Agenda for Africa's call to promote cultural heritage, youth empowerment, and Brand Africa, the festival seals the DRC's growing stake in the regional tourism discourse.

"This festival is like an opportunity for my country to show another face of DRC," said Hon. Didier Mpambia, Minister of Tourism. "We want to show the world that tourism can be a tool of peace and to bring people together from different countries."

The World Music and Tourism Festival will welcome ministers of tourism from the African continent, the Americas, and other places; the UN Tourism Secretary-

General, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili; music and tourism professionals; and a diverse group of artists, cultural practitioners, and tour operators. Their presence not only lends the festival more credibility, but also reflects international recognition of Kinshasa as a destination where creative industries can thrive.

"It's more than just a festival," added Minister Mpambia. "It's a place to meet together, to understand each other. This is especially important in this time."

Music, as witnessed throughout the world—from Argentina's tango to Jamaica's reggae—can define the image of a destination. The DRC would like to emulate these global successes by sharing its own compelling narrative through Congolese Rumba and a broader celebration of artistic expression. This will be achieved through curated exhibitions, panel discussions, professional networking, live concerts, and guided cultural tours in and around Kinshasa.

Apart from cultural performances, the festival is also designed as a diplomacy forum to strengthen South-South collaboration, especially between Africa and Latin America. In acknowledgment of historical and cultural affinities, the project invites itself to dialogue and cooperation towards the development of inclusive and resilient tourism economies.

Among its core goals, the festival seeks to:



- Promote the tourism potential of the DRC and enhance its international image;
- Put music and culture at the service of sustainable tourism development;
- Foster cross-continental collaboration between artists, cultural institutions, and tour operators;
- Engage youth in Rumba heritage protection and promotion;
- Bring tangible economic benefits to local tour operators and hospitality;
- Design Rumba-themed itineraries that enhance tourist experiences.

Planned festival activities include:

- An exhibition park of arts, crafts, fashion, and gastronomy;
- Panel debates and interactive forums on music, tourism, and development;
- Networking between cultural and tourism professionals;
- Concerts and entertainment of rumba;
- Guided visits of the cultural sites of Kinshasa;
- A scenic Congo River trip.

Host city Kinshasa—designated a UNESCO Creative City of Music in 2015—is ready to provide a culturally rich backdrop. With a population of close to 15 million individuals and boasting a vibrant musical existence that resonates beyond borders, it is an ideal place to celebrations devoted to music as a force of unity, identity, and economic dynamism.



## Nature's Classroom: How Constance Ephelia is cultivating a new generation of eco-conscious leaders in Seychelles

In a world where greenwashing often masks the true essence of sustainability, Constance Ephelia in Seychelles has emerged as a living, breathing ecosystem of environmental integrity, cultural integration and youth empowerment — and not just for its guests. Beyond the accolades and shiny plaques, the resort is quietly nurturing what could become its most lasting legacy: a new generation of eco-conscious Seychellois.

While the spotlight may have recently been cast on the resort's well-deserved Platinum Award from Sustainable Seychelles, a deeper narrative is unfolding beneath the canopy of the Ramsar-listed mangroves: education through experience, and sustainability by osmosis.

Through a long-standing partnership with the local community and education system, Constance Ephelia has embraced its role as more than just a resort — it's a nature-infused learning hub. The resort's collaboration with the government's "Adopt a School" initiative has seen them take the young minds of Poglou under their wing, fostering a relationship that blends hospitality with mentorship.

"We bring them in, we go to them — it's a relationship that goes both ways," said Stéphane Duchesne, General Manager of Constance Ephelia. "We want these kids not just to see the beauty of the resort, but to see a future for themselves in this industry. And more than that — a responsibility to their environment," he said in an interview with *VoyagesAfric*.

Through educational tours, lecture series, and immersive activities like mangrove clean-ups, tree planting, and wildlife observation, children from the district are exposed early to the practical applications of sustainability. They're not just told about conservation; they're



given the tools and experiences to live it.

### The mangrove as mentor

Few hotel grounds in the world can double as an ecological classroom, but Constance Ephelia's setting is uniquely suited for the task. Nestled between the ancient granite mountains and the delicate ecosystems of the Port Launay marine park and a Ramsar mangrove site, the resort's location itself becomes the teacher.

Marcos, the Sustainability Manager who has spent over a decade stewarding the property's green initiatives, explained, "Every year we welcome around 500 students to the resort to explore the mangrove. They come not just to observe, but to participate — planting trees, spotting endemic birds, learning about pollination through our beehives. It's learning by doing."

And it's not just schoolchildren. Guests too are welcomed into the fold of sustainability, participating in kayaking eco-tours, tree planting, and recycling workshops. "More and more people don't just want to visit paradise," Stéphane added, "they want to help preserve it."

### From food waste to fueling futures

Another telling example of how the resort walks the sustainability talk lies in its circular economy practices. Food scraps become pig feed for local farmers. Cooking oil is transformed into biodiesel. Water is desalinated and reused for irrigation. It's not just about reducing waste — it's about redefining value.

"When you show children that what we throw away can nourish livestock or grow a tree, they begin to see sustainability not as sacrifice, but as innovation," said Marcos.

### A cultural bridge, not just a luxury stay

The team at Constance Ephelia is also intent on grounding its operations in local culture. From Creole cuisine served to the elderly community at annual Christmas feasts, to fundraisers supporting nearby orphanages, the resort isn't just located in Seychelles — it *belongs* to it.



"Culture is sustainability too," Stéphane emphasised. "By celebrating local food, language, music, and traditions, we help preserve the human ecosystem around us as well."

And in this cultural immersion lies inspiration. When children from Poglou dance at the resort's events, meet chefs, engineers, and managers, they don't just see a hotel — they see a future employer, a mentor, or even a version of themselves in a few years.

Sustainability at Constance Ephelia is not just about carbon offsets and recycling bins — it's a philosophy that's seeded in the soil, echoed in the songs of the local community, and reflected in the eyes of the children running through its mangroves.

As Marcos puts it: "We're not just here to protect nature — we're here to pass it on."

And in doing so, Constance Ephelia is shaping more than just a sustainable resort — it's cultivating a resilient generation ready to protect, nurture, and lead Seychelles into a greener tomorrow.

Constance Ephelia Resort was on April 3, 2025 crowned with the maiden Sustainable Seychelles Platinum Award, the highest recognition for excellence in sustainability. The award was presented during the prestigious Sustainable Seychelles Recognition & Certification Ceremony, where the nation's leading eco-conscious tourism establishments were celebrated.



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## Transforming Connectivity Expanding Horizons

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Engage with potential partners in the African aviation community through our unique pre-arranged meeting system.



### AIRLINES

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Develop your network, listen and gather educational insight via the conference programme.



### TOURISM AUTHORITIES

Tourism authorities are encouraged to attend and support their airports in their drive to attract and retain air services.

Support your airport and airline partners. Connect with other destinations and gain insight through our varied conference programme.





## Africa champions culinary heritage at 2nd UN Tourism Gastronomy Forum in Arusha

The flavors, culture, and spirit of Africa took center stage at the 2nd UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Africa, held under the theme: *"Gastronomy Tourism for People and Planet: Innovate, Empower and Preserve."* The forum concluded with a resounding call to action: to elevate African cuisine as a driver of inclusive growth, sustainability, and innovation.

Hosted in Arusha, the event gathered ministers, chefs, policymakers, academia, and development partners in an impactful exchange of ideas and best practices that connected tradition with transformation.

In his keynote, the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. Dr. Philip Mpango, set the tone for the gathering.

*"We must empower our local communities to turn their traditional culinary practices into economic opportunities,"* he said. *"Gastronomy tourism is not just about food; it's about livelihoods, culture, and sustainability."*

Dr. Mpango underscored the deeper cultural meaning of food, reminding participants that Africa's culinary heritage is a profound storytelling tool:

*"We must not overlook the cultural*



UN Tourism SG shows a copy of the *Tour of African Gastronomy* Publication to the Vice President

heritage embedded in our culinary traditions. It is through these flavors that we tell the story of Africa."

He reaffirmed Tanzania's commitment to making gastronomy tourism a pillar of development, emphasizing its potential to spur youth employment, rural growth, and national pride.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili lauded Tanzania's leadership and echoed the continent's culinary potential:

*"Gastronomy tourism connects people to places. It celebrates identity while opening doors to innovation, jobs, and investment. Africa is brimming with culinary potential, and Tanzania has*

H.E Philip Isdor Mpango, Vice-President, United Republic of Tanzania



UN Tourism signs an MOU with Chefs of Africa represented by Chef Dieuveil Malonga

shown great leadership in advancing this agenda."

Emphasizing the role of education and innovation, he added:

*"By investing in culinary education and innovation, Africa can take its rightful place on the global food tourism map."*

Pololikashvili described the Forum as *"an impactful demonstration of how regional collaboration can transform tourism ecosystems through culture, food, and people."*

Tanzania's Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, H.E. Dr. Pindi Hazara Chana, welcomed delegates with a firm call for inclusive action:

*"Our approach to gastronomy tourism must be sustainable and inclusive. We must empower local farmers, chefs, and food entrepreneurs to lead the way."*



She spotlighted the global appetite for African cuisine:

“Our cuisines are our identity—rich in spices, rooted in culture, and shaped by the land. This is the moment to share that story with the world.”

Her rallying message: *“Let us seize this opportunity to innovate, collaborate, and transform gastronomy into a vehicle of empowerment for our people.”*

Mr. Joxe Mari Aizega, Director General of the Basque Culinary Center, applauded the forum’s collaborative spirit, saying, “We are here to listen, to learn, and to reflect on how gastronomy can become a real driver of progress in Africa.”

The forum explored thematic pillars that align culinary development with social and environmental impact, including:



- Policy integration for food tourism development
- Culinary education and training
- Value chain creation to connect producers with markets
- Sustainability and regenerative practices in food systems
- Embracing innovation and digital transformation

A major milestone was the **announcement of the Africa International Academy for Culinary Arts in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**. Developed in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe and under the patronage of the First Lady of Zimbabwe, the Academy aims to position Africa as a global culinary training hub.

“This Academy represents a concrete step in our efforts to professionalize and preserve African culinary heritage. It will empower communities, especially women and youth, with skills to transform their traditional knowledge into global opportunities,” said H.E. Dr. Auxillia C. Mnangagwa, First Lady of Zimbabwe.

Adding to the momentum, UN Tourism signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with leading African chefs**, formalizing a continental partnership to promote education, research, and innovation in gastronomy.

Closing the forum, Tanzania’s Deputy Permanent Secretary for Natural Resources and Tourism, Nkoba Mabula, affirmed the nation’s commitment to turning dialogue into action:

“We believe in the transformative power of gastronomy. The ideas, partnerships, and insights shared here will help us build more resilient and inclusive food tourism ecosystems.”

The two-day event also featured **live cooking showcases, youth-led panels, and cross-sector networking**, bringing together diverse voices to shape Africa’s culinary future.

As the curtain fell in Arusha, **Sierra Leone** was officially unveiled as the next host of the Forum—signaling that Africa’s gastronomic journey is just beginning.





# UN Tourism Names Sierra Leone as 2026 Host for Gastronomy Forum in Africa



Sierra Leone has been officially unveiled as the host of the 3rd UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Africa, scheduled to take place in 2026 – a major milestone in the country's growing ambition to position itself as a leading player in Africa's gastronomy tourism landscape.

The announcement was made by Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, during the final cocktail event at the 2nd Regional Forum held in Arusha, Tanzania.

"Thank you to everyone. Tonight, our dear sister Nabila Tunis, the Minister of Tourism for Sierra Leone – she is on a special mission in Washington – I was speaking to her, and I am pleased to announce that she is ready

to host the next forum in Sierra Leone," Pololikashvili declared to applause.

Following the successful inaugural edition in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in 2024, and this year's gathering in Arusha, Tanzania, the 2026 forum in Sierra Leone is expected to build even greater momentum around harnessing Africa's rich culinary traditions as a driver for tourism development, cultural preservation, and inclusive economic growth.

The Forum will once again convene policymakers, renowned chefs, tourism leaders, entrepreneurs, academics, and influencers from across Africa and beyond. Over three days, participants will take part in vibrant panel discussions, live culinary showcases, immersive knowledge-sharing sessions, and practical workshops – all designed to spotlight Africa's unique gastronomic identity and strengthen its role in sustainable tourism.

Reacting to the announcement, Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Hon. Nabila Farida Tunis, expressed her excitement and commitment to making the event a resounding success.

"We are truly honoured to host the Third UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy

Tourism for Africa in 2026," she said. "This is a fantastic opportunity for Sierra Leone to showcase our diverse culinary heritage, celebrate the talent of our chefs, and play our part in advancing the African agenda to position the continent as a premier global gastronomy destination. We look forward to welcoming the world to experience the authentic flavours and warm hospitality of Sierra Leone."

The 2026 forum will focus on key themes including sustainable food systems, empowering local producers and entrepreneurs, promoting African cuisines on the global stage through branding and storytelling, and fostering stronger linkages between agriculture and tourism. It will also highlight how innovation, education, and entrepreneurship can fuel the next wave of growth in gastronomy tourism across the continent.

As preparations get underway, stakeholders across Sierra Leone are gearing up to deliver a memorable and impactful event. Expectations are high that the forum will serve not only as a celebration of African cuisine, but also as a catalyst for innovation, investment, and collaboration, using food as a powerful bridge between cultures, communities, and economies.



# AFRICA SHOWCASE™

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## AFRICA SHOWCASE: CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE 24 - 28 February 2025



## ITB BERLIN: BERLIN 04 - 06 March 2025

## AFRICA SHOWCASE: LATIN AMERICA 23 - 28 March 2025



## AFRICA SHOWCASE: NORDICS 27 April - 01 May 2025



## AFRICA SHOWCASE: AUSTRALIA 21 - 31 July 2025



## AFRICA SHOWCASE: MITTELEUROPA 15 - 19 September 2025



## ITB ASIA: SINGAPORE 15 - 17 October 2025

## AFRICA SHOWCASE: NORTH AMERICA 10 - 21 November 2025



## AFRICA SHOWCASE: MIDDLE EAST Dates to be Confirmed



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# Tourism Calendar of Events

May 12-15 2025	<b>Africa's Travel Indaba 2025</b> <b>Venue:</b> Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre (Durban ICC) Durban South Africa <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> exhibitor@indaba-southafrica.co.za <b>About:</b> It showcases the widest variety of Africa's best tourism products and attracts international buyers and media from across the world. Africa's Travel Indaba is owned by South African Tourism.
May 20-22 2025	<b>IMEX Frankfurt</b> <b>Venue:</b> Frankfurt, Germany <b>Contact:</b> +44 (0) 1273 227311 <b>Email:</b> <b>About:</b> IMEX Frankfurt is where the global meetings, events and incentive travel industry comes together annually for the largest trade show of its kind in Europe.
May 29-30 2025	<b>UN Tourism Executive Council</b> <b>Venue:</b> Sergovia, Spain <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> <b>About:</b> The highest decision making body of UN Tourism
June 6-8 2025	<b>Karibu KiliFair 2025</b> <b>Venue:</b> Arusha, Tanzania <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> info@kilifair.com <b>About:</b> KiliFair brings together investors, tour operators, hoteliers, SMEs and several other tourism stakeholders from around the world as part of efforts to adequately support and showcase the tourism industry in East Africa.
June 7-9 2025	<b>Zambia Travel Expo (ZATEX 2025)</b> <b>Venue:</b> Lusaka, Zambia <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> info@zambia.travel <b>About:</b> The Zambia Travel Expo (ZATEX) is a tourism exhibition aimed at highlighting Zambia's diverse tourism offerings and services. Organised by the Zambia Tourism Agency in collaboration with the private sector and the Ministry responsible for Tourism
June 11-13 2025	<b>68th UN Tourism Commission for Africa Meeting</b> <b>Venue:</b> Abuja, Nigeria <b>Contact:</b> rdaf@untourism.int <b>Email:</b> <b>About:</b> The UN Tourism Regional Commission for Africa is the major institutional platform where ministries in charge of tourism discuss the latest trends of the sector at the continental and global level and the implementation of their program of work. The Commission of Africa Meeting is held every year as part of UN Tourism statutory events.
June 11-13 2025	<b>9th AviaDev Africa</b> <b>Venue:</b> Golden Tulip Zanzibar Airport, Tanzania Zanzibar <b>Contact:</b> +447930573621 <b>Email:</b> mala.patel@thebench.com <b>About:</b> AviaDev Africa is the premier platform dedicated to growing connectivity to, from, and within the African continent. Bringing together airports, airlines, tourism authorities, governments, and industry suppliers, AviaDev offers attendees the ability to pre-arrange meetings, learn from industry peers, and make those important connections.
June 17-19 2025	<b>Future Hospitality Summit</b> <b>Venue:</b> The Westin Cape Town, South Africa <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> mala.patel@thebench.com <b>About:</b> Africa Hospitality Investment Forum is Africa's premier meeting place of leaders in the hospitality sector, attracting hotel and real estate investors, owners and developers, global hotel operator CEOs and prominent advisory services from across the African continent and beyond.

# Tourism Calendar of Events

June 23-25 2025	<b>Experience Africa</b> <b>Venue:</b> 155 Bishopsgate, London 155 Bishopsgate, London, Greater London, UK <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> <b>About:</b> Experience Africa by ATTA® – the premiere platform for African travel trade – has been uniting suppliers from across the continent with active buyers from the UK, Europe, and other international destinations since 2018.
June 24-27 2025	<b>Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit</b> <b>Venue:</b> Johannesburg, South Africa <b>Contact:</b> +27 813037030 <b>Email:</b> <b>About:</b> The Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit (AYTIS) & Challenge is hosted by Africa Tourism Partners in collaboration with UN Tourism and BDO. It is the "one and only" pan-African Youth and start-ups in Tourism Summit and innovation challenge in tourism on the continent.
July 16-18 2025	<b>1st World Music and Tourism festival</b> <b>Venue:</b> Kinshaha, Democratic Republic of Congo <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> rdaf@untourism.int <b>About:</b> World Music and Tourism Festival in Kinshasa, from 16 to 18 July 2025, underlines the importance of cultural diversity as a lever for tourism and economic development.
July 22-24 2025	<b>2nd UN Tourism &amp; ICAO Ministerial Conference on Tourism and Air Transport in Africa</b> <b>Venue:</b> Luanda, Angola <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> rdaf@untourism.int <b>About:</b> The Conference will focus on fostering stronger synergies between the two sectors to drive economic growth and sustainable development.
August 23 2025	<b>Seychelles Nature Trail 2025</b> <b>Venue:</b> Seychelles <b>Contact:</b> +262 262 29 06 03 <b>Email:</b> seychellesnaturetrail@gmail.com <b>About:</b> Bringing together participants from around the world, the challenge will take runners on a journey through Seychelles' diverse terrains, from lush forests to rocky paths and coastal trails, offering an unforgettable adventure.
August 27-29 2025	<b>Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA 2025)</b> <b>Venue:</b> City of uMhlatuze, kwazulu Natal, South Africa <b>Contact:</b> +27795618309 <b>Email:</b> vuyelwa@millvest.co.za <b>About:</b> The Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA) offers destinations an ideal platform to support and contribute to their economic development and growth efforts by actively promoting investment and trade opportunities within their tourism and related sectors of their economies. TIFA seeks to promote tourism and related sectors investment, finance solutions and opportunities between African countries and the rest of the World.
September 17-19 2025	<b>TBCSA Tourism Leadership Conference</b> <b>Venue:</b> Suncity, South Africa <b>Contact:</b> +27 12 664 0120 <b>Email:</b> tourism@tbcsa.travel <b>About:</b> The annual TBCSA Tourism Leadership Conference brings together tourism industry professionals and leading experts to connect, learn, share, and collaborate.
September 18-20 2025	<b>Africa Tourism Leadership Forum</b> <b>Venue:</b> <b>Contact:</b> <b>Email:</b> <b>About:</b>



# Travel & Tourism Blitz



## WTM Africa announces winners of 2025 Responsible Tourism Awards

World Travel Market (WTM) Africa on Thursday 10th April announced the winners of its prestigious 2025 Responsible Tourism Awards, recognising outstanding contributions to sustainable and responsible tourism practices across the continent.

"Today, we're here to celebrate Africa's changemakers," said Rachel Nxele, SATSA's Vice Chairperson and Chair of Responsible Tourism, who presented the awards. "Among you are small businesses and large businesses. All of you have made a significant contribution not just to make tourism better, but to make tourism responsible."

The ceremony recognised 20 businesses from nine countries: Kenya, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### Gold Award Winners

In the Nature Positive category, Emboo Safari Camp claimed the Gold Award for its pioneering approach to luxury sustainable hospitality. The Kenya-based operation has successfully demonstrated that high-end tourism experiences can coexist with and actively contribute to environmental regeneration.

!Khwa ttu, known as "the embassy of the San," received Gold in the Shared Value category for its innovative integration of San cultural heritage, ethical sourcing, and community empowerment into its food and beverage offerings. "We value this award because we're passionate about recycling. We support our locals by buying only from our locals. We all need each other. If you look after your friend, your friend will look after you. We need to stand up together," said their representative.

Similarly, Dlala Nje earned Gold for its immersive inner-city tours and experiences that empower local communities while challenging stereotypes.

For excellence in Managing Waste, HBD Principe secured Gold for implementing comprehensive waste management systems on a UNESCO Biosphere island with no industrial treatment facilities. Their initiatives include innovative glass recycling and community engagement programmes.

Township and Village was awarded Gold in the Peace and Inclusivity category for connecting communities in Stellenbosch to tourism while raising awareness about socio-economic divides and apartheid-era displacement. The organisation has developed comprehensive workplace policy manuals that ensure all employees understand their rights, responsibilities and expectations, with ethical standards aligned to responsible tourism commitments.

In the Climate Change category, Green Safaris of Zambia earned Gold for pioneering "Silent Safaris" with solar-powered electric vehicles. Their lodges are over 80% solar-powered and they've eliminated single-use plastics. Through their foundation, they distribute fuel-efficient stoves that reduce household emissions by an estimated 2.28 tons of carbon annually. The judges were particularly impressed by their bamboo planting initiatives and ecosystem restoration efforts.

Foxes Safari Camps received Gold in the All Inclusive category for applying circular economy principles throughout their operations. They maintain organic vegetable gardens and a working livestock farm to supply their properties with fresh



produce, source 90% of supplies from local communities, and prioritise skills development through training programmes in hospitality, guiding, driving and aviation. They also produce furniture and provide vehicle maintenance training for local artisans and mechanics.

### Silver Award Winners

Silver Awards were presented to several outstanding initiatives including:

- Volcanoes Safaris (Uganda/Rwanda) – Nature Positive
- The Community Rhino Conservation Initiative (Zimbabwe) – Nature Positive
- Kijani Supplies (Kenya/Uganda) – Shared Value
- Hamagriza Indigenous Restaurant & Hub (South Africa) – Shared Value
- Destination Zero Waste Zanzibar (TUI Care Foundation project) – Waste Management, which has created 48 jobs and collected over 1.5 million kilograms of glass and nearly 15,000 kilograms of plastic waste
- Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (South Africa) – Waste Management, which

manages 1.2 million kilograms of waste over the past decade, diverting 62% from landfills and creatively repurposing old cable car cables into souvenirs

- The Heart of Cape Town under Uthando SA – Peace & Inclusivity, which illuminated wire art across parts of Cape Town created by local artists to promote love, compassion and kindness

- Saruni Base Camp (Kenya) – Climate Change Mitigation

- Hideaways Africa (One to Watch) – Recognised for responsible tourism initiatives addressing environmental conservation and community engagement across operations in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe

### About WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards

The WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards recognise and promote the most inspiring and replicable examples of responsible tourism practices in the African tourism industry. The awards are aligned with the global sustainable development goals and aim to encourage the industry to adopt responsible tourism practices for the benefit of destinations, communities, and the environment.

# Travel & Tourism Blitz



## Aleph Hospitality Expands Presence in Ghana with the Signing of a Second Hotel

Aleph Hospitality the largest independent hospitality management company in the Middle East and Africa, is set to expand its footprint in Ghana with the addition of The Address, a landmark hotel in Accra, to its growing portfolio.

The Address is owned by DevtracoPlus Limited one of Ghana's leading real estate companies under the Devtraco Group. In 2022 Aleph Hospitality signed a management agreement for The Pelican Hotel in Accra with the same developer. The Address marks the second hotel which DevtracoPlus has entrusted with Aleph Hospitality, reflecting the owner's

confidence in the management company's expertise. A key component of Aleph Hospitality's continued growth is their proven track record in the region, leading to over 60% of existing hotel owners entrusting further properties to Aleph Hospitality's management.

Scheduled to open in 2026, the hotel tower at The Address will feature 121 rooms and suites with sophisticated interiors, premium finishes, and a seamless fusion of style and functionality in addition to a restaurant, sky view bar, cigar lounge, fully equipped fitness centre, pool, and meeting rooms. Located in Roman Ridge, one of



Accra's most sought-after locations in the northern part of the Ghanaian capital, The Address is a mixed-use development which includes a collection of luxury apartments with private pools.

## Derek Houston celebrates 60 years in the tourism industry



Derek Houston Managing Director of Houston Travel Marketing is celebrating his 60th year of working in the tourism industry. Derek is one of the pioneers of Intra Africa travel promotion.

Derek and his wife Janet have been organising their famous Spotlight on Africa Travel workshops for the past 25 years. They have "Spotlighted" in 45 cities in Africa and Europe and met with over 15,000 travel trade during these workshops.

Spotlight Travel Expos continues this year with a full programme.

Our iconic Nairobi Spotlight Travel Expo will be held for the 18th time from 27-29 May with 35 exhibitors from Southern & Eastern Africa meeting with over 400 trade from Kenya.

Later in the year Spotlight TravelExpos are planned for Kampala on 28 August and Dar es Salaam on 19 September.

## Namibia: Indileni Daniel is new Minister of Environment and Tourism

The President of Namibia, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah has named Indileni Daniel as the country's New Minister of Environment & Tourism. Ms Indileni Daniel was part of the president's 14 member cabinet named on Saturday 22nd March at the State House, Windhoek.

The new minister replaces Mr Shifeta Pohamba who held the position for a decade. The ringing changed effected by the new president also saw the Ministry's portfolio realigned from Environment, Forestry and Tourism to Environment and Tourism.

Daniel was one of the candidates appointed by President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah to the Swapo National Assembly candidates list in September 2024, while she was serving as the party's vice president.

Speaking to the Namibia Press Agency immediately after her swearing-in at the State House, Ms. Daniel expressed it as an honor to take on such a dynamic and significant responsibility. "We need a safe environment to drive tourism forward. Tourism will play a key role in promoting our economic growth," she said. She also emphasized the importance of citizens recognizing the vital role that both the environment and tourism play in Namibia's economy. Additionally, she





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