

**Press Release N°156/2018****The First Ordinary Session of the Sub-Committee on Tourism of the STC-TTIET Kicked off with Experts Session**

**Nairobi, Kenya, 01 October 2018:** The African Union Commission (AUC), through its Department of Infrastructure and Energy, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Kenya opened today the First Ordinary Session of the Sub-Committee on Tourism of the Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC-TTIET).

With the objective of addressing the key challenges aligning tourism strategies to agenda 2063, the STC-TTIET Sub-Committee on Tourism experts session is set to brainstorm and review the status of implementation of the 2017 Lomé Plan of Action for Tourism with a view to identify achievements, challenges and charting the way forward to enhance the realization of established goals.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC), Mr. Cheikh Bedda, Director of Infrastructure and Energy welcomed participants and appreciated the Government of the Republic of Kenya for hosting this conference.

The Director said that the AUC in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has initiated the elaboration of the continental tourism policy strategy including a proposal for establishment of a continental tourism body. He outlined the flagship projects of AU agenda 2063, which are significantly contribute to accelerate the growth of the tourism sector in Africa including, the Single African Air Transport (SAATM); the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); the protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment as well as a single African Passport; the Continental High Speed Train (CHSRN); and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).

“Tourism in Africa is seriously affected by poor transport networks, inadequate infrastructure and prevalence of visa restrictions between African countries. Thus, it is the primary objective of the African Union to remove these barriers in order to create a strong united and prosperous Africa”, he added.

Addressing participants, Mr. Munseseishe Munodawafa, Secretary for Environment, Tourism and Hospitality Industry of the Government of Zimbabwe underscored “the inclusion of Tourism in the AU Agenda 2063, gives Africa the confidence that attainment

of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030, which focus on empowerment and addressing poverty, unemployment, inter-alia, is indeed, a reality for the Continent's people. In 2017, Africa received 62 million international tourists, which amounts to an increase of 8% over 2016, accounting for 10.4% of global GDP and 313 million jobs. The UNWTO is confident that international tourist arrivals in Africa will grow by between 9% and 10% by the end of 2018. "This is good for Africa, but is only achievable if we work together as a united Continent", he said.

Officially opening the experts' session, Hon. Najib BALALA, Cabinet Secretary for Tourism & Wildlife of the Republic of Kenya noted, "the potential of economic growth and development related to the tourism industry are fully recognized at both the continental and international levels. In the African context, the tourism industry is confronted with a number of issues, not only in its long-term development and prosperity, but also in the strategic orientation".

The Cabinet Secretary stated that the increasing need to implement a continental strategy on the tourism sector is imperative. "Thus, it is important to develop a tourism action plan with the view to optimize the role of tourism as an engine and catalyst for economic development and growth in Africa, through the establishment of a conducive environment, regional co-operation advocacy and stakeholder participation, he urged. (*The complete speech is available at [www.au.int](http://www.au.int)*).

The outcomes of Experts' meeting will be presented for consideration and adoption of the Ministers' session scheduled on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018.

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