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Agenda 2063: Tourism in Africa

Statement by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Dr.
Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, on the occasion of the Tourism Indaba
Ministerial Roundtable

eThekweni/Durban, 9 May 2014

Honourable Marthinus Van SCHALKWYK, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of South Africa;
Honourable Ministers;
AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy
Representative of regional and international organisations;
Distinguished Delegates;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I am taking the floor to address you on a subject that is so important to African development and prosperity.

I was excited when I heard that South Africa decided to extend the Tourism Indaba to the rest of the continent. Let me thank Honourable Marthinus Van SCHALKWYK, the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of South Africa for this initiative. My personal appreciation to the Minister of Tourism of Seychelles, with whom I've discussed the idea of an African chapter, when I visited the island state last year and who hosted the African Tourism Ministers Working Group. A note of appreciation to all Ministers of Tourism and Experts who met in Seychelles in March 2014 to define tourism targets and strategies for the African Agenda 2063.

Agenda 2063 builds on the Pan African vision and frameworks developed over decades, the OAU Charter, the Monrovia Declaration, the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty and NEPAD, and bring them together. It allows Africans from all walks of life and in all sectors to discuss and determine the future they want.

Agenda 2063 helps us to look ahead fifty years, allows us to move beyond the constraints of today, to dream and to plan. It allows us put in place milestones towards reaching our dreams in the shortest possible time.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

We are living in a continent that is endowed and blessed with vast natural resources and historical artefacts with incredible touristic value. The extensive wild life reserves with a variety of unique species, the great rivers, forests, astounding waterfalls, lakes, snow-capped mountains close to the Equator, our vast oceanic resources to name but a few, are hallmarks of the continent waiting to be explored. In addition, our friendly and warm people, and our diverse cultures is yet another advantage.

This is also a continent that is the cradle of humanity and which have seen momentous occasions in the evolution of humanity. We therefore have a rich heritage, with over eight of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites located in Africa and many more to come.

Most of our continent has remained preserved in pristine conditions, with our people and nature living in balance.

The big question that we need to ask ourselves and answer is: how much has the continent and the world benefited from the wonderful touristic resources existing in Africa? How many of our own peoples are aware of the tourism wealth that abounds in their continent?

Excellencies,

According to the current information of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), global international tourist arrivals grew by 5% on average in 2013 to over 1 billion compared to 2012. Demand for international tourism was strongest for destinations in Asia, the Pacific and Africa, which grew by 6%. Even with the financial crisis, tourism in Europe grew by 5%.

Against this background, International tourist arrivals in Africa saw an increase in arrivals by 3 million tourists in 2012, bringing the number of international tourists to our shores to a new record of 56 million. This figure is more than double that registered in 2000, making of Africa one of the fastest growing tourism regions in the world during the last decade, starting from a very low base.

in absolute terms, Africa still lags behind all regions, accounting for less than 5% of total global arrivals. In Asia and Pacific countries arrivals now stand at 248 million, the Americas increased to 169 million and arrivals in Europe reached a total of 563 million.

China, which became the largest outbound market in 2012 with an expenditure of US\$ 102 billion, saw an increase in expenditure of 26% to a total of US\$ 129 billion in 2013. The Russian Federation, the 5th largest outbound market worldwide with an expenditure of US\$ 54 billion, also reported 26% growth while Brazil at US\$ 25 billion became one of the top ten source markets by expenditure in 2013, with a growth rate of 14%. In contrast, the US and Europe outbound tourism grew by only

+3% while Germany, Japan and Italy reported decline in outbound tourist expenditure.

I have provided the global tourist situation in figures in order to enable us to clearly see Africa's position in this industry despite its abundant tourism endowments. We need to keep watching the global market trends especially for regions and countries, which produce more outbound in order to judiciously direct our marketing efforts for greater results.

In that regard, it is clear that currently and for some time to come in the future, China and BRICs countries more generally, will remain a strong market for tourism, which needs to be taken more seriously.

When we say: **AFRICA: OPEN FOR TOURISM**, we need to know where to direct our marketing efforts and which particular aspects of our tourism facilities and services are in need of improvement in order to cater for the targeted markets.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers

As I mentioned at the outset, the African Union Commission, has prioritised tourism among the socio-economic sectors in defining the targets and strategies for the Africa Agenda 2063. We believe tourism has a huge potential and would go a long way in improving the economic and social status of Africans in the next few decades. In Seychelles, the Ministerial Working Group conducted their work under the theme: ***Tourism: a Transformative Force for Africa.***

The Ministerial Working Group chose a very ambitious overall goal for the tourism sector in the African Agenda 2063, that is to **"MAKE AFRICA THE PREFERRED DESTINATION FOR TOURISM"**. Now we need to work on the right strategies that will enable us to reach that desired goal. Fortunately, we already have the AU-NEPAD Tourism Action Plan, which was adopted in July 2004. The Action Plan has comprehensively outlined the situation, challenges and strategies for the tourism sector in Africa. On my part, I will touch on a few ones that appear more critical at this point in time.

One thing that is clear is that we cannot achieve successful results in the tourism industry, if we continue to work in isolation as individual countries. We have to start pursuing joint strategies in order to accelerate growth in this sector. Tourists are not interested in our

administrative borders; they want to explore as many sites attraction as possible given limited resources and time at their disposal.

Therefore, we need to focus on joint marketing of our tourism attractions across the borders. For example, we could arrange to cater for groups of tourists who want to enjoy a package including the beaches of Mombasa, the Mount Kilimanjaro and a visit to the primates in the Virunga Mountains.

This means that, we need to urgently work on simplified and joint visa regimes (uni-visa) that can be quickly made available electronically and, hence, enable tourists to move around groups of African countries easily and more affordably. I am glad that some Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have already done so and others are working on this initiative.

A second issue is the importance of also developing the domestic African tourism market. We now have a middle class on the continent of above 300 million people, and we must ensure that as their ranks swell and more Africans have disposable income for holidays, they also spent it in the continent.

A third important issue is the infrastructure for tourism, from hotels, lodges, bed and breakfast and restaurants to transport, ICT, energy, water and sanitation. Tourists want pristine landscape and reserves, but they also want reliable energy, access to wi-fi hotspots and other forms of modern infrastructure.

Let me start with air transport and the issues of connectivity and ease of movement between and within our countries. The current situation whereby to move between African regions one has to transit either through Europe or the Middle East is no longer acceptable. We already have the 1999 Yamoussoukro *Decision for Liberalisation of Air Transport Markets in Africa*. We need to speed up its implementation in order to ensure that as many cities and other socio-economic centres of our continent are connected by reliable, safe secure and sustainable direct flights. No huge investments are called for here; just some reasonable adjustment of policy and regulatory measures.

More importantly, in mt '*E-mail from the future*,' written to Kwame Nkrumah from 2063, we spoke about our children and grandchildren criss-crossing the continent with a high-speed train, that connect all African capitals and major cities. When we raised it for the first time last

year, it sounded like a pipe dream, but just a week ago there are signs that this is indeed something that can be done and we are starting shaping our ideas. We are discussing this for example with China, which is now the leading country in high-speed rail development and technology. Connecting African cities by a connected high-speed rail is a twenty to thirty year project, but we must and will start today to put plans place and start executing them.

We've paid attention to our land resources as tourist attraction, but our oceanic resources, which are three times our landmass, have been neglected. Sea transport between our countries, in addition to our beaches and diving sites must therefore also be attended to as we develop our strategy and milestones for the future of African tourism.

Another issue, which is becoming a real danger to the tourism sector in Africa is the scourge of poaching. In recent years, the killing of wild life especially elephants and rhinos for their tusks and horns has reached epidemic proportions. Over a thousand of our rangers across the continent have been killed by poachers. We are and must engage all countries who are recipients of these illegal goods, so that we put a stop to the killing of a heritage that belongs to all of humanity.

One thing is clear though. The scale of poaching and the audacity of the traffickers, exhibited by intercepted container loads alleged to have passed through African ports, shows the existence of well-organised crime rings with the collusion of senior public officials. If we do not take concerted measures to stop this menace, the tourism wealth that we are boasting of today will remain just a historical fact to be taught at schools for our future generations to ponder on what went wrong with us, their ancestors.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers

I need not overemphasise the hope that the African Union Commission has placed on the tourism sector to play its role to move this continent towards integration, peace and shared prosperity. In that regard, I count on your valuable wisdom to work together to speed up the achievement of the goal of prosperity and stability in our beloved Africa.

The African Union Commission will always be available to work with you, the RECs, specialised organisations and our key partners including the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) to ensure that the

tourism sector makes the expected contribution to the aspirations of our peoples as enshrined in the African Agenda 2063.

The expanded Tourism Indaba is, definitely, an African event with an African cultural accent. As we are creating a Tourism “BRAND AFRICA”, let us now resolve to **MAKE AFRICA THE PREFERRED DESTINATION FOR TOURISM.**

I wish you all a fruitful roundtable and a great 2014 Tourism Indaba!