



OPENING ADDRESS OF MR. CHEIKH BEDDA, DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, NAIROBI, KENYA, 1ST OCTOBER 2018

- **Hon. Minister Najib Balala, Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Republic of Kenya**
- **Distinguished Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chairperson of the AU Sub-Committee on Tourism**
- **Distinguished Representative of the Republic of Kenya, host of the First Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Tourism**
- **Distinguished Representatives of Member States**
- **Distinguished Representatives of Regional and International Organisations**
- **Distinguished Representatives of Development Partners**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**
- **All Protocols observed**

1. On behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC) I would like to welcome you to the First Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Tourism. I would also like to express our profound gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Kenya for accepting to host this meeting. We also commend the steady leadership provided by the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe in advancing the continental tourism industry. In recent years, Zimbabwe has worked closely with the AUC to ensure that the tourism agenda is elevated as a priority socio-economic sector in the development programme of the African Union. You may, therefore, wish to note with appreciation that, apart from being the first meeting of the Sub-Committee on Tourism, this is also the first time that the African Ministers responsible for Tourism are meeting under the umbrella of the African Union.

2. Your presence today in this historic meeting is just special and highly valuable to all of us working on this important sector. We can only say thank you for honouring our invitation and expect to have your sustained support in this process of strengthening the tourism sector within the framework of the AU Agenda 2063.

3. The Sub-Committee on Tourism is one of the three Sub-Committees that were created during the First Meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism

(STC-TTIIET) which took place in Lomé, Togo in March 2017. Their creation is provided for in the Rules of Procedure of the STC. They are: the **Sub-Committee on Transport**, **Sub-Committee on Energy** and **Sub-Committee on Tourism**.

4. The STC meeting in Lomé also adopted a comprehensive Plan of Action for the development of the Tourism sector in Africa. The plan of Action is based on key tourism strategic frameworks especially the AU/NEPAD Tourism Action Plan of 2004 and the Seychelles Final Communique of 2014 on Tourism and the AU Agenda 2063. As you would recall, the latter was an outcome of the Meeting of the AU Ministerial Working Group on Tourism that was held in Seychelles in March 2014. The meeting developed a comprehensive strategy for the tourism sector in Africa for realizing the Aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063. Finally, the Ministers recommended the overall goal for the continent as: ***Africa to be the Preferred Tourism Destination*** in the world.

- **Distinguished Participants**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

5. The functions of the Sub-Committee on Tourism have been concisely defined in the Rules of Procedure of the STC on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism. The key responsibilities of this Sub-Committee include:

- i) Addressing major challenges facing the tourism sector in Africa;
- ii) Overseeing the formulation of tourism policies, strategies and programmes to resolve the challenges;
- iii) Monitoring and evaluation of implementation of policies, programmes and decisions of the policy organs of the African Union in tourism matters; and
- iv) Facilitating partnerships and advocacy for the interests of the African tourism industry in the international markets.

6. These tasks, among others, are specifically detailed in the Tourism Action Plan adopted by the STC on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism in Lomé, Togo in March 2017. Each task is clasified as either a policy, technical or advocacy activity. Responsibility for implementation is shared among the stakeholders under the overal coordination of the AUC which is also the secretariat if the STC-TTIIET and its Sub-Committees. In brief, as a technical sub-committee, this body is expected to oversee and provide guidance to the AUC and all stakeholders, regarding formulation and implementation of appropriate continental tourism policy, strategic and regulatory frameworks as well as programmes and projects.

7. 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. Furthermore, the AUC is implementing a some flagship projects of the AU Agenda 2063 that are expected to contribute significantly to acelerating growth in the tourism sector in Africa. These include:

- i) The **Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM)** which was launched in January 2018;
- ii) The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** whose agreement was signed in March 2018;
- iii) The Protocol on the **Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment** as well as creation of a single **African Passport** also adopted in March 2018;
- iv) The **Continental High Speed Train (CHSRN)**; and
- v) The **Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA)**

8. As we all know, tourism in Africa is seriously affected by poor transport networks, inadequate infrastructure and prevalence of visa restrictions between African countries. It is the primary objective of the African Union to remove these barriers in order to create a strong united and prosperous Africa. The AUC recognizes the great potential of tourism in realizing this objective as well the many benefits that tourism stands to gain in the successful implementation of those flagship projects.

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9. I have attempted to describe concisely the context and functions of the Sub-Committee on Tourism in order to give you the picture of the great importance and the huge task of the Sub-Committee in leading and guiding the AUC and other stakeholders in the efforts to find and implement solutions to the major tourism challenges of the continent. Therefore, during this first meeting, the Sub-Committee is expected to review the Tourism Action Plan and agree on the responsibilities of each stakeholder and the indicated timelines.

10. Furthermore, the Sub-Committee will have to agree on the mechanism for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the Action Plan. Hence, it is obvious that establishment of effective functional lines of communication among the key stakeholders will be of paramount importance in order to sustain the working momentum of the Sub-Committee.

11. Apart from reviewing the Tourism Plan of Action, you will have the opportunity to deliberate and exchange views on the draft tourism policy strategy document as well as the proposal for the establishment of the continental tourism organisation which will be presented to you. Furthermore, information will be shared on regional programmes as well as on other important initiatives such as tourism and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as well as tourism and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). All these would be valuable in the bid to improve the Tourism Action Plan.

12. Certainly, you can see that, as experts, you have much to do to present to the Ministers. They expect from you well-articulated review of the main issues and practical recommendations to enable them to make sound decisions.

13. I wish you the best in your deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.