



MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TOURISM, GRAND BAIE, MAURITIUS,

29 MARCH, 2012

The Meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for Tourism and the 48th RETOSA Board Meeting were held on 29 March, 2012 in Grand Baie, Mauritius. The Meeting was officially opened by Honourable M.J.T.S. Yeung Sik Yuen, Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Mauritius, and was chaired by Honourable Armando Inroga, Minister of Trade and Industry for the Republic of Mozambique. The meeting was attended by Ministers and Deputy Ministers responsible for Tourism of Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as the Deputy Executive Secretary (Regional Integration) of the SADC Secretariat, Dr. Caholo.

Addressing the meeting, Dr Caholo stated that it is encouraging to note that the tourism sector, which is one of the region's key growth sectors, continues to play a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of the region. He pointed out that the key objective, as espoused by the Protocol on Development of Tourism, is to promote the region as single destination, bearing in mind that the RETOSA Member States are bound by a common vision, common values and a common destiny, and in respect of tourism, by the diversities of its tourist attractions, and stressed that these values underpinned the role of RETOSA.

In his keynote address to the meeting, Mr M.J.T.S. Yeung Sik Yuen, Honourable Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Mauritius, urged the Ministers to come up with practical strategies aimed at harnessing tourism in the SADC region, and reiterated the importance of the region working collectively to enhance its competitiveness against global markets, as patterns for tourism kept changing at a global scale. He also outlined Mauritius strategy relating to promotion of tourism arrivals in the country in key external markets.

In his address to the meeting, Vice Minister of Tourism for Angola, Mr Baptista Paulino, underscored the importance of regional cooperation in joint marketing of SADC within the framework of RETOSA, noting that the region had abundant

natural wonders that gave the region a comparative edge and could help attract tourists from key source markets.

The Ministers received a report on Southern Africa Tourism Sector Performance presented by RETOSA, which called for a review and harmonization of the existing frameworks and strategies for tourism growth and development in the Southern Africa region. The report highlighted that the regional tourism environment is facing growing competition from emerging tourist destinations such as the Middle East and that it is imperative that the region confront any challenges faced by formulating and implementing a regional tourism growth and development strategy. The meeting noted that this strategy is being developed by RETOSA and will be presented to the Ministers at their next meeting for consideration and approval. Commenting on the sector performance report, the Ministers recommended that further work be undertaken to develop effective strategies to enhance intra-regional and continental tourism arrivals, receipts, investments and the region's competitiveness on the global market place. The Ministers also noted the need to scale up joint marketing of the SADC region as a single but multi-faceted destination in emerging markets such as the BRICS, for which a roadmap has to be developed to facilitate initiatives of showcasing SADC in those markets. The Ministers also approved the new RETOSA destination brand with the strap-line "*Experience Southern Africa*" to be launched and rolled-out by September 2012.

The Meeting also deliberated on the effectiveness of RETOSA, and resolved that there was need to reexamine among others, its structure, financing, resourcing, priorities and institutional positioning to ensure that it served the Member states and sector as effectively in order to deliver on its mandate. The Ministers approved and directed that an empirical study be conducted to provide an in-depth analysis of how to re-structure RETOSA to become more effective, with a view to improving the Region competitiveness. The Ministers resolved to convene an Extra-Ordinary Ministerial Meeting before the end of the year to review the outcomes of the RETOSA Evaluation process, with the view to implementing its resolutions on the matter without delay.

The Meeting also reviewed the implementation of regional tourism cross-cutting programmes which contribute meaningfully to regional socio-economic development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the SADC Region, including job creation and poverty alleviation. Among the key issues discussed was the review of the state of implementation of the Yamaoussoukro Decision (YD) on Air Transport Liberalisation in SADC and ongoing infrastructure development and border facilitation measures along SADC Corridors and their impact on facilitation of tourism in the region. The

Ministers noted that Member States have made substantial progress with reforms leading to the enacting of policies that endorse YD implementation, appropriate legal and institutional reforms to facilitate the liberalization process, and that further liberalization of the skies was necessary if efficient and cost effective access to tourism destinations is to be realised.

Another key cross-cutting issue discussed was individual Member States current Visa regimes and the state of implementation of SADC UNIVISA system. The Ministers noted that about 50% of SADC Member States do not require visas for tourists from key source markets and observed the ongoing preparations for the implementation of the UNIVISA among the participating States: namely; Angola, Mozambique, Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The meeting commended the UNIVISA Pilot Member States and emphasised that this progress presents an awesome opportunity to enrich the region's comparative advantages, which reflected SADC's determination and willingness to actively position the tourism sector as one of the key economic drivers, thereby increasing tourism contribution to the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Ministers reaffirmed the need for the tourism sector to work closely with the organs responsible for the implementation of the UNIVISA and expedite the implementation as the effective implementation would have a positive impact on tourism arrivals and receipts from key source markets.

The Meeting took note of the Member States' Tourism Calendar of Events compiled by RETOSA, including an update on the July, 2012 African Union Summit in Malawi, 2012 Routes Conference in Seychelles, 2013 General Assembly to be co-hosted by Zambia and Zimbabwe, the 2013 African Cup of Nations to held in Johannesburg as well as other regional and Member States events scheduled to take place in 2012 and 2013. The Ministers congratulated all Member States that have won bids to host mega events and, unanimously agreed to rally support for these events.

The meeting expressed its gratitude to Mauritius for the excellent facilities it had availed for the meeting, as well as the warm welcome that had been extended to all participants and delegates. The Ministers welcomed the offer by Mozambique to host the next Ordinary Meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for Tourism.

Grand Baie, Mauritius