



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

Opening Remarks

By

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1. Honourable Ministers
2. Mr. Ousmane Ndiaye, Regional Director, UNWTO Programme for Africa
3. Mr. Luis Eduardo Cortés, Chairman of the IFEMA Executive Committee
4. Mr. Ricardo Martínez Vázquez, Director General, Casa África
5. Mr. Pierre Yete, Director of Industrial Development, Engineering and Tourism, Monetary and Economic Community of Central African States (CEMAC) Commission (t.b.c)
6. Middle East Ministers' Representative (WILL get name from Casa)
7. Mr. Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General
8. Other Distinguished delegates,
9. Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the East African Community and on my own behalf to thank the Government of Spain and Casa Africa for organizing the INVESTOUR Forum and inviting CEMAC and the EAC as the key regional economic communities to participate.

As you are all aware, the Community is comprised of five (5) Partner States, namely, Republic of Burundi, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, and Republic of Uganda. The objective of my presentation is to highlight the development so far reached in implementing the areas of cooperation in Tourism and Wildlife Conservation and Management within the Region as outlined in our Treaty.

In Tourism, the Community sets out to;

1. develop a collective and co-ordinated approach to the promotion and marketing of quality tourism into and within the Community. This entails harmonizing policies in the tourism industry and establishment of a framework of co-operation in the sector that will ensure equitable distribution of benefits.
2. establish a common code of conduct for private and public tour and travel operators, standardise hotel classifications and harmonise the professional standards of agents in the tourism and travel industry within the Community.
3. develop a regional strategy for tourism promotion whereby individual efforts are reinforced by regional action.

On Part of Wildlife Conservation and Management, the main focus for the Community is to develop a collective and co-ordinated policy for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of wildlife and other tourist sites in the Community. We seek to achieve this by:

- (a) harmonising policies for the conservation of wildlife, within and outside protected areas;

- (b) exchanging information and adopt common policies on wildlife management and development; and
- (c) co-ordinating regional efforts in controlling and monitoring encroachment and poaching activities; among others.

Distinguished delegates

Allow me to highlight a few of our key milestones and developments in the tourism and wildlife sector in order for you to grasp the enormity of the task that lies ahead. One of them is the establishment of the **EAC Criteria for Classification of Accommodation and Restaurant Establishments.**

The classification system brings out different aspects of service delivery essential for customer satisfaction. It covers physical and tangible characteristics of accommodation establishments such as location, dimensions of rooms, supplies in bathrooms and frequency of change of linen, as well as non tangible elements such as style, elegance, comfort, finish and luxury. The system covers social contact in aspects such as staff grooming and communication skills.

Distinguished delegates,

We all agree if the region is to enjoy the benefits that tourism can bring, there is need to go for quality rather than quantity. Quality assurance indicators like the star rating system established in the developed criteria for accommodation and catering facilities is one of the ways of building confidence in potential customers who would like to patronize the region, and have the quality of our tourism product which is internationally recognized. Therefore, this criteria provides for a wide range of options which investors may choose to aim at – from Guidelines for ‘Approved’ establishments to criteria for attaining five (5) star rating.

Another pillar in the Community has been the implementation of the overall joint Tourism Marketing Plan and Strategy that seeks the development of Tourism products specifically labelled ‘Destination East Africa’ and promoting the Region as a Single Tourist destination. The EAC Partner States continue to participate in several international trade fairs such as World Travel market (WTM) in London and the ITB in Berlin with exhibitions in the same area, relaying a common message. In addition, the Secretariat hosts an EAC day that brings together various stakeholders under one roof to network with all 5 Partner States strategically together, thus enhancing the B2B opportunities in providing a “one stop shop” scenario.

Furthermore, the EAC is aggressively working on establishing a ONE Single Visa to facilitate the easier movement of tourists to the Region. We are aware that this is a long awaited leap forward and we are all eager to see to its implementation.

Efforts that I have just mentioned will of course greatly boost the economies of the Region and thus improve areas of service, the tourism sector not excluded. At this juncture, let me share some information on earnings in the region from Travel & Tourism's Direct Contribution to GDP. According to the World Tourism and Travel Council, earnings in 2005 were estimated at 2.8 billion dollars and have increased to 3.4 billion dollars in 2010 and are projected to increase to 4.3 billion dollars by 2015. Considering that these are figures extrapolated for 5 countries, and considering the bountiful resource that is found only in East Africa, it is poignant to note that we have barely scraped the surface of our potential.

Distinguished delegates

The EAC recognises that areas that cover regional infrastructure interventions are key to attracting investment into the region, improving competitiveness, and promoting trade. This implies that our roads, railways, civil aviation, maritime transport and ports, multi-modal transport, freight administration and management must be improved greatly.

To date, there have been tremendous efforts in improving the transportation systems in East Africa to facilitate the arrival and movement of tourists within our Region. Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya are in the process of expanding, refurbishing and improving their international and various smaller airports while Rwanda has recently completed refurbishing her International Airport which now allows for bigger capacity aircrafts to utilize. Rwanda has also invested heavily in their national carrier Rwanda Air that now includes international routes to and from Kigali. Not to mention Kenya Airways and other leading airlines that fly to and from the Region regularly with increasing traffic.

On the other hand, the EAC has identified five main corridors within the Community (a total length of about 12,000 km), which constitute a strategic priority and require rehabilitation and upgrading to complete the road network in the Community. The railway and ports are also in the plan for rebuilding, refurbishing and expansion.

Our communication systems in the entire region have also seen great improvement with the introduction of the East African Community Broadband ICT Infrastructure Network. Without too much elaboration, I am sure you all appreciate the implication this will have to enhancing communication within and without the Community.

I want to reassure you ladies and gentlemen that the EAC is committed to ensuring that the region is attractive to visitors and investors across the board. Needless to say, there are still areas that require further improvement or enhancement and thus it will be an opportunity wasted not to discuss areas of collaboration at a focal forum such as this on tourism. I therefore, look forward to networking, discussing and possibly breaking new ground with many of you during the course of this day in ways we can bring the East African Community and Spain closer.

With these few remarks, I once again thank Casa Africa for this invitation and encourage my colleagues from the Community and CEMAC present to optimize this focal forum and not leave the way we came....

One people....One destiny..... ASANTENI