



OPENING SPEECH AT THE 1st ANNUAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME REVIEW CONFERENCE

By

Hotel Africana, Kampala

20th September, 2023

The Hon. Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities,
Hon Minister of State for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities,
Hon Members of Parliament Present,
The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Representatives of Development Partners,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. I wish to thank the Hon Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities for inviting me to participate in this 1st Annual Tourism Development Programme Review Conference under the theme: “***Leveraging the Tourism Industry as a Pivot for Economic Recovery through Sustainable Investment, Improved Market Access and Visibility***”.
2. This Annual Tourism Development Programme Review Conference builds on the National Annual Performance Review that was recently undertaken to assess the progress in achieving the NDPIII targets, constraints, challenges and strategies needed to achieve the desired national socioeconomic transformation. It is also informed by the National Budget Conference and Economic Growth Forum.
3. The Government Annual Performance Assessment Report for the FY 2022/23 indicated that there was an improvement in the performance of the programmes against the set targets for the FY 2022/2023 as compared to the previous financial year.
4. During the Economic Growth Forum and the Budget Conference, the Minister for Finance highlighted the constraints and challenges that impede national economic growth and development.
5. I also noted that despite these challenges and constraints, there were numerous opportunities where Uganda has a comparative advantage existed: These include among others, the variety and abundance of wild fauna and flora, and diverse cultural heritage and history that provide opportunities for tourism product development, as well as the investments in critical infrastructure, including roads, airports, and bridges to facilitate the easy movement of tourists as well as lower the costs of doing business.
6. During the National Budget Conference and Economic Growth Forum FY 2023/24 the National Budget Strategy was presented which is anchored on the NRM Manifesto 2021-2026 and guidance by H.E the President to grow the economy tenfold from USD

55.2 billion to USD 500 billion within a span of fifteen years. And among the strategies is unlocking constraints to Tourism Development.

7. Distinguished participants, as you may be aware, the Statistical and Economic Analysis of the Tourism and Expenditure yielded interesting statistics that point to the fact that:
 - i. Attracting 100,000 additional leisure tourists would add **11 percent** to exports and 1.6 percent to GDP;
 - ii. Persuading tourists to spend one additional night in Uganda would add **7 percent to exports** and **1.0 percent to GDP**.
 - iii. 8 percent annual growth in leisure and conference tourists would generate an **additional USD 220** million in receipts per annum.
8. Current international and domestic statistics therefore give strong justification for Uganda's strategic decision to prioritize tourism in its economic development agenda for socio economic transformation. In order to implement the NRM manifesto, and contribute significantly towards attaining the socio-economic transformation agenda, the country has to increase its tourism contribution to the economy.
9. These facts make a compelling case to attract tourists to Uganda, make them stay longer and spend more in the country to drive its growth. Tourism evidently offers hope for Uganda to become a middle income country if we fully exploit its potential.
10. The above revelations are in tandem with the NRM Government recognition of the Tourism industry as one of Uganda's leading foreign exchange earners that has distinguished itself as an important sector to support the diversification of Uganda's economy. I therefore wish to appreciate the tourism sector for contributing to the socioeconomic transformation of Uganda to middle income status. The tourism has evidently made significant contribution to Uganda's Gross Domestic Product and is increasingly affirming its position as a key source of livelihood and pride, helping to support families and local economies, and to build communities throughout the Country.
11. Government acknowledges that Tourism is a fragile sector, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is also sensitive to impacts of Safety, security and stability concerns. These are now guaranteed under the NRM Government which improved security in the national parks both for the tourists and wildlife as a result of collaboration among the UPDF, the Tourism Police force and Uganda Wildlife Authority. The fight against poaching and encroachment has also been intensified. And the battle against the Coronavirus Pandemic has been won by the strong health interventions employed by this government

12. The NRM government has ensured the communities around the national parks and wildlife reserves benefit from the proceeds from the parks. Through the revenue-sharing schemes, communities around the periphery of the parks have continuously, in particular, been supported financially to construct schools and health units.
13. Government will continue empowering communities neighbouring protected areas to support wildlife conservation and preservation of cultural heritage for sustainable tourism, environmental protection.
14. Government has fully revived the National Airline with the aim of facilitating the development of Entebbe International Airport into a regional hub, the direct connectivity of the country to the major existing and upcoming markets for tourists to Uganda, and promoting the export of high value agricultural products.
15. Government implores all Ugandans to look back with pride at the achievements in developing Uganda as a preferred tourism destination in the recent past. Government has therefore laid a strong foundation to *Leveraging the Tourism Industry as a Pivot for Economic Recovery through Sustainable Investment, Improved Market Access and Visibility*.
16. Hon. Minister and distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I wish to commend you for fulfilling the requirements of government accounting procedures by holding your Annual Tourism Development Programme Review as a way of taking stock of your achievements, challenges and strategies moving forward. I thank you for inviting me to preside over the opening of the 1st Annual Tourism Development Programme performance Review and wish you successful deliberations as we strive to develop the tourism sector and the country as a whole.
17. It is now my honour and pleasure to declare the 1st Annual Tourism Development Programme performance Review Conference officially open.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY