

69532

Dist. RESTRICTED

TRANS/TRU/93/MAD.14
January 1993

ENGLISH
Original: English

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

*Sub-Regional Conference of
African Ministers of Tourism*

*Antananarivo (Madagascar)
27 - 30 January 1993*

MEETING OF EXPERTS
27 - 28 January 1993

**SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY:
SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION
AND COORDINATION FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

*Communication prepared and presented by
SADC TOURISM COORDINATION UNIT*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cooperation in any sphere and at whatever level, fulfils the basic principle that unity is strength. It is undertaken by parties who recognize strengths in one another, that they can pool together to fight against a common enemy. For Southern African Development Community (SADC), this has been a premise that saw it come into being.

This paper sets out to examine the strides made in the coordination of tourism development in the SADC region.

2. THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)

In April 1980, nine majority ruled countries of Southern Africa, namely, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, signed a Lusaka declaration that established a Southern African development Co-ordination Conference (SADC) - Namibia became the tenth member when it attained independence in 1990. A major goal of the organization was declared to be achievement of economic liberation. Specifically, this was "the reduction of economic dependence, particularly, but not only on the Republic of South Africa" (SADCC, 1988).*

One of the fundamental principles on which SADC was based, was equitable development of the member States. In carrying out its mandate, the organization identified sectors (and sub-sectors) for coordinated development. Each member country was then allocated a sector and sole responsibility to develop the sector on behalf of the region. Tourism was one such sector, allocated to Lesotho.

Initial scepticism levelled at SADCC, by the developed world, considered the organization a mistake. "By 1988, however, the World Bank's Vice-President for Africa, Edward Jacox, was describing SADCC as 'a functioning example of how regional cooperation in Africa might work', while the UK's then aid Minister, Chris Patten, stated that his Government believed "that to support SADCC is to support success" (Stoneman and Thompson, 1991).

However, political changes in the region have slowly rendered SADCC obsolete. Specifically, a changing South Africa, which was SADCC's raison d'être, has given rise to the need for a new mandate for the organization's continued existence. On another level, SADCC was an informal organization whose establishment was made through a memorandum of understanding, based on members' political goodwill. However, changes in political leadership in the member countries have brought with them uncertainty regarding the initial political commitment. Therefore, adjustments became necessary to assure the organization's unquestionable future.

In August 1992, the Heads of Government of the ten SADCC member States signed a treaty that transformed SADCC into SADC (Southern African Development Community). A major thrust of the Community became economic integration. The basic principles of equity, mutual benefit and interdependence, however, remained valid and essential in forging the integration.

3. REGIONAL COOPERATION IN TOURISM

Regional cooperation is based essentially on the sharing of experience. In the development of SADC tourism, it has been important that the industry, throughout the region, share these in order to attain the same level of product quality, as a prerequisite to a joint promotion of the region.

As a region, SADC offers possibilities of a varied product in a multideestination area. Though the region seeks to project itself as a low-volume high-spent tourist destination in the main generating markets, a different tune is being called in the promotion of intra-regional movement of the SADC nationals.

While intra-regional tourism has been necessary in promoting a mutual understanding as a way of enhancing cooperation among the SADC nationals, it is now most urgent. In this new thrust of a Community, this mutual understanding would underlie any attempts at integration. For this reason, the promotion of intra-regional tourism will focus, primarily on the Isociocultural aspect, ahead of the economic aspect.

4. APPROACH TO COLLABORATION

The present Tourism Development Programme in the SADC region, is made up of two major areas of Product Development and Marketing. These two areas are reinforced with two other components of Tourism Services and Human Resources Development.

Projects in each of these areas have a regional thrust in them. They may be common base or core projects to the region or they may be projects of a national origin. A basic requirement, particularly with regard to the latter set, is that they benefit more than one member country. In this regard, criteria has been developed, that serves as a guide in developing and in selecting such projects. The project areas are as follows:

4.1 Product development

This takes the form of rehabilitation and expansion of the tourist attractions and facilities. However, in laying a basis for developments in this and other areas, a 5 year strategy for the development of the sector is, at the moment, being designed.

4.2 Tourism marketing

Marketing puts emphasis on the multideestination potential of the region. In this area, projects undertaken include market studies that have been done in the generating regions of Western Europe, North America, Scandinavia and the Pacific Rim. A study on intra-regional travel remains outstanding, but should be underway by year end. In addition, a promotional resource base project that entails designing printed and audio-visual material, has been developed.

4.3 Tourism services

Tourism services seek to establish common standards that may be used for product quality assurance. Functions undertaken here include the harmonization of tourism statistics, standardization and grading of tourism facilities, and facilitation of tourist movement throughout the region. With regard to the latter two, the World Tourism Organization Support Missions have undertaken an on-location assessment and made appropriate recommendations in each of the SADC States.

The sector is also engaged in creating a network of SADC tour operators and mobilizing the tourism private enterprise community. This is being done in consideration of the fact that tourism is largely a private sector activity.

4.4 Human resources development

A comprehensive study that made an assessment of the training needs, and of the availability as well as suitability of training facilities, has recently been completed for the region. The study revealed skilled manpower shortages at all levels in the various fields. In particular, the absence of adequate managerial skills was indication of the industry's vulnerability to the not so desirable foreign control.

Regarding the training facilities, the level of adequacy varied in the individual member countries. Required improvements were, therefore, recommended accordingly. These facilities have been earmarked for regional training in the various areas according to their suitability.

5. PROS AND CONS OF COLLABORATION

In any administration, there is often conflict of priority and of methods of operation in the various activities that are undertaken to achieve set goals, Without doubt, bringing together ten administrations to work towards predetermined goals cannot help but magnify the problem tenfold. The coordination of tourism development in the SADC region, therefore, unavoidably, has to deal with and overcome some very negative aspects that go with the enormous task.

On the other hand, the very fact that integration was contemplated and actually turned into reality, is signal to a great driving force behind.

Following, therefore, is considering of some of the negative and positive aspects to the collaboration:

5.1 Negative aspects to collaboration

5.1.1 Levels of economic development

The levels of economic development of the ten SADC countries vary a great deal. For instance, according to the Theme Document for 1992, in 1989, GAP/Capita was US\$1,600 at the top, and US\$80 at minimum, giving a variance of US\$1,520. This huge gap should certainly mean that developmental priorities will differ. For instance, member countries at the lower end of the scale instance, member countries at the lower end of the scale will certainly need to pay more attention to food production and provision of basic health and education. They are less likely to be attentive to, for example, the promotion of tourism. The higher income member countries who are in a position to focus more attention and support to the industry are, therefore, faced with the difficult task of dragging along the less fortunate members.

5.1.2 Government controls

Systems of administration differ amongst the SAD member States. Some States run a completely centralized system, while others have opted for a decentralized one, with varying degrees of government intervention. All of these systems carry with the varying levels of bureaucracy, consequently, those who are able to make decisions quicker find themselves losing business opportunities while they await the slower ones. This is cause for great frustration in the former case.

5.1.3 Image

Image can make or break a place as a tourist destination. There is going on in a very relatively small part of the region, a civilian war. However, in the mind of a not well informed traveller, this is indication that the whole region is unsafe to visit. Indeed he should stop and wonder why the SADC countries that do not suffer from an image problem should feel compelled to include in their midst, States with this negative image. The fact that even in those few member countries that are involved in war, there are still some parts that are receptive to visitors, would be viewed with great scepticism. Back in the region, some member States have seen the reality of the market place, and have had reservations regarding their being part of a multideestination that includes part of the region that suffer from a blemished image. But when all is said and done, the basic principle of equality overrules, in SADC.

5.1.4 Communication

The region does not have a one homogeneous local language that may be used as a medium of communication. Anyhow, since communication extends to the international community, the choice of a universally accepted language has had to be done. Two languages of English and Portuguese, inherited from the colonial era, have been adopted as official medium of communication. This means that exchange of information has to go through some hassle of translation/interpretation, and one can only imagine how much gets lost or distorted in the process.

5.2 Negative aspect to collaboration

5.2.1 Complementarity of the tourism product

The region offers a diverse product that a single country could never measure up to. The diversity is especially enhanced by the variety found in the history and culture that each of the ten countries offers. In addition, the natural attractions that are unique to individual member countries are great for complementarity in product packaging.

5.2.2 Pooling of resources

Regional cooperation enables the SADC States to mobilize and pool together their scarce material and human resources. This should allow

them greater muscle for a joint promotion of their regional policies in tourism development.

5.2.3 Commitment by cooperators

A basis for the cooperation has been a sound political commitment by the member States. The move from SADCC to SADC has by no means lessened this commitment. Member countries are therefore determined to see their cooperation prosper.

6. THE FUTURE

Coordination of regional development is no mean task. It is an undertaking that demands the best will of those involved. The fact that the success of the cooperation will be measured by equitable development of the member States, especially in the face of all the constraints, is indication of the deep commitment that the member countries have towards a development of their region.

A pleasing fact about SADC is that in the face of all the difficulties, the positive attitude it has adopted, pale these to insignificance. Tourism's role in these developments is quite an important one. It is even more so now, in the context of SADC. Its ability to move the nationals of the region around, a special feature required to enhance regional integration, given the sector a special place in the region, we are confident that in this new era of a community the tourism sector will earn this special place.