

Kenyan President urges policy makers to mitigate challenges that impede tourism growth



Nairobi, 10 December 2013 – President of the Republic of Kenya, H.E Uhuru Kenyatta, has launched the ECA commissioned publication of the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region 2013-2023.

The launch of Sustainable Tourism Master plan in Nairobi was also graced by the vice president of Kenya, Hon. William Samoei Ruto and senior officials of in charge of Tourism in IGAD member countries: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

The Tourism Master Plan for the eight countries of Eastern Africa, members of IGAD, provides a regional framework for sustainable tourism development with a view to contributing to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation and to promoting regional integration.

President Kenyatta said that there are now approximately 6 billion domestic tourists globally. 80 per cent of the international tourists travel within their respective regions. “This is a clear indication of the importance of both regional and domestic tourism, a fact that appears to elude in Eastern Africa region” he said.

President Kenyatta said that it is sad to note that African continent’s share of the global tourism industry stands only at 5.1 per cent of international arrivals, which translates to 33.6 billion US dollars or 3.1 per cent of international tourism receipts.

“I therefore urge my government to mitigate the inhibitions to tourism development with appropriate policies and regulatory and institutional frameworks, so that our tourism industries become globally competitive, both nationally and regionally”, said President Kenyatta.

Tourism Master Plan for IGAD Region was elaborated after realization that the tourism sector could be one of the solutions paths to addressing the chronic problem of jobless growth that affects many countries in Eastern Africa, if its full potential would be optimally harnessed.

“It was against this background that we extended our support to IGAD to develop the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan” said Antonio Pedro, Director of ECA/SRO-EA. He added that the usefulness of the regional framework could only be expanded if its key tenets would be mainstreamed and domesticated at national level.

“In view of this, we have just started an exercise to support Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda deepening their respective tourism sectors in line with the regional master plan”, Pedro explained.

Pedro says however that inadequate and unreliable infrastructure and related services increase transaction costs and can impact negatively on the regional tourism products. “Image and perception deficits associated with poor marketing strategies, can deprive African region of growth opportunities”, Pedro added.

Amb. Maalim Mahboub, Executive Secretary of IGAD clarified that Eastern Africa has always been a tourist Destination, but collective inter-country efforts to widen the industry and undertake positive refinements has been weak.

“This is precisely what we are striving to achieve through this master Plan” said Mahboub. He also emphasized that “Collective focus on Supply side of tourism such as access to electricity, better communication, infrastructure development as well as more competitive investment climate for private sector to flourish are definite panacea for tourism Development at a larger Scale”.

Representatives of IGAD member states committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan through signing launched blueprint.