

Mauritius: Sea, Sand, Sun and why it must diversify its tourism

ECA Press Release No. 17/2012

Port Louis, 29 February 2012 (ECA) – The Island of Mauritius is synonymous to leisure. Renowned for its beaches and bluest of waters, Mauritius is a destination for merry makers with 92 percent of its visitors coming purely to enjoy its sea, sun and sand in turn, creating over 28,000 direct jobs and accounting for 10 percent to its GDP.

As a perfect backdrop to a two-day meeting if experts to deliberate opportunities in the tourism sector in southern Africa, Mauritius boasts the highest income per capita at nearly US\$10,000 per annum for its 1.2 million inhabitants. Its main exports include sugar, clothing, tea and jewellery. Some of the big clothing name brands in the US and in Europe are manufactured in Mauritius.



The tourism sector has in the last five years grown steadily at an average of 4 percent, according to a paper presented by the Ministry of Tourism at the experts meeting. "This is lower than the projected rate of 7 percent," says Sunil Kowlessur, the Principal Tourism Planner attributing the low rate growth to volatile global financial and consumption patterns.

In 2009 for instance, Mauritius recorded a 6 percent negative growth as a direct result of the global financial crisis. Europe forms its main market at 66 percent, with France as the leading market share at 30 percent.

Mr Kowlessur reckons that the global tourism landscape has changed from two decades ago where the country recorded a hefty 15 percent growth rate.

"Mauritius is now competing with many and cheaper destinations around the world and within Africa targeting both middle and high end markets," he says, and cautions on the need for Mauritius to diversify its tourism market beyond high end European tourists. He adds that the country is exploring new markets in Russia and China; "there is now a direct flight between Beijing and Port Louis' partly to market and facilitate easy access and direct to the Island," he says.

Although a step in the right direction, Mr Kowlessur says diversification of the market remains a challenge because "hotels and tourism companies are in the hands of the private sector, whose products are tailored for the high end European market and may not necessarily want to change this model anytime soon."

On the issue of balancing tourism growth and sustainable development, Mauritius is viewed as a model in the region for sustainable tourism characterized with strict enforcement and adherence to the tourism development strategy, which places emphasis on "low rise, low density developments, seascape architecture, use of local materials and sound pollution and waste management."

The two day meeting which precedes the 18th session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Exports will submit recommendations on opportunities in the tourism sector in southern Africa to member States representatives, who will meet for the next two days on the same theme.

Issued by:

ECA Information and Communication Service
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa Ethiopia

Tel: 251 11 5445098 Fax: +251-11-551 03 65
E-mail: ecainfo@uneca.org
Web: www.uneca.org

For highlights and more, follow us on:



Related Articles

ECA study says many peace negotiations do not address causes of conflicts (11/28/2012)

Experts review ECA's flagship report on value-addition (11/28/2012)

SADC eCommerce strategy approved by ICT

Knowledge gap on climate change a major barrier to policy development (9/7/2012)

Africa is the second fastest growing continent - Economic Report on Africa 2012 (6/29/2012)

Knowledge Management training kicks off to strengthen collaboration in support of

ECA's subregional office in Southern Africa gets a new Director (3/16/2012)

Minister of Tourism officially opens 18th Session of ICE, says Africa should tap into cultural tourism (3/1/2012)

Southern Africa should seize current global focus on continent as investment

Ministers(11/20/2012)

Southern African member states(5/4/2012)

destination - Experts(2/29/2012)

ECA, AFDB to collaborate on youth
employment and other projects in
Southern Africa(9/28/2012)

© 2012 Economic Commission for Africa