



**SPEECH BY THE HONORABLE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY,
ZIMBABWE ON THE OCCASSION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 56TH REGIONAL
COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (CAF) MEETING AND SEMINAR ON TOURISM AND AIR
CONNECTIVITY, IN LUANDA, ANGOLA: 28 APRIL 2014**

The UNWTO Secretary General, Dr. Talib Rifai,

Hon. Minister, Pedro Mutindi,

Colleague Ministers,

Angolan High Officials here present,

The UNWTO Secretariat,

Members of the Regional Commission for Africa,

Permanent Secretaries and Director Generals here present,

Invited guests,

Ladies and Gentleman,

As I contemplated, what to share with you during this 1st Session, I was struck by the popular adage, "many faces, many dreams, one goal" which sounds like a simple, economical and yet inspiring quote. This phrase captures the essential core of Africa's oneness, the unity in diversity, which other continents strive for but fail to achieve. I speak to this session, where Africa's future tourism milestones will be discussed to foster sustainable tourism development in the region. The African brand has become more distinguishable, making its mark increasingly visible on the global arena. As your CAF Chair in the next two years to come, I am eager to advance tourism growth on the continent, with help from all of us here.

During this session, we are also expected to tackle the issue of **tourism and air connectivity**. As we deliberate on the subject, let us all acknowledge that



tourism is increasingly becoming more dependent on air transport and if we are to fulfill the expectations of increased arrivals and earnings in our respective destinations, tourism and air transport policies have to be integrated. Zimbabwe will be host to the Routes Africa Summit in June and I look forward to further enriching discussions on how to improve the viability of the African Aviation Industry.

I speak of the prime importance to channel immense effort and resources into making our tourism destinations accessible and attractive. The world has acknowledged the fundamental role played by air connectivity and as a continent, we should embrace the same. Therefore, a great responsibility is thrust upon our tourism and transport sectors to work hand in hand in the provision of accessible tourism destinations.

In terms of natural attractiveness, Africa can hold its own and compete favorably against the major tourist destinations in the world. Gone are the days where we can expect a tourist to visit **56 countries** with **56 visas**. We must embrace UAE's rightly coined 2013 successful bid "connecting minds, creating the future" in their hosting of the 2020 World Expo in Dubai, which I can refer to, due to its articulate proclamation as,

"Today has become an interconnected world, a renewed vision of progress and development based on a shared proposed commitment, hence a single human kind, individual country or specific community could be unique and remarkable; **but it is through working together that we can advance**".

I have managed to aptly capture a way of increasing tourist volumes to our destinations through the following popular four **(4) Gs**,



1. **G**et them in your country,
2. **G**et their money,
3. **G**et them out of your country, and finally
4. **G**et them back

Ladies and gentleman,

Even the bible aptly captures the need to embrace destination accessibility and I can refer to **Isiah 60vs11** where it is written, "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought (KJV)." The only hidden pronouncement of this verse is, we are seized with removing our strategic barriers to improve the way we do business here in Africa such as open skies policies, visa regimes, levies and taxes and more visitor-friendly airports to name but a few.

Key issues such as taxes and levies may be fundamental and legitimate fiscal tools for our governments, but there is a growing concern regarding proliferation of levies on both air transport and tourism. Whilst the industry should naturally contribute its due, this trend can actively produce net damage to our economies. In many cases, taxes and duties create market distortion and a trade barrier as they hamper fair competition among destinations. I commend the UK Government's recent decision to reform the air passenger duty. The decision is as a result of the UNWTO advocating the need for countries to review the Air Passenger Duty (APD).

I would like to reassure you that, as a team, we shall provide Africa's tourism sector with the right impetus. This nexus is important to us in our collective quest for poverty alleviation and tourism development at strategic levels. I am



convinced that, the fate of our tourism lies in our urgency to respond to vicissitudes which prohibit tourism development in our various destinations

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that this Forum will provide a great opportunity for all African States here-present with an opportunity to discuss ways of increasing the number of visitors to the region with authentic and diverse tourism products, enhanced connectivity, a safe and secure environment, and increased quality of services.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let's all be seized with the issue of **tourism and biodiversity, zero tolerance to poaching in Africa by 2020**, which I believe with the roadmap I have designed for your consideration, would seek to strengthen and support Africa's tourism and biodiversity. You may recall that in 2010 we embraced the theme, "tourism and biodiversity" as part of the 2010 World Tourism Day celebrations, but after careful consideration I felt that not enough justice had been done in combating the poaching crisis which has been escalated to alarming levels on our continent.

Preserving our precious flora and fauna is not only essential for development and security, but to our survival on this planet. Hence, we all have a role to play and a stake in conserving biological diversity to sustain life everywhere and in all its forms. Recalling the words of the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, "It is too late to undo the damage the planet has suffered, but it is never too soon to start preserving all that we have left". This gathering here today, I believe, will further play a significant role in sharing and learning knowledge, information exchange and experiences that will enhance the protection and sustainable use of our biodiversity resources.



Ladies and gentlemen,

This commitment takes a multi-pronged approach by dedicating funding to: **“stop the killing,” “stop the trafficking,”** and **“stop the demand.”** As the Tourism Ministers we should support these efforts to holistically curb wildlife poaching by building on current awareness campaigns and promoting engagement with the consumer country governments. This collaborative commitment has massive potential impact for improving the future survival of our last wildlife stocks. Let us jealously guard our heritage so that our children may enjoy the fruit of the seeds we sow and tend today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With these remarks, I wish you all the very best in your deliberations over the next three days. I stand ready to work with you in ensuring that we play our part in building a better future for Africa!

Thank you, Merci, Obrigado