

ADDRESS BY  
**HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO**  
AT THE 3<sup>RD</sup> IAPT AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON  
PEACE THROUGH TOURISM  
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA FEBRUARY 6 2005

**PROTOCOL**

Permit me, on behalf of the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to express my profound gratitude to my brother His Excellency President Mwanawasa of Zambia for the very warm reception extended to my delegation and me since our arrival. It is always a delight to visit the historic city of Lusaka and I must say that the cordiality exhibited since our arrival is indeed an essential ingredient necessary for world peace.

Also, I wish to congratulate the Founder and President of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IAPT) Louis D' Amore for this great initiative at ensuring sustainable Tourism in Africa, together with your partners – the Africa Travel Association which has consistently promoted tourism in the continent of Africa. I am happy to say that the favourable atmosphere that has come to exist during the last couple of years in African relationships have resulted in creating great strides in mutual understanding, respect and awareness of common interest.

The conference which aims at developing a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for African Tourism is relevant to African leaders and their collective resolve. Today, more than ever, the leaders and people of Africa are increasingly aware of their commitments to a new vision for Africa – vision of peace, non-violence and sustainable social, human and economic development for all its people.

Mr. Chairman, tourism is defined as a human activity which involves movement of persons outside their usual environment for purposes of leisure, business, enlightenment, exposure, even education. This activity is considered as one of the core economic activities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of its significant roles in the national economies of both developed and developing countries. It is a complex network of activities involving all aspects of accommodation, transportation, information, publishing, hospitality, technology and services. Today it is playing the same roles as manufacturing and agriculture especially in terms of job creation, foreign exchange earnings, the development of hitherto disadvantaged areas, and the promotion of goodwill, harmony, love and peace.

In 2002 alone, worldwide receipts from tourism totaled US \$ 474 billion. This sector is now responsible for one in every ten jobs in the world. For developing countries therefore, tourism represents one sure way to resolving the challenge of underemployment and unemployment.

A recent forecast by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in its *Tourism 2020 Vision* shows that by the year 2020, international tourism will reach 1.6 billion arrivals with receipts amounting to US\$2 trillion, US\$ five (US\$5 billion) billion every day. The forecast articulates the position that tourism will become the world's largest industry. Furthermore, the sector will have extensive economic, socio-cultural and environmental consequences and, therefore, calls for the strengthening of partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, historical facts indicate that the first Global Conference with the theme: "Tourism: A VITAL FORCE FOR PEACE" took place in October 1988 in Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada and its theme builds on the philosophy and principles expressed in *The Manila Declaration on Tourism*. The *Declaration* challenges the industry on the need to emphasize the social, cultural, economic, educational and political values of tourism. The *Declaration* also states that the super structure of tourism is PEACE. Thus, tourism is potentially the most significant vehicle for promoting universal understanding and trust as well as goodwill among different nationalities.

The truth is that when you know a place, its culture, people, values, institutions, and those things that sustain them as people, you are likely to appreciate their achievements and see them as part of living humanity. Tourism builds contacts, deepens knowledge, promotes understanding, and strengthens bonds of friendship. The benefits of tourism bring out the best in people and encourage tolerance and sensitivity to the realities of others. In these ways, tourism promotes peace, love, understanding, unity and progress among peoples, communities and nations. These are values and opportunities that we must strive for because they are attainable.

Mr. Chairman, the theme for this year's 3<sup>rd</sup> IIPT African peace through tourism conference is "Tourism: Pathway to A Peaceful and Prosperous Africa". I am particularly touched by the implication of this theme and its relevance to Africa. Our continent, until very recently was characterised by youth restiveness, communal clashes, religious riots, coups and counter-coups, political uncertainty and instability, corruption and bad governance, and general illiberal political conduct. Civil and inter-state wars diverted resources from development, undermined public policies, contaminated social values, compromised good governance, displaced producers and rural dwellers, and culminated in the relocation or destruction of public utilities.

I am pleased to note that Africa has moved largely away from its past. Today, we are collectively striving for a stable, peaceful, prosperous and progressive continent that is steadily taking its rightful place in the global community.

To do this however, requires that we pay attention to the living condition of the individual African and our respective communities. For an individual to be a tourist, he or she must be well-fed, secure, happy, at peace with him or her self and family, be gainfully employed, healthy, and enlightened enough to want to visit or learn about other places. Such an individual must have access to resources and the required infrastructure to facilitate movement. The community from which such a potential tourist originates ~~from~~ must be stable, peaceful and prosperous.

Nationally, public policies, leadership, and politics must acknowledge and favour the growth of tourism to encourage the inflow of visitors. Official policy must see tourism as a positive and critical aspect of development. In fact, leadership at the highest level must identify with the tourism development agenda of the nation concerned. It is my hope that this meeting will look into these and related issues and come with viable recommendations.

The *Tourism 2020 Vision* which I mentioned earlier indicates that tourism growth in all the regions of the world will be accompanied by fierce competition and in order to be a winner, development must be realistic, sustainable, and pro-people. Such development must build values and environments that

enhance productivity, encourage creativity, engender peace and harmony, and build institutions and structures that encourage dialogue, tolerance, and peace. The question is: how can our region develop quality tourism products when we engage in the destruction of our bio-diversity, cultural diversity and social development?

Africa has what it takes to generate substantial foreign exchange through tourism for development purposes. Africa possesses vast and largely untapped natural and cultural resources in abundance in all its sub-regions. In spite of the abundant resources, Africa suffers widely from perception in major tourist generating markets of being a high-risk continent to visit. We should not be deterred but we should concentrate also on infrastructure and product improvement and expansion to be followed by image enhancement.

We must individually and collectively, and at all times, fight those image eroders as well as unwarranted, unfair and undeserved stereotypes about us in the international media and decision-making circles. What is so amazing is that these stereotypes are generated, packaged, and circulated by people who do not know our history, our struggles, our sacrifices, dreams, and capacities. They build on rumours or isolated experiences that are not unique to Africa. They deliberately ignore our achievements and beauty and prefer to generalize about the continent. They also ignore our cultural, physical, infrastructural, social and other assets that should attract the world to Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in a continent that can boast of variety of sites, the typical African hospitality, and varieties of culture, tourism only seeks a chance to blossom. But this can only happen in conditions of peace, love, understanding, tolerance, inclusion and democracy. Today's Africa is in a new dawn. This is an Africa characterized by commitment to democracy and to the empowerment of people and their communities. It is an Africa that is fast rehabilitating, regenerating, and repositioning itself for growth, security, stability, democracy and development. This, is an Africa that is open for the world to discover, re-explore and fall in love with. We in Africa, through the African Union, NEPAD and our respective member states are fully committed to improving on those values, policies, programmes, institutions and structures that promote peace, tolerance and inclusion. These in turn will provide the context for expansion of tourism and consequently ensure the promotion of growth and development.

In Nigeria, tourism is taken as one of our six priority areas and there is a Presidential Council on Tourism that I chair as demonstration of how seriously we take the sector. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me at this juncture inform this august gathering of the preparations which are in top gear in Nigeria and to invite you all to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commonwealth Tourism Ministers Meeting holding from 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April 2005, and the International Conference on Tourism Communications in September 2005. Both will be focusing significantly on correcting the negative perception of our continent.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the socio-economic benefits derivable from tourism are enormous and therefore call for maximum regional cooperation and collaboration especially in the areas of transportation and information technology. It is my hope that with the inherent potentials in tourism, our governments will continue to pay adequate attention to the sector.

Finally, I wish once again to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia, the President of International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPPT), Louis D' Amore, and the Ministry of Tourism of Zambia for the excellent organization of this conference. *Thank you all and God bless.*