

**ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU TOURISME
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL DEL TURISMO**

COMMUNITY TOURISM: THE WAY AHEAD FOR AFRICA

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ADDRESS BY DR. DAWID DE VILLIERS, DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE WORLD TOURISM
ORGANIZATION

Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

"I would like to thank the International Institute for Peace through Tourism and Mr. Louis D'Amore personally for the invitation to speak at this 2nd African Conference. I am an African with roots of 340 years spanning 9 generations in this continent. There is nothing I would like to see more than the success of Africa. Every opportunity I get to make a contribution I grab with both hands - that is why it is such a privilege for me to be here.

It is also a great pleasure to be back in Tanzania. And, let me be bold - without bias against any other country - Tanzania is one of my favoured destinations - and the Minister knows this. The relationship between Tanzania and the World Tourism Organization is excellent and we have good cooperation in many fields.

I have been asked to speak on the theme: Community Tourism: the Way Ahead for Africa.

Addressing this subject requires that I start with peace. There is no way forward for Africa without peace. We all know about the disasters that conflict, terrorism and war inflict on people and the way these situations undermine development and destroy communities.

Peace remains the most precious commodity in the world - it represents the first step on the road to development, progress, social order and fulfillment. We need peace if we wish to meet the major challenges that threaten our survival. Reducing poverty has become one of the most compelling challenges of our time. Poverty is more than a lack of income - it is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon with an intricate relationship to issues such as disease, illiteracy, infant mortality, environmental degradation and many other socio-economic issues.

Against this background the 189 members of the UN General Assembly unanimously agreed to the Millennium Declaration in 2000 - a declaration of intent and a commitment to work for a better world in the 21st Century. The Declaration was linked to a short number of clearly defined **Development Goals** that provide the criteria to measure the progress made - or failure in meeting the set goals.

The unanimous decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations to extend the status of WTO to that of a fully-fledged UN Specialised Agency, places tourism in a strong position to play a more direct role in driving the peace and development agenda forward. For many years the

important contribution tourism was making to job creation, foreign exchange income, capacity building, community empowerment and development in general, has not received the recognition it deserves. That is why international financial agencies did not include tourism in their development strategies. That situation has changed significantly over the last number of years.

The decision of the General Assembly of the UN to designate 2001 as International Eco-tourism year and to ask WTO and UNEP to arrange a programme and World Summit was a significant step towards greater recognition. The inclusion of paragraphs 43 and 70 in the Implementation Plan of WSSD (World Summit for Sustainable Development) in 2002 in Johannesburg and the instruction to WTO to take a lead was another important step. The recent decision of the UN to extend the status **of fully-fledged UN Specialised Agency** to WTO is recognition by world leaders of the value of tourism. It is recognition of the importance of an industry that is now placed on equal footing with such other principal activities of human society as industry, agriculture, transport, education, culture, health and labour.

Africa is well positioned to derive more value from tourism. When we talk about Africa, we must remember that we talk of a very big continent with over fifty highly heterogeneous countries and territories. There are many huge differences between countries within Africa. There are sub-regions and countries where tourism is a star performer - in others the opposite is true. Africa undoubtedly has a considerable tourism potential that could be developed. Its tourism strength however, is above all to be found in its originality and authenticity. It has a lot to offer that can no longer be found elsewhere. Africa still has a legacy of romanticism as the continent of the explorers and as a place for adventures.

However, the region has not yet managed to gain access to world markets on a scale that would make tourism the force for development and community empowerment that it could become. Africa's base volume is still low compared with other regions.

One key challenge that Africa and African destinations face is to improve the commonly weak image, or even lack of image, of the continent as a whole - and even more importantly of its individual destinations. Too often a negative perception prevails of Africa as a continent of poverty, disease and conflict. Problems in a single country continue to exert a negative effect on perceptions of the region as a whole. The general public and potential tourist are often unable to distinguish between individual countries. Consequently all destinations suffer to a greater or lesser extent. Destinations should work to replace this negative image with a positive one through active, focused and well planned communication strategies in which the uniqueness and strengths of what they have to offer, and the positive developments in their countries are highlighted.

Africa is an exciting continent but its progress and development are hampered, amongst other, by the impediments created by poor or non-existent infrastructure and fragile developing economies. However, most African countries have one, common, unique selling property, namely an abundance of Africa's diverse and fascinating fauna and flora. If this great natural wealth can be correctly conserved and managed, their sustainable utilization should contribute significantly to the long-term development of the continent.

Africa has an explosive eco-tourism potential and it is eco-tourism - more than anything else - that will create jobs and opportunities for communities to develop. The eco-tourism wealth of Africa is not concentrated in cities but is spread out over vast rural areas where poverty is more prevalent and development of communities more desperately needed. Ecotourism is in essence

community orientated. This is a message that WTO is preaching from every platform. The Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism now a UN document - makes the point abundantly clear. The document contains numerous paragraphs that elaborate on the particular nature of community involvement in the development of eco-tourism. The same can be said of the WSSD Plan of Implementation. In paragraph 43 the objective to enable indigenous and local communities to develop and benefit from eco-tourism is strongly emphasised. In the WTO publication: "Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management" this aspect is dealt with in great detail. The argument for community development through tourism has been convincingly made - and eco-tourism provides Africa with the ideal vehicle to move in that direction.

One of the most successful and powerful initiatives to utilize the immense natural potential of Africa - its open spaces, rivers, mountains and wildlife - comes from the Peace Parks Foundation and the concept of Trans-frontier Conservation Areas. The principle is to integrate large tracks of land crossing national boundaries into Peace Parks. The goal is to advance sustainable economic development, stimulate community involvement, conserve bio-diversity and strengthen regional peace and stability. The Foundation has been requested by the World Bank, NEPAD (New Economic Plan for African Development) and DBSA (Development Bank of Southern Africa) and other international aid agencies to properly plan the infrastructure and tourist facilities needed in 22 identified Peace Parks - and to facilitate their development.

The fact is that the national boundaries proclaimed in colonial times and during the period that was dubbed the "scramble for Africa", cut across tribal land and ethnic groupings, across animal migration routes, thereby fragmented eco-systems and led to the destruction of bio-diversity. No wonder Africa had so many civil wars and regional conflicts. The concept to cluster together those tracks of lands that belong together and manage its flora and fauna in an integrated way lays the foundation for economic growth, progress and peace. It is not accidental that the initiative is called Peace Parks.

Let me mention only one example of a peace park that was established. The area between South Africa (Kruger Park), Mozambique (Gaza) and Zimbabwe (Gonarezhou) has been integrated to form the world's greatest animal kingdom - one-third the size of Germany. The translocation of 1000 elephants from Kruger Park started in June last year, followed by the translocation of other species.

This concept can open many new doors for Africa's development. Peace Parks can be created across the continent, and even linked together in a way that could create unique animal kingdoms and make Africa the world's leader in the protection of fauna and flora. The economic benefits would be enormous - mind-boggling. The world has lost more than 30% of its plant, fish and animal species over the past 30 years. It has lost more than 30% of its forests. I don't even want to begin to refer to the many global environmental threats such as climate change and global warming. Suffice to say that with peace parks we are creating "lungs" for the world - lungs that can become the backbone of Africa's economic growth over the next three decades.

The image of Africa in many parts of the world is that of a "dark" or "lost" continent. It is better known for aids, famine, droughts, poverty and civil wars. It is a continent that represents only about 4% of world trade. Can there be any beacons of hope? I strongly believe the answer is "Yes". Africa is not "lost", but just "not discovered". I believe that the focus is so strong on the negatives, that many positive trends are being missed.

The image must change. Yes, and we will have to do it ourselves - not by blaming others - but by using our opportunities to make Africa a continent of peace and progress. To achieve that goal the strength of tourism should be more effectively use as a tool for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. This challenge is our opportunity.

Thank you