

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



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ON THE OCCASION OF THE

**1st IIPT European Conference:
Bridging the North-South Divide through sustainable tourism development and
the UN Millennium Development Goals**

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The Moderator;

Hon. Minister;

Delegations;

Ladies and Gentlemen

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON. MINISTER OF MET AT THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PEACE THROUGH TOURISM CONFERENCE

THEME: bridging the North-South Divide through Sustainable Tourism Development and the UN Millennium Development Goals

At the onset I would like to thank the International Institute for Peace through Tourism for the invitation extended to Namibia to participate in this Conference. We are looking forward to learn from other countries and to share our experience.

The International Institute for Peace through Tourism initiative is special because of the special support it received from internationally renowned and revered leadership such as Pope John Paul II, Nobel Peace laureates Nelson Mandela and Wangari Maathi, to mention but a few. The realization and recognition of the importance of the tourism industry has been a significant milestone. It is now accepted that tourism can play a prominent role in promoting international peace and collaboration amongst nation states and non-state actors; biodiversity conservation, advancement of culture and natural heritage; poverty reduction as well as healing wounds of conflicts. Tourism thus provides an instrument or tool to bridge the North-South divide and for the international community to work towards the achievement of sustainable development, in accordance with the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

The importance of tourism cannot be overemphasized. It translate itself into one of the major transnational trade and development sectors. Today tourism is the fastest growing industry

internationally. The year 2007 exceeded the expectations for international tourism with arrivals reaching new record figures close to 900 million. This represents a 6% increase over 2006. The different world regions also continued to enjoy steady growth rates with the Middle East leading the way with Africa coming in fourth ahead of the Americas and Europe. However, Americas and Europe still remain the biggest tourist attractions (UNWTO, 2008).

Namibia as part of the international community, the country's tourism industry has been experiencing a steady growth over the last several years. For example, the tourist arrivals have grown from 833,345 in 2006 to 928,912 in 2007. This represents an increase in tourists of 11%, which is impressive by any standards. This clearly demonstrates the healthy and vibrant nature of our tourism industry.

Tourism plays a significant role in international peace, sustainable economic and environmental development; infrastructure development in a world where the divide between the rich and poor nations seems to continue to increase.

For the South, particularly Africa, which is faced with many developmental challenges, tourism has become one of the important development pillars. Therefore the theme for this year's bridging the North-South Divide through Sustainable Tourism Development could not have been more appropriate. Similarly, the topic of this session, session (1) namely the 'Bridging the North-South Divide through Sustainable Tourism Development and the UN Millennium Development Goals, will also help participants to evaluate progress made in the realization of MDGs and the role of the tourism industry. The potential for tourism to play a significant role in the alleviation of poverty, which is one of the aims of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism, is increasingly recognized by international bodies and national governments, including my country Namibia. Poverty reduction is one of the MDGs. later on in this presentation I will share information on how the tourism industry in Namibia is contributing to poverty reduction.

In spite of the many difficulties such as natural disasters, health scares, rising oil prices, exchange rate fluctuations, military conflict and terrorism, as well as other economic and political uncertainties, that affect this industry, it continues to grow. International tourist arrivals worldwide have continued to grow steadily as mentioned before. The tourism receipts corresponding to these arrivals reached US\$ 856 billion in 2007. These figures demonstrate once again the resilience of the industry. Moreover, the importance of this industry, particularly for the low and lower-middle income countries is confirmed by the fact that the growth rate in international arrivals of these countries between 1990 and 2006 increased by 271.9 percent. Among the 30 countries with the largest poor populations, there were ten countries with a growth in international arrivals between 1990 and 2001 of over 200 per cent. This growth rate clearly surpassed those of the developed countries. It is therefore important to note tourism is a principal export for 83% of developing countries. Thereby contributing to the realization of the UN Millennium Development Goals

Tourism plays an important role in women and child development. It employs more women and young people than most other industries, providing economic benefits and independence to them. This is very important in terms of supporting child development and breaking the cycle of poverty (UNWTO, 2007). It has also to be noted that women empowerment and gender equality is part of the MDGs.

Some of the areas that need to be strengthened to bridge the North-South divide through sustainable tourism is the travel advisory services. Some travel advisory services continued to portray the South as politically unstable, ravaged by war, corruption and poverty. Such attitudes need to be addressed and reversed.

Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that, since the early 1990s tourists flow to the South has been increasing steadily, Africa only receives 3% of the total international tourists' arrivals. This is a clear testimony of Africa's 'perceived' image as a war ravaged poverty stricken and disease riddled continent. However, one can argue that the steady increase is a result of factors such as the end of Cold War and civil conflicts that resulted into the democratization of the countries of the South.

The recovery of the international financial markets from the crisis of the early 1980s and sustained growth of the world economy, as well as the appreciation of the US Dollar and other major international currencies may also be some of those factors.

According to the latest UNWTO statistics for 2008, all sub-regions have received positive tourism growth results. What is more encouraging is the fact that the countries of the South are recording an increased growth with the Middle East leading the way followed by North-East and South Asia, and Central and South America. However with the increase on oil prices and the financial crises in the USA and elsewhere, we are still waiting to see the impact of these events on the tourism industry.

Tourism like sports does promote people to people contact. Against that background the sector should not be politicized. Of-course it is of essence that at all times the safety and security of tourist should be at the centre of government policies, in the same way safety and security is accorded to any citizen living in a given country.

Another area for closer South-South and North-South cooperation and strengthening is climate change and its impact on tourism. The effects of climate change do not respect national or international borders or geographical locations. Research shows that the world has now become hotter than at any time during the past 1000 years. Climate models that project future conditions show that global warming will continue if emissions of heat-trapping gases continue to increase. It is therefore not very difficult to conclude that this global warming will have significant impacts on the tourism sector. As you know many of our tourist especially the overseas tourist come to Namibia and other parts of the South during winter season when the temperatures are not too high for them. If the temperature regimes shift and the days become warmer even during the winter we may see a decline in the number of tourist coming to our countries in the South.

We need to understand the activities which generate Carbon Dioxide CO₂ emissions – and find ways to mitigate their effects. Activities such as travel, transport and using energy for heating, lighting and power are such activities and off-course they are very much linked to the tourism

sector. The effect of these activities is known as ones' 'carbon footprint' – we all have one and we all need to make changes to reduce its size. It is therefore very important to work with our visitors, communities, tourism operators, government departments, schools and other stakeholders in the tourism sector in order to create awareness on climate change. This obligation is applicable to both the North and the South. This will thus allow the tourism sector to respond positively to the challenge of climate change and through that we can minimize our carbon foot print, while making sure that tourism should continue to make a significant contribution to countries' economic development.

The need for South- South cooperation in strengthening ties to advance initiatives towards sustainable tourism development should be exploited through organizations such as UNWTO, International Institute for Peace through Tourism and Bi-lateral channels. Transport in Africa especially air transport is of great concern because it has a major influence on the tourism industry. In order to access certain countries in Africa one still has to travel through Europe to reach these countries, thus making it expensive in terms of especially financial resource and the amount of time spent travelling. Alas most of our marketing and promotional material is geared towards European and American market rather than intraregional. Due to proximity of the neighboring countries it is important that intraregional travel be encouraged and facilitated. Since long haul air travel is also contributing to global warming, intraregional travel by other means rather than Air reduce release of harmful gasses. For example, in 2007, 74 % of the tourists arrived in Namibia by road. It is interesting to note that most overseas tourists once they have arrived by air in Southern Africa make use of roads to tour the region.

Other broad areas of South-South and North South cooperation in the field of tourism which may need attention includes amongst others:

- Joint Tourism Marketing and development

- Interaction between tourism and travel trade 'officials' and tourism related organizations, Associations, youth and students
- Study visits of researchers and experts on tourism, including Vocational Training and skills development
- Information Sharing and Mutual Cooperation on Tourism
- The sharing of best practice and best practice guidelines in the sector
- Harmonization on classification and standardisation and reciprocation of privileges between countries in the sector.
- Technical and financial support for the development and production of tourism statistics
- Technical and financial assistance for the development of a central data, information management for planning and monitoring and other products of the industry
- Sharing of experience with the mainstreaming of arts and culture into the tourism products

These broad areas of cooperation may not be all relevant to all countries. However, joint and concerted efforts to address these areas in terms of South-South and North -South collaboration will go a long way in maximising the benefits of tourism especially through the multiplier effect that has a positive impact on the achievements of the MDGs

As part of our commitment to realize the MDGs within the tourism sector, Namibia has developed the Community Based Natural Resources Management Programme (CBNRM). Against that background we made great strides in promoting sustainable tourism through the implementation of the Community-based Natural Resource Management Programme (CBNRM). This programme effectively came into fruition with the passing of the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996. This legislation gave conditional user rights over wildlife and other natural resources to communities in communal areas that formed a conservation management unit called conservancy. The core aim of the CBNRM programme is to empower local communities to manage and benefit from their natural resources in a sustainable fashion. The three most important rights devolved to communities are the rights of ownership over huntable game, rights to revenues from the sale of

game or game products; rights to tourism, including building important tourist facilities such as campsites and to conduct tour guiding.

This devolution of rights to the local communities to conserve and benefit from the natural resources found in and around their settlements has led to one of Namibia's success in the area of economic empowerment since independence in 1990. What makes the success of this programme more remarkable is the fact that when those rights were under the colonial apartheid government, a significant reduction of wildlife in Namibia was experienced and some animal species were approaching near extinction. Within less than 10 years of the restoration of these rights the wildlife numbers have increased to such an extent that communities can sustainably harvest wildlife. This process has not only allowed Namibia to realize the restoration and/or preservation of the country's heritage and wildlife, but also aided otherwise destitute citizens to generate jobs, reduce poverty and improve their quality of life. Since the first conservancy was registered in 1998 the number of registered conservancies has grown over the years. Today there are 53 registered conservancies with several more in the pipeline. This represents 118,704 km² of communal area conservancy, which accounts for 39% of all communal land and 14.4% of the country's total land surface.

In 2007 the financial and economic income from the conservancies and programme supported CBNRM activities generated N\$39.1 million, of which N\$27.6 million came from conservancies and N\$11.5 million from other CBNRM activities. In terms of benefits to conservancies the largest contribution comes from joint venture lodges between the local community and investors and the rest is generated from wildlife utilization such as trophy hunting, game meat consumption as well as sale of live game. Within the implementation of the conservancy policy Namibia was able to address the UN Millennium Development Goals related to poverty, nutrition and women empowerment as most participants in conservancies are women. And this demonstrates that sustainable tourism has potential to address the challenges of the MDGs.

Apart from financial and economic benefits, the CBNRM programme also has socio-political benefits. The conservancies have acquired decision-making powers, developed leadership skill;

advance good governance and accountability, responsible management of common property resources and local level monitoring. All these benefits and powers, reinforce a sense of ownership and control over natural resources and tourism development amongst the beneficiary communities.

Another remarkable achievement of this programme as mentioned above is the high number of women either holding management and staff position thus enabling them to participate in natural resources management and decision-making process. Traditionally, all over the world, particularly in rural areas, women are not afforded decision-making opportunities besides good intentions of national consultations. Namibia is not any different. However, CBNRM programme is changing this attitude. In Namibia 32 of the 53 conservancies women are managing finances.

The programme has also reached many international milestones by way of international awards. For example a number of conservancies, tourist establishment and operations in Namibia have won international awards.

The Na// Jagna Conservancy was recently chosen by the Equator Initiative Technical Advisory Committee as one of the twenty-five outstanding winners of the equator Prize of 2008 and received this award on 6 October in Barcelona Spain.

Despite the good and encouraging picture communities, MET and support organizations are still faced with many challenges, amongst which the following rank the highest: financial management and sustainability; strong leadership and managing benefits. However with good will and through the strengthened cooperation between South-South and North-South sustainable tourism is possible. Similarly, I strongly believe tourism is one tool that can help Nations to realize the MDGs.

In conclusion, once again I thank the IIPT for inviting us to be part of this conference and to share our ideas and Namibia's experience on the subject matter.

I thank you.

