



The State of Eritrea



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa

**23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of  
Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE)**

**ECA Office for Eastern Africa**

**Concept Note for the Plenary Session:**

**Boosting Regional Tourism in Eastern Africa:  
Enhancing the Competitiveness of the Region**

**Asmara, Eritrea**

**05-07 November 2019**

## I. Background

Tourism is a priority sector in Africa, at the national, regional and continental levels. For Eastern Africa, it is a driver of economic growth and development, contributing as much as 64% to Seychelles' GDP and an average of 8.7% of GDP across the region.

The Africa Union (AU) has identified tourism as one of the avenues through which to achieve the goals of the Union's Agenda 2063: *The Africa We Want*. Meanwhile, at the regional level, the East African Community (EAC) has – in its Vision 2050 framework – identified tourism as a pathway for resolving the perennial challenge of unemployment, in particular, that of women and young people. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has also identified the sector as a channel through which its developmental goals could be achieved.

In its Agenda 2063 goals, the AU has set targets to be met within its 10-year implementation frameworks, the first of which is due to end by 2023. The main target in this first phase is to increase tourism's contribution to the continent's GDP by 100%, from the 2013 base year (i.e. from some USD 162 billion to USD 324 billion) and to double intra-Africa tourism over the same period.

To realise these goals, the AU recommends the implementation of a 'Continental Tourism Strategy' (the formulation of which has been completed) and the establishment of an African Tourism Organisation. What is more, the tourism sector has been identified as one of the five priority service sectors for African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Similarly, the ongoing work on the formulation of the EAC tourism marketing strategy envisages growing international, intra- and inter-regional to over 30 million by 2024, with a target of 80% from the region.

These notable efforts and prioritization of the tourism sector, notwithstanding substantial challenges to the growth of international and (even more so) intra-African tourism, continue to include only a narrow range of products that are often nature-based and generic, without having the African tourism market in mind. There is also limited human capital, lack of value for money and empirical data to inform appropriate policy formulation, all pointing to competitiveness-related issues. In fact, the recently released *Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index*, indicates that Eastern Africa is not doing well when compared to other parts of the world and that at positions 62 and 82, Seychelles and Kenya, are the best ranked countries in the region ([WEForum, 2019](#)).

## II. Objectives of the Session

This Session will discuss the issues that hinder the growth and development of the tourism sector in the Eastern Africa region. In particular, the session will discuss the extant challenges and potential solutions to address them. It will also deliberate on innovative ideas that could position the region as a preferred destination, first regionally and second internationally.

The Session will, therefore, explore best practices from across the world that could work to ensure that tourism is developed in a sustainable manner, in line with Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030. In particular, the session will deliberate on the following:

- a) Why is Eastern Africa region still low-ranking in the Global Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, and what could be done to reverse this trend?
- b) Can tourism in Africa – and in Eastern Africa, in particular – contribute to Agenda 2030? If so, which particular Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could the sector have an impact on?
- c) Who are the main stakeholders in intra-regional and intra-continental tourism in Africa, and what are their roles? What can be done to ensure that stakeholders work collaboratively?
- d) What lessons can be learned from the most-visited cities in the world, if any? What could be done to ensure the sustainability of the urban tourism concept in the Eastern Africa region?

## III. Format of the Meeting

The convener and contact person for this session is Geoffrey Manyara, Tourism Expert, UNECA Office for Eastern Africa. Further clarification can be requested from the convener via email: [manyara@un.org](mailto:manyara@un.org). The session will have a presentation by the convener as part of the main plenary parallel sessions of the 23<sup>rd</sup> ICSEO. This will be followed by a panel discussion.

Moderator:

- **Christabel Ligami**, News reporter, The East African

Panelists:

- **Hon. Hirut Kassaw**, Minister for Culture and Tourism, Ethiopia
- **Richard Rugimabana**, Executive Secretary, Tourism Confederation of Tanzania
- **Osman Abdi Mohamed**, Chief Executive Officer, National Tourism Office, Djibouti

- **Jacinta Nzioka**, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Convention Bureau.

## IV. Participants

The panel session will be attended by representatives of Eastern Africa member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and IGOs. In attendance will also be representatives of the private sector, international institutions, civil society organisations, media, and other relevant stakeholders.

## V. Supporting Documents

Mastercard. (2019). **Global Destination Cities Index Report**. Available at:  
<https://newsroom.mastercard.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GDCI-Global-Report-FINAL-1.pdf>

UNECA, AU, AfDB and UNCTAD. (2019). **Next Steps for African Continental Free Trade Area: Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA IX)**. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Available at:  
[https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/aria9\\_report\\_en\\_4sept\\_fin.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/aria9_report_en_4sept_fin.pdf)

UNECA. (forthcoming). **Sustainable Financing of Tourism in Eastern Africa**. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

UNWTO. (2016). **Annual Report**. Madrid, Spain. Available at:  
[http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/annual\\_report\\_2016\\_web\\_0.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/annual_report_2016_web_0.pdf)

WEF. (2019). **Travel and tourism Competitiveness Report: Travel and Tourism at a Tipping Point**. Geneva, Switzerland. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TTCR\\_2019.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TTCR_2019.pdf)