

**REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**REMARKS**

**BY**

**HON. JOHN MULIMBA**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**(REGIONAL AFFAIRS)**

**AT**

**THE 2ND UGANDA - KENYA COAST TOURISM CONFERENCE, 2023**

**DIANI REEF BEACH RESORT AND SPA,**

**KWALE COUNTY, REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**MONDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 2023**

**The Hon. Minister of State for Tourism of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Martin Mugarra Bahinduka**

**Your Excellency the Deputy Governor of Kwale County, Hon. Josphat Chirema Kombo**

**The Deputy Governors of Counties of Kilifi and Taita Taveta**

**The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Bagiire Vincent Waiswa**

**The Consul General of Uganda to Mombasa, Amb. Paul Mukumbya**

**County Executive Committee Members present**

**Members of the County Government of Kwale**

**Participants from Uganda and Kenya**

**Invited Guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

I bring you warm greetings from the Government and People of Uganda. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government and People of Kenya for the warm reception we have received since we arrived at the Coast yesterday. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Her Excellency Fatuma Mohammed Achani, Governor of Kwale County, for hosting us here in Diani. I wish also to thank the Consul General, Amb. Paul Mukumbya and his team, as well as partners and stakeholders from Uganda and Kenya Coast, for organizing the 2nd Uganda- Kenya Coast Tourism Conference.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am very pleased to be part of the 2nd Uganda- Kenya Coast Tourism Conference. Last year, I was part of the inaugural Uganda- Kenya Coast Tourism Conference which took place in Mombasa. As I recall, we agreed that this Conference should be annual. Therefore, it is my pleasure to once again, thank the Consul General of Uganda, and other stakeholders for organizing this Conference.

A few months ago, when we met in Kampala on 22nd August 2023 during the launch of the 2nd Uganda- Kenya Coast Tourism Conference, i emphasized the importance of strengthening, the partnership between Uganda and Kenya in the area of tourism. Our two countries possess great potential, which we need to explore and showcase to the rest of the world. We need to use platforms such as the 2nd Uganda- Kenya Coast Tourism Conference, to build a strong and vibrant tourism sector in the region.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

One of the objectives of this year’s Conference, is creating awareness about the two destinations and the tourism products they offer. As you are aware, Uganda is endowed with unique safaris, rich cultural and historical heritage, a variety of attractions of flora and fauna, including the mountain gorillas, tree climbing lions and over 1063 bird species in national parks and protected areas spread across the country.

On the other hand, the Coastal region of Kenya is endowed several tourism attractions from the historical Fort Jesus, Beautiful Beaches and Resorts, Marine National Parks, Elephant sanctuary, the Dolphins, Wildlife Parks, slave caves and sacred forests, Vasco Da Gama Fort in Malindi, White sands, the Coral Reefs, diving and snorkeling among others.

However, there is still lack of enough awareness about the tourism products in both countries. A big section of the population, including tourism stakeholders, is not aware of the rich and diverse products in each other’s countries, even when the two countries remain each other’s top tourist source markets. Therefore, we need to raise awareness about tourism products in both countries so that we can increase the number of tourists between Uganda and Kenya.

We also need to carryout sensitization about the existing visa free regime between our two countries, as well as the East Africa Tourist Visa especially for tourists coming from outside the African continent. We also need to encourage regular fam trips and excursions between Uganda and Kenya, in order to showcase the rich tourism products which can be marketed by tourism stakeholders in both countries.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

We need to build strong partnerships between Uganda and Kenya in the area of tourism. Building partnerships, enables tourism stakeholders to share information, knowledge and expertise on how to boost the tourism sector in the two countries. It also helps to create joint itineraries that can be used by stakeholders to market tourism destinations in Uganda and Kenya.

At a policy level, we need to create an enabling environment which can foster, building of synergies and partnerships among stakeholders in the tourism sector. This would require efforts of the public and private sector, to jointly work together to formulate policies that support development of the tourism sector. We can also use foras such as Joint Ministerial Committee Meetings, between our two countries, to create an enabling policy framework that can facilitate tourism between Uganda and Kenya

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

We need to address bottlenecks that hinder tourism between our two countries. Much as we are endowed with rich diverse tourism products, a lot of barriers that prevent full realization of benefits from the tourism sector still exist. For instance, the high cost of air travel between Uganda and Kenya, is making it hard for tourists to move between our two countries. Therefore, we need to make air travel between our countries and the whole region, as affordable as possible.

In addition, we must also improve our existing infrastructure especially roads, and airport facilities, to facilitate movement of tourists. As Government of Uganda, we have embarked on expanding Entebbe International Airport, construction of a new airport in Hoima District as well as upgrading the existing airfields. In addition, we have also undertaken to improve existing road infrastructure leading to tourism rich areas.

However, we still have gaps in the area of accommodation, especially high end lodges in the major parks and game reserves. We therefore call upon partners, to come and invest in high end accommodation in Uganda, in order to address this gap.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

As I conclude, the theme for the 2nd Uganda- Kenya Coast Tourism Conference is “Consolidating Networks, Synergies & Diversity to maximize the tourism potential between Uganda and Kenya Coastal Region. Indeed, there is a lot of potential existing between our two countries, yet we have not explored it. However, we have the ability to build a strong and vibrant tourism sector which can facilitate an increase in the tourism figures between our two countries. We can move beyond the 370,000 Kenyans who visited Uganda last year, and the 150,000 Ugandans who visited Kenya last year. All we need is to work together, to ensure that we make this partnership work.

I wish to thank you all for participating in the 2nd Uganda- Kenya Coast Tourism Conference. I look forward to see you in Kampala next year.

Enjoy your stay in Diani

**ASANTE SANA**

**MUNGU AWA BARIKI**

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY**