

## UGANDA AT ITB BERLIN 2011



### ITB Berlin 2011

Uganda Tourism Board led a team of Uganda's tourism public and private sector to ITB Berlin 2011 for the 15th partaking.

ITB is the biggest and most popular tourism fair which attracts trade and tourism industry players in enormous numbers.

This year, the show which run from the 9th-13th March 2011, attracted 11,163 exhibitors and over 280,000 visitors and trade visitors.

Uganda showcased its plentiful attractions to the Germany population and the entire world. Germany is ranked as the top most world spender in tourism and travel according to UNWTO statistics and according to research; it is also among the top 10 tourism potential markets for Uganda.

### Increase in Visitor Arrivals in 2010

About 880,000 tourists visited Uganda in 2010. This showed an increment of over 300,000 tourists from the records of 2009. Uganda in 2009 received about 844,000 visitors.

Uganda Tourism Board is intensifying the marketing of the country as a pristine destination to increase arrivals with a million tourists targeted this year.

UTB has also put in more effort to lure the local population into visiting the numerous tourism sites that the country is endowed with by boosting and escalating the domestic tourism campaign.

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### Northern Uganda Tourism Launched

The tourism fraternity came together to launch tourism in a region that has been torn apart by wars and instabilities and yet holds unspoiled tourism products adding to Uganda's enormous diversity.

A series of events were hosted including the launch of a book, Tourism Investment opportunities in Northern Uganda, before the grand launch at Fort Patiko in Gulu district.

The State Minister for Tourism, Mr. Serapio Rukundo, said northern Uganda has numerous tourist attractions ranging from wildlife, rich landscapes, scenic rivers and cultural and historical sites.

"Unfortunately, these unique attractions largely remain unknown to potential tourists, tour operators and investors," Mr. Rukundo said at the launch of a book, 'Tourism Investment Opportunities in Northern Uganda.

Prior to the launch, a thorough assessment of potential historical, natural and cultural tourism attractions had been conducted by the Northern Uganda Transition Initiative and Wild, a tourism agency.

The study found that "attractions and destinations apart from the Murchison Falls and Kidepo Valley National Park were largely unknown" to visitors and tour operators or were felt to be too risky to visit.

Political leaders and players in the tourism sector said the move by the government would help create more employment opportunities for the communities in the north.

The outgoing Gulu District chairman, Mr. Norbert Mao, said, "This launch is an offensive to show that Northern Uganda has many positive attributes. It is not a place of warmongers

### Uganda in tourism final

UGANDA is in the finals of the tourism for "Tomorrow Awards" organized by the World Travel and Tourism Council of London.

Uganda is competing in the Conservation Awards category, which is open to any country, tourism business, organization or attraction that deals with conservation.

"To qualify, the country should be in position to educate the communities around the forests to understand the benefits of forests and the need to conserve them and using them sustainably," said Chris Seek, an expert carrying out the verification exercise of Budongo Eco-Tourism site, one of the projects forwarded for the conservation awards.

Amos Wekesa, the chairman of the Uganda Tourism Association, noted that Uganda's being a finalist was a clear indication that the tourism industry was being recognized worldwide.

### New Rules for tour operators

Government is in the process of amending the Uganda Tourism Act to ensure regulation of the tour and travel industry.

Whilst officiating at the second travel night of The Association of Tour and Travel Agents at the Kampala Serena Hotel, Ambassador Julius Onen, the trade, tourism and industry permanent secretary, indicated that the proposal to amend the Act was raised by the tour and travel operators, who asked for guidelines to streamline their operations.

He noted that since the industry handles a lot of money, there was need for controls in terms of credibility and accountability.

Penalties for the agencies that fail to abide with the rules and regulations will also be included in the amendments to the new law. He cited cases where tourists arrive at the airport but find no one to receive them.

"As a result, guests end up stranded since they do not know where to go.

"The new law will help to protect the integrity of the industry," Onen pointed out.

The permanent secretary, however, acknowledged the need for maximum consultations before any law is presented to Cabinet "because a law which is not owned by the people is useless."

### **New Rules for Tour Operators**

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The amendments to the law are expected to be tabled in Parliament after the swearing-in of the 9th Parliament in May.

Onen disclosed plans to restructure the Uganda Tourism Board to orient it with a specific revenue source.

He said this would enable the board to collect some of its own revenue instead of depending on handouts.

### **Interesting Wild Life**

Elephants are the largest land animals. But one thing is surely unique to these destructive giants, their memory!

Elephants have a memory that lasts for so long, to the extent that they are believed to transfer their memory to their young ones.

For instance, an elephant is able to remember every watering point or feeding area within the vast territory occupied by its herd before. Interesting!

### **Tourism Media Awards**

The Tourism Media Awards is an annual event organized by Uganda Tourism Board together with the ministry of tourism and Uganda wildlife authority to recognize the efforts of the media in promoting Uganda's tourism.

The event, sponsored by USAID STAR, is slated for September 26th this year and is an event organized for the world tourism day celebrations.

The awards among other things are targeted at encouraging journalists to report about tourism. This in a way complements the Board's effort to promote domestic tourism, one of the major interests of UTB in 2011.

### **Tourism Marketing Strategy**

Uganda Tourism Board, together with the tourism stakeholders, is currently redesigning the marketing strategy for Uganda's tourism.

The 5 year strategy will be guiding the marketing approaches for the next five (5) years, from 2011-2016.

The new strategy seeks to improve domestic tourism, sustaining existing source markets and positioning Uganda as a preferred choice of destination.

The strategy clearly stipulates approaches to developing and improving the tourism sector including intensifying marketing, comprehensive branding, researching and basing all activities on empirical findings.

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