



7TH MEETING OF THE SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TOURISM

MASA HOTEL, GABORONE BOTSWANA

7 JULY, 2016

PRESS RELEASE

1. The 7th Meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for Tourism met in Gaborone, Botswana, on 7 July, 2016. The meeting was hosted by the Government of Botswana.
2. The meeting was officially opened by the Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism for Botswana, Hon Tshekedi Khama, who is also the Chairperson of the SADC Committee of Ministers responsible for Tourism. In his Opening Remarks, the Chair underscored the importance of regional cooperation, whilst recognising the national diversities and identities, and the value of complementarity in products and services.
3. The meeting was called to review the progress made with the implementation of the regional tourism programme in the SADC region, exchange views on topical issues relating to or impacting on tourism in the SADC region. The meeting also took the opportunity to review the outcomes of the mandate the Ministers had given to the Board of the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA) to transform RETOSA into a viable organisation that coordinates the regional tourism issues in the region, ensuring that it is not only sustainable, but adds the much needed value to the SADC tourism sector.
4. The meeting was attended by Ministers and Deputy Ministers from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The other countries were represented by Permanent Secretaries/Director Generals and Senior Officials.

5. The meeting received a presentation from a representative of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), Ms Carol Hay, on its strategy in promoting, championing and coordinating the tourism industry in the Caribbean States, with the objective of benchmarking RETOSA with other similar regional entities around the world. The meeting also received a report from the RETOSA Board on the revised mandate of RETOSA, its revised organisational structure and road map towards implementation of the Ministers decision to resuscitate RETOSA. The organisational structure shall commence with a lean structure which will grow to the ultimate approved structure over time and on a phased basis.
6. Ministers approved to continued existence of RETOSA, and mandated to RETOSA Board to work on the strategy, funding and job evaluation for RETOSA. Ministers recognised the need for SADC Member States to work together as a collective in the promotion of tourism in the region, and that RETOSA constituted an appropriate vehicle for the region to achieve this objective, with the support of the SADC Secretariat addressing the regional tourism policy and legislative harmonisation.
7. The Ministers also appealed to Council to ensure that there is adequate capacity at the Secretariat to coordinate and address issues of regional tourism coordination within the framework of the on-going restructuring of the SADC Secretariat.
8. The Ministers also directed the RETOSA Board to review the RETOSA Charter and the MOU between SADC Secretariat and RETOSA, and align them to the revised structure and mandate of the Organisation and any other imperatives
9. Ministers also received presentations from experts in the following areas:
 - (i) The war against poaching;
 - (ii) Cross Border Tourism Facilitation
 - (iii) Travel Facilitation in Africa and Representation of Africa in Global Tourism Affairs
10. Ministers engaged in extensive discussion on the presentation, and resolved to consult on a cross-sectoral basis to find solution to the challenges that were presented to them.
11. The Ministers reviewed the proposed priority activities of the Tourism Sector for the 2016/2017 financial year in the areas of Marketing and Communications; Research, Planning and Development; as well as other pertinent activities aimed at transforming the Tourism Industry for the better. Ministers approved the priorities, based on which they will receive a progress report at the next meeting.
12. The Ministers received a report the Finance and Human Resources Committee, which included the status of payment of subscriptions to RETOSA, as well as the Income and Expenditure Report.

13. The Ministers noted and regretted Mauritius withdrawal from RETOSA, and whilst accepting their decision, they resolved to engage Mauritius in order to establish the reasons for its withdrawal with the view to address and such reasons to encourage Mauritius to re-join the organisation, as it was deemed critical for the region to operate on the basis of a collective approach. The Ministers mandated the Chair of the Committee of Ministers responsible for Tourism to engage Mauritius on this matter. Namibia and Angola offered to assist the chair in engaging Mauritius
14. Ministers noted the candidature of Hon Engineer Walter Mzembi, Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry for the Republic of Zimbabwe, for election as the next Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Ministers resolved to support the candidature of Eng. Dr Walter Mzembi, as well as undertake lobbying amongst states outside of the SADC region.
15. In his response to the endorsement of his nomination, Hon Mzembi expressed appreciation to all the SADC Member States for the unparalleled support for his candidature, and undertook to work hard to take the tourism industry at the global and regional level to new heights, building onto the legacy of the current Secretary General of the UNWTO.
16. Ministers accepted by Zimbabwe for the next meeting of Ministers responsible for Tourism to be held in Zimbabwe, in 2017;
17. The Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry for Zimbabwe, Hon. Dr Eng Walter Mzembi, delivered a Vote of Thanks on behalf on the other Ministers, Heads of Delegation and the rest of the participants at the meeting. Hon Mzembi paid tribute to Botswana for the excellent hospitality, the warm welcome extended to all the delegations that came in from outside of Botswana as well as the facilities that were put at the disposal of the meeting;
18. The Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism of Botswana and Chairperson of the SADC Committee of Ministers responsible for Tourism, Hon. Tshekedi Khama, thanked all the Ministers and delegates for their candid contributions and for making his task an easier one. He expressed the wish for all the delegates to have a safe journey back home, and looked forward to meeting all the Ministers at the next meeting and other fora.