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**GLOBAL TOURISM LEADERS DISCUSS IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION TO ENSURE SUCCESS OF AFRICA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY AT THE AFRICA TRAVEL ASSOCIATION'S SIXTH ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL FORUM ON TOURISM**

**ATA President Calls on all African Countries to Join Africa's Leading Travel Trade Association**

***State of Tourism in Africa* Report Reveals 2010 Strong Year for Tourist Arrivals to Africa**

**New York, N.Y., September 27, 2011** – African and global tourism leaders gathered at New York University last Tuesday, September 20, 2011 to discuss the need to raise the profile of travel and tourism on Africa's political and economic agendas and to establish networks of collaboration to raise Africa's tourism profile on the global tourism stage.

The event was organized by the Africa Travel Association (ATA) and hosted by New York University's Africa House as world leaders gathered in New York City for the United Nations General Assembly meetings. Nearly 200 people attended ATA's signature U.S. event, including representatives from the travel and tourism industry, the diplomatic community, NYU, the non-profit sector, and the media.

"This year's event was the most successful Presidential Forum to date, with the participation of the most comprehensive group of global and regional tourism leaders," said Edward Bergman, ATA Executive Director. "This important gathering provides a setting for tourism leaders from Africa and around the world to address key issues facing tourism development in Africa and to build strong strategic partnerships to make it happen."

In his remarks, Mr. Bergman also announced the release of the second *State of Tourism in Africa* report, prepared by Africa House-New York University, the World Bank and ATA. Citing UNWTO and WTTC data, among other sources such as the China Tourism Academy, Caribbean Tourism Organization and Expedia, the report revealed that Africa continued to show a growth trend in 2010 with an 8.8% increase in tourism arrivals numbering 63 million.

Program participants included representatives from Chad, Egypt, The Gambia, Rwanda and Tanzania, and the African Union, alongside the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), and African Travel and Tourism Association (Atta). CNN Chief Business Correspondent Ali Velshi moderated the event.

ATA President and Minister of Tourism & Culture of The Gambia Tourism, Honorable Fatou Mas-Njie Jobe, reminded African states that the "possibilities of economic growth and development related to the tourism industry are not yet fully recognized or appreciated in Africa's political corridors and public realms," highlighting that collaboration between the government and private sector are vital. She continued, "ATA, through its partnerships with the

AU and with other international and regional tourism bodies, like UNWTO, WTTC, CTO, Atta and NTA, can show each and every African nation and its people that “tourism is part of the solution, not the problem.”

In a video address to the ATA forum, Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO stressed his commitment to ATA to promote tourism. He said, “UNWTO stands ready to help you promote Africa to the world and to make tourism thrive for Africa and its people.” He highlighted that “tourism is ever more recognized as a tool for development... at the UN level, as well as at the national level,” bringing jobs, investment, infrastructure, economic growth, and development.

The roundtable discussion focused on a number of key issues, including how travel advisories, security and the media contribute to negative images of Africa; the increasing need to provide tailored services for different regional markets, like China and the Middle East; and the need for governments to create conducive environments for tourism growth. Discussants also focused on the importance of public-private sector cooperation.

African leaders who participated in the event included H.E. Dr. Ajaratou Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice President and Minister of Women's Affairs, Republic of The Gambia; H.E. Amina Ali, Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary, African Union; Hon. Moussa Faki, Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, Republic of Chad; Hon. Fatou Mas Jobe-Njie, Minister of Tourism & Culture and ATA President, Republic of The Gambia; and Hon. Ezekiel Maige, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, United Republic of Tanzania. They were joined by tourism experts, Mr. Mohamed Hegazy, Tourism Attaché, USA & Latin America, Egyptian Tourist Authority and Ms. Rica Rwigamba, Head of Tourism and Conservation Department, Rwanda Development Board (RDB).

Global tourism leaders included Mr. Marcio Favilla L. de Paula, Executive Director for Competitiveness, External Relations and Partnerships, UNWTO; Mr. Hugh Riley, Secretary General & CEO, CTO; Mr. David Scowsill, President & CEO, WTTC; and Mr. Nigel Vere Nicoll, Managing Director, Atta.

The Tanzania Tourist Board presented their annual awards at the event. Ethiopian Airlines African Journeys received the 2011 Tour Operator Promotion Award; LuxuryWeb Magazine received the 2011 Web Travel Magazine Award, and South African Airways received the 2011 Supporting Airline Award.

The Egypt Tourist Authority as well as Tanzania National Parks and the Tanzania Tourist Board, and South African Airways were event sponsors.

#### **More information on 2011 ATA Presidential Forum on Tourism**

For a program, visit [2011 Sixth Annual Presidential Forum on Tourism Program](#); For photos, visit ATA's Facebook Fanpage at [2011 Sixth Annual Presidential Forum on Tourism Photos](#); For remarks, ATA members can visit ATA's Knowledge Base through their member log-in at [ATA's Knowledge Base for Members](#); Video highlights, including address from Mr. Taleb Rifai of UNWTO and spotlight on Chad are posted on [ATA's YouTube site](#).

#### **About the Africa Travel Association (ATA)**

The Africa Travel Association (ATA) is the leading global trade association promoting travel and tourism to Africa and strengthening intra-Africa partnerships. Established in 1975, ATA serves both the public and private sectors of the international travel and tourism industry. ATA membership comprises African governments, their tourism ministers, tourism bureaus and

boards, airlines, cruise lines, hotels, resorts, front-line travel sellers and providers, tour operators and travel agents, and affiliate industries. ATA partners with the African Union Commission (AU) to promote the sustainable development of tourism to and across Africa. ATA's annual events bring together industry leaders to shape Africa's tourism agenda. For more information about ATA, visit [www.AfricaTravelAssociation.org](http://www.AfricaTravelAssociation.org)



Program participants at the Africa Travel Association's Sixth Annual Presidential Forum on Tourism at New York University on September 20, 2011. Photo courtesy of Jim Lopes.

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