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Fourth edition May 2013

Uganda News

ROUTES AFRICA 2013 PROGRAMME IS OUT FOR KAMPALA MEETING



The preliminary programme for this year's main African aviation event, **Routes Africa** has recently been released. **Routes Africa 2013** is hosted by the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority and Entebbe International Airport and will Details on the programme line up are shown below and intending participants can contact Routes Online via [www.routesonline.com/events/159/routes-africa-2013/](#) to sign up for an event which is expected to bring together record numbers of participants from African, European, Middle Eastern / Gulf, Asian and American airlines, airports, tourist boards and related organizations.

ROUTES AFRICA STRATEGY SUMMIT DRAFT PROGRAMME SUNDAY 7th JULY & MONDAY 8th JULY 2013

Day 1 - Sunday 7th July

14.00-14.05	Opening Remarks Nigel Mayes, VP Commercial & Routes, UBM Live Dr W Rama Makuza, MD, Uganda CAA
14.05-14.20	Welcome Address –
14.20-14.40	Keynote Address – Honourable Maria Mutagamba, The Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities for Uganda
14.40-15.00	Keynote Address Dr Titus Naikuni, CEO, Kenya Airways

15.00-15.45	<p>Session 1 –</p> <p>Public, Private Partnerships for Airport Management and Development – is this the solution to Airport Infrastructure in Africa. What are the pros and cons.</p> <p>Moderator: TBC</p> <p>Robinson Misitala, Managing Director, National Airports Zambia</p> <p>Madame Ramatou Magagi, International Finance Corporation, IFC</p> <p>Dr Waleed Youssef, Chief Strategy Officer, TAV Airports</p> <p>Joachim von Winning, Chief Commercial Officer, Cairo Airport</p>
15.45-16.10	Refreshment Break
15.10-16.30	<p>Keynote Presentation</p> <p>Overview of the African Market or Solutions to Challenges of Safety and Security in African Aviation Industry Or Solutions to air service connectivity in Africa</p> <p>Ali Tounsi, Secretary General, ACI Africa</p>
16.30-17.30	<p>Session 2 – New Carriers for New Africa – the rise of LCCs.</p> <p>Can incumbents compete with new carriers? Which will survive? The role of strong home based (national) Airlines.</p> <p>Moderator: Kostas Iatrou, Managing Director, Air Transport News</p> <p>Inati Ntshanga, CEO, SA Express Airways</p> <p>Richard Bodin, CCO, Fastjet</p> <p>Sergio Rosa, CEO, Air Burkina</p> <p>Abderahmane Berthe, CEO, Air Mali</p>
17.30	Closing Remarks - Nigel Mayes, VP Commercial & Routes, UBM Live

Day 2 – Monday 8th July

09.15-09.30	Opening Remarks - Nigel Mayes, VP Commercial & Routes, UBM Live
09.30-10.00	Presentation Understanding the Market Opportunity Marc Gordien, Vice President of Consulting, ASM
10.00-10.45	Session 3 – Driving Tourism in Africa. Where are the next market opportunities? What are the barriers to growth? What are the opportunities? The importance of the package. Moderator: Minister Alain St. Ange, Minister of Tourism for Seychelles Doreen Owusu-Fianko, Managing Director, Ghana Airports Company Mr. Cuthbert Baguma, CEO, Tourism Uganda Herman Carpentier, Vice President Africa, Brussels Airlines Mr. Michael Mabuyakhulu MPP – KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development & Tourism
10.45-11.15	Refreshment Break
11.15-11.45	Presentation - Operating in Europe: Traffic rights and Airport Slots Eric Herbane, Managing Director, COHOR
11.45-12.30	Panel 4 – Outlook for the Future Moderator - Raphael Kuuchi, Director, Commercial, Corporate & Industry Affairs, AFRAA Michael Higgins, RVP for Africa, IATA Driss Benhima, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer - Royal Air Maroc Group

	ATR
17.15-17.30	Presentation The Manufacturers Perspective – Regional Aircraft as a solution to network growth in Africa Charles Carriere, Airline Marketing Manager, Bombardier
12.30	Closing Remarks - Nigel Mayes, VP Commercial & Routes, UBM Live

PARAA AND CHOBE LODGES RECOGNIZED BY TRIPADVISOR



Two of Uganda's leading safari lodges, the Madhvani Group's Chobe and Paraa Safari Lodges in Murchisons Falls National Park, have just received recognition as top rated properties by **TripAdvisor** the global industry leader in client based ratings of hotels, resorts, lodges, restaurants and other tourism attractions.

Both were presented with the coveted '*Certificate of Excellence 2013*' which puts the two Marasa Africa managed properties into the top 10 percent of reviews given by visitors.

While Paraa is located in the lower part of the park, near the main ferry crossing of the River Nile, the Chobe Safari Lodge is set in the real wilderness of the upstream section of the Nile above the falls, and while just 12 kilometres off the main Kampala to Gulu highway, giving visitors a feeling to be as remote as they can be in the midst of a mature tropical rainforest with magnificent views over the white waters of the river.

More about the two lodges can be accessed through the respective websites but here below a brief overview of both properties, which incidentally were repeatedly reviewed here in the past.

[Chobe Safari Lodge/Uganda](#)

The more recently opened and very luxurious five-star Chobe Safari Lodge, located in a little-known section of Murchison Falls National Park, is becoming one of Uganda's key tourist destinations for adventurers, anglers, and aficionados of river-scapes. It comprises 36 elegant guest rooms, 21 luxury tents, four suites and a Presidential Cottage. A state-of-the-art Conference block can host up to 100 guests and is fully equipped for business meetings. The lodge enjoys breathtaking panoramic views of the River Nile, coupled with the sounds of its frothing rapids.

[Paraa Safari Lodge](#)

Paraa, also known as the "Jewel of the Nile," is situated in Murchison Falls National Park, with spectacular views of the river. Each of the lodge's 54 rooms, suites, three luxury safari tents and Queen's Cottage is designed with an authentic Colonial African style. Each has its own spacious balcony and en-suite bath, all overlooking the River. The Queen's Cottage, named after Queen Elizabeth II's mother who stayed there in 1959, comprises two bedrooms, a lounge, and a large balcony, and is ideal for families or friends traveling together.

Amenities include a holistic massage center, a gym and a large free-form swimming pool just above the entertainment area by the rustic bar, where bonfires and traditional African entertainment take place in the evening twice weekly. There is also a Business Center with internet and a gift shop selling local crafts and safari essentials. The Nile River itself offers world class game fishing for Nile Perch near the lodge which rents fishing gear and binoculars. The lodge operates a regular launch service to travel comfortably upstream to the bottom of the falls,

where the mighty Nile squeezes through a gap of only 7 metres wide and falls nearly 50 metres, before it then meanders towards Lake Albert. Chimpanzee trekking may be arranged at a forest some 37 miles from the Lodge on a day excursion trip.

Watch this space for regular updates from Uganda's national parks, game reserves and other tourism attractions.

SOURCE OF THE NILE MARATHON POSTPONED TILL NEXT YEAR



There is disappointment among the marathon enthusiasts that the 5th edition of the Jinja Source of the Nile Marathon, which was due to be run this weekend, appears to have been postponed until May 2014, according to information posted on the marathon website. This year would have been the fifth edition of Uganda's second international marathon, after the MTN Kampala Marathon every year in November, and while attracting lesser numbers has nevertheless grown to be the biggest sporting event in Jinja, aka *The Adventure Capital of East Africa*. The event has until now offered two main races, one over 10 KM and one over the half marathon distance of 21 KM, but from reliable sources it was learned that a full 42 KM marathon will be introduced for the race next year. No reasons were available for the cancellation of the race which has up to now been organized by Hared, a Ugandan fuel company.

Jinja has over the years embraced tourism, in particular adventure sports tourism, with a gusto and offers along the upper Nile valley, below the Source of the Nile and the two hydro electric dams, world class rafting, boating, bungee jumping, quad biking, cross country cycling, horseback riding as well as golfing and fishing. A range of lodges, resorts and hotels are available for all budgets, starting from backpacker accommodation to 5 star resorts along the river banks or even on islands in the middle of the roaring white waters of the world's longest river. Visit www.nilemarathon.com for more details or look up Jinja's attractions via www.visituganda.com

UGANDA CAA ANNOUNCES PLANS TO REMODEL DEPARTURE AREA OF ENTEBBE AIRPORT



Travellers using the Entebbe International Airport have for long been suffering the inconvenience of being made to walk long distances from the car park to the main terminal, often subjected to bucketing rain, as a result of the security apparatus gone bonkers over keeping vehicles away from the terminal. *'Entebbe is the only airport in the region where you cannot drive up to the terminal and offload your passengers and baggage, or park even just opposite. Nairobi is the best example, and surely their threat levels are no different from ours because they are also in Somalia with troops. Kigali is another example, or Kilimanjaro, where you drive up, drop off and go for check in. It is sad to note that airlines and the CAA are subjected to dictates of this sort. It impacts on the departure experience of our visitors and many are very very upset about the arrangements security forces on us, especially when it rains and they come to the check in all soaked. The staircase to go upstairs to departures is not protected from rain and crossing the road with baggage and then often ending in a queue before they can enter the terminal is just not userfriendly at all. We have told them that so often but are basically told to shut up and that it is for security. Security is important but so is user friendliness. We compete with other destinations in the region and this is the worst experience a traveler can have at any of the big airports'* ranted a regular aviation source from Entebbe on strict demand of anonymity for fear of repercussions.

The Uganda CAA, as managers of the airport in Entebbe, are acutely aware of this problem and have, according to another source, repeatedly tried to get the access restrictions lifted, but to no avail.

It was now learned that as a result the CAA is putting up additional parking areas to address the shortage of parking caused by security declaring previous parking areas nearer the terminal off limits – again in stark contrast to what other airports in the region do – as well as adding more cover from the elements to protect travelers from the downside of the weather. Indoors will a team of consultants also redesign the flow of passengers from the entry gate

security check to the check in terminals through immigration to the departure lounges, in what could be a major functionality upgrade as the number of passengers using Entebbe continues to grow by double digit figures. The last major overhaul of the airport took place for the Commonwealth Summit in 2007 and while a grand masterplan for the expansion and redevelopment of the airport has been completed, much of it has not been implemented at this stage. The cargo area adjoining the passenger terminal for instance was due to be moved to a new, integrated cargo handling area at the 'old airport' side, to make way for an expansion of the passenger terminal, and while in Nairobi the construction of Terminal 4 is ongoing and Project Greenfield due to kick off later this year, Entebbe currently seems to stand still. Both Kigali and Addis Ababa are due to get new airports, while in Tanzania JNIA in Dar es Salaam will undergo a complete modernization now that funds have been secured from the Dutch government – which has also co-financed similar work at Kilimanjaro International Airport.

'If we want to be a destination of choice, for safari holidays, adventure holidays and conferences, we need to invest in infrastructure. The traffic situation into Kampala is unbearable and Entebbe, once the queen of airports in the region, is now tired and comes across as almost dysfunctional. It is not userfriendly any more and the way security has taken over is totally different from any other airport in the region I have been to. The new Entebbe highway must be accelerated. A new access plan into and through the city must be put into place to stop those traffic jams. Look at Nairobi what they are doing there with new cross city highways, a commuter rail plan and bypasses. Have our planners and implementers slept while all these super highways were built in Nairobi? Tourism needs infrastructure to prosper and it is time to work on that now, because otherwise we might be left behind by our competitors in the region' said a senior tourism stakeholder, when discussing the issues yesterday. The announcement by the CAA was broadly welcomed by aviation and tourism sources even though no time frame for the completion of the changes was attached to the announcement. Watch this space for more information as and when available.

JAMES TUMUSIIME APPOINTED NEW CHAIRMAN OF UGANDA TOURISM BOARD



In a marked departure from past practice, when often political considerations influenced the appointment of members of the Board of Directors of Tourism Uganda, has the Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities Hon. Maria Mutagamba announced a team of seasoned professionals comprising leading industry representatives to oversee, in what can only be hoped, the revival of Uganda's tourism fortunes on a grand scale.

Chairman of the Board is Mr. James Tumusiime, a leading member of the publishing and media fraternity in Uganda, signaling a new partnership with the media in the making.

Also on the board now is the Executive Director of the Uganda Wildlife Authority Dr. Andrew Seguya, significant as much of Uganda's tourism industry is based on wildlife experience and visits to the 10 national parks.

Similarly was Ms. Lilly Ajarova, the Executive Director of the Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary appointed to serve an initial 3 year term on the board. Others are Mr. Roger Wamara, Sales and Marketing Manager of Qatar Airways in Uganda, Amos Wekesa, CEO of Great Lakes Safaris, Ismail Sekandi, Managing Director of Rwizi Arch Hotel in Mbarara and immediate former Executive Director of the Uganda Hotel Owners Association. From the government side were Mrs. Edith Kassaja-Kateme of the National Planning Authority appointed along with Mr. Michael Aliyo from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

Mr. Cuthbert Baguma, the Executive Director of Tourism Uganda, serves as an ex officio member and Secretary to the Board.

While announcing the appointments, the Minister also signaled a further significant change to the funding of the Uganda Tourism Board, when she indicated that the long overdue operationalisation of the Tourism Development Levy, provided for in the Tourism Act of 2008 but never, until now, made a reality, is due to be tackled in the next financial year 2013/14, which could turn the fortunes of Tourism Uganda around.

Long hampered by a lack of funding, inspite of regular verbal commitments to the sector, which has in recent years become a key economic activity for the country, Tourism Uganda's budget allocations were barely enough to meet recurrent expenses and had promotional activities overseas restricted to attending just the most important tourism trade fairs, like ITB, WTM and a few others. When the levy becomes operational, an estimated 10 million US Dollars will become available for a range of tourism related activities, spelled out in the law and related regulations of the upcoming Tourism Development Fund, key among them financing the operations of Tourism Uganda. This

will put Uganda, in terms of available marketing budgets, at par with other key destinations, not only in the region but the continent at large. Budget analysts expect that UTB will for the next financial year be allocated between 1.5 and 2 billion Uganda Shillings, a fraction of what industry observers consider the bare minimum, but with the levy now apparently becoming a reality, the long lasting financial woes of Tourism Uganda seem to be finally coming to an end.

A regular source, when discussing the appointments, provided this insight: *‘Finally we get a competent board with experience from across the entire industry. Airlines, hotels, safari operators, wildlife attractions, they are now all present at board level. But the best news is that the levy will become a reality now. As you know, for a long time there were these issues of who collects and where does the money go, and the industry was totally opposed to see the money go to the Ministry of Finance, because it would be used for alien purposes. If lucky we would get a fraction back. But like CAA collects airport service charge and uses it as they see fit to develop our airport, so should tourism have the same right to collect a levy and use it as the industry decides. You have some years ago already said that UTB should have between 1.5 and 2 million US Dollars as a marketing budget. The levy could substantially increase that now. Uganda can finally build on the top ratings we got from Lonely Planet and National Geographic and many other sources, naming us a leading adventure and safari destination. We can match such recognition with a presence at all key tourism trade fairs. The Adventure Travel Trade Shows in America for instance could bring us a lot of traffic. We can go into new and emerging markets like Eastern Europe and China and make our attractions known. The airlines are ready to bring extra capacity from such markets, especially our long standing partners like KLM, Kenya Airways, Brussels Airlines or BA but also those from the Gulf like Emirates and Qatar or Turkish Airlines. We might see new airlines wanting to fly to Entebbe even. These are the first rays of real hope tourism had in a long time and the sector will blossom from it’.*

While all eyes will now be on the new board to see how they shape their agenda and implement it, at this moment in time it is congratulations to the newly appointed Board of Directors of Tourism Uganda and all the best for the work ahead in coming years.

Kenya News

NEW TOURISM SECRETARY ANNOUNCES 10 POINT PLAN TOWARDS RECOVERY



‘I have come up with a ten point plan highlighting the areas that we shall prioritise going forward. These include streamlining the boards of State corporations in tourism, hastening the implementation of the Tourism Act and setting up a tourism market recovery programme to recover Kenya’s lost market share in tourism. The national tourism strategy is at the moment being crafted and will be in place in the next few months’ was Mrs. Phyllis Kandie, the new Cabinet Secretary for East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism, previously known as Minister, quoted to have told a meeting of tourism stakeholders, who were anxious to hear what government had in store to revive the flagging fortunes of the country’s tourism sector. Former tourism minister Mwazo, now openly described as the worst in Kenya’s history, had like a bull in a china shop caused havoc and left the sector’s political administration in the proverbial tatters, before making his escape to a senatorial seat in the last elections.

Of key interest for the sector were, as recently mentioned in a related development, infrastructure developments like the completion of a road between Narok and the Masai Mara Game Reserve, the bypass from the Nairobi – Mombasa highway and the Moi International Airport to the south coast and, as one source put it: *‘... to get us the funding KTB needs to run a recovery marketing campaign across the world. Last year Mwazo just make empty promises on which he failed to deliver and you see where we now are. The man was just incompetent and good riddance is all I can say. If he had delivered on his promises to get tourism the funding required we would be better off and now we have to clean out after him. Well, the new boss in tourism has shown she got the message and we will now wait and see how she delivers on her 10 point plan’.*

Keenly awaited now are the upcoming announcements on who will chair the boards of several new parastatals which were created under the tourism act, although there are already whispers emerging from within key stakeholders that perhaps the formation of a single tourism authority would serve the sector better than a fragmented regime of several bodies, which could well lead to sectoral infighting over turf claims instead of all pulling into one direction. *‘The*

creation of many parastatals was a result of the grand coalition of the last government needing to create a lot of jobs for cronies. Now that we have a single government again, maybe we should revisit some of those issues and seek a better way forward. Tourism authorities are working well in other countries like Zimbabwe, and from what I know Tanzania is looking at creating one too. Right now we have a situation of many chiefs. The recurrent expenditure will be high and eat into the marketing budget. It is something we need to improve upon' added the same source, setting the scenario for what will be an interesting year ahead for Kenya's tourism industry. Watch this space for regular updates on what's on in tourism from across the region.

CHELI AND PEACOCK INTRODUCES NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Cheli & Peacock, one of Kenya's foremost safari and safari camp operators, has just announced the appointment of Antonia Glen and Bilal Yusuf as Directors of International Sales and Finance respectively.

Effective immediately they will join the board where they will serve alongside company owners Stefano and Liz Cheli. Bilal, who joined the company in 1999 as Chief Accountant rose through the ranks before recently being promoted as Director for Finance while Antonia, who also joined the company in 1999, equally rose through the ranks to attain the position of Director International Sales.

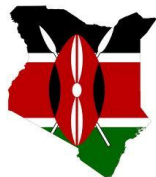
Stefano was quoted in a media release just received here as having commented: *'Both Bilal and Antonia have been with the company for many years and their promotions reflect their enduring hard work, professional aptitude, loyalty and ongoing contribution to the firm. Liz and I are thrilled to welcome them both to the Board of Directors and, along with the rest of the team, we wish them many congratulations. As one of the leading and longest-established safari operators in the business, we are delighted that Cheli & Peacock grows from strength to strength. This is a very exciting time for us and we look forward to the coming years'*.

Tourism trade personnel attending the leading trade fairs on a regular basis will no doubt have been acquainted with Antonia over the years, but for those not in the know, above is a *preview* of whom they will meet at the next tourism show.

In a related development it was also just learned that two of C&P's collection of gems, *Loisaba* and the *Elephant Pepper Camp*, have once again received the *TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for 2013*, confirmation that the all important vote for quality by those who really matter, the clientele, has again opted to raise those two properties to the top of their class. Both properties have in the past gained international recognition through a number of awards given to them by travel trade media, The Good Safari Guide Awards and other internationally recognized organizations. Well done to the teams at both camps.

For more information on the locations of C&P's stunning safari and beach properties, visit their website via www.chelipeacecock.com or write to info@chelipeacecock.co.ke

TOURISTS STRANDED BY STRIKING TRUCK DRIVERS



A massive traffic jam along the main highway to Mombasa was blocked yesterday for over 8 hours by striking truck drivers, with cars on both sides of the Mariakani weight bridge backed up for over 20 kilometres.

As a result were safari vehicles stranded for the duration, in the absence of any bypass or detour possible, leaving tourists infuriated by the delays getting them to the game parks, while those returning from safari to their respective beach resorts too were victims of the strike.

According to a Mombasa based source did the truck drivers strike over allegations of massive corruption at the weight station, where allegedly vehicles with ‘arrangements’ are allowed to pass while the rest is subjected to harassment, intimidation and worse, or so it has been alleged.

These allegations are not new and weigh bridges have for long been identified as money extraction machines for corrupt police officers, though no amount of government action, transfers of personnel or arrests have been able to change that. Said a regular source from the Kenyan coast in response to a mailed enquiry: ***‘This is the low season and we need every tourist we can get. Now those who came and went on safari yesterday were messed up by these issues which have been festering for a while. We need weigh bridges to protect our roads from the massive overloading which has in the past destroyed even new roads very quickly. But these stations need to be professionally managed and effectively supervised to prevent corruption. This was not a good day for tourism and the affected clients reached their destinations very very late. Traffic in and out of Mombasa can be bad and we demand that the highway must be expanded, the bypass to the south coast constructed and a second bridge built over Tudor creek to the northern mainland. There are reasons we have been demanding this for many years and the new government must act if they are true to their word to boost tourism. Without infrastructure, tourism cannot prosper, and we in Mombasa demand equal rights to Nairobi where so many new highway and bypass projects are underway. This is not right’.***

Sometime last year was traffic stuck in and out of Mombasa for nearly a day, when road works, combined with undisciplined driving by trucks caused a major traffic jam. The tourism industry also has for long been asking for a bypass from the international airport in Mombasa, linked to the Nairobi – Mombasa highway, to the south coast in Ukunda, to facilitate easier road transport and avoid the often unreliable ferry crossing at Likoni. Added the source: ***‘When we get our international conference centre, the roads must be ready too to carry that added traffic. There is no point to build new facilities if tourist and business visitors cannot reach there, or miss flights because of traffic jams. The central government and the county government must sit down with stakeholders and show us the way forward, the time for talking is really at an end now’***, signaling increasing frustration with the past lack of attention to coastal infrastructure developments. Watch this space.

ETIHAD LAUNCHES AMSTERDAM FLIGHTS



Travelers from Nairobi / Kenya, presently the only East Africa destination Etihad, Abu Dhabi’s national airline is serving, now have the added option when travelling to Amsterdam to route via the capital city of the United Arab Emirates, as the airline launched flights to the Netherlands last weekend. The daily flights on Airbus A330-200 aircraft, which feature 22 business and 240 economy seats, are codeshared with KLM.

A few weeks ago did Etihad sign a comprehensive MoU and code share agreement with Kenya Airways, an almost natural development considering that KQ’s second largest shareholder KLM equally has developed strong commercial ties with Etihad since late 2012. While no member of any alliance, as yet, Etihad has developed their own concept of strategic partnerships, with shareholdings in Air Berlin, Air Seychelles, Air Lingus and Virgin Australia, and a similar deal is currently awaiting finalization with India’s Jet Airways.

There is growing speculation that Etihad may also take a significant shareholding in KLM/Air France, itself a lead member in the world’s second largest airline alliance SkyTeam, leaving space for yet more speculation if Etihad may eventually join that alliance or else opt to stick to their proven model of partnerships through shareholdings and commercial code share agreements.

Meanwhile has Etihad over the weekend also completed the takeover of the Abu Dhabi Airport Services, the Abu Dhabi Inflight Catering and the Abu Dhabi Cargo Company to have full control over the quality of services these previously state owned companies offer and which will in the future add significant revenue streams to the Etihad Group.

Tanzania News

LEAKEY DISCREDITS HIMSELF WITH RESPONSE ABOUT CONCERNS RAISED



Following the revelations that Dr. Richard Leakey had waded into the Serengeti Highway debate with a hair brained proposal to build a flyover highway across the migration routes of the wildebeest, did one of the world's foremost Serengeti defense groups, *Save the Serengeti* write to him, expressing concerns over his statements and requesting clarification. Save the Serengeti is made up of renowned individuals, supported by leading conservation institutions, and is credited with encouraging factual debate over the initial proposals to build a highway across the Serengeti's migration routes. In fact, StS is the voice of over 51,500 individuals and NGO's and THE place where factual exchanges were facilitated since the group was formed in 2010 and which has provided a platform for conservationists from around the world standing together to ensure that *Serengeti Must Not Die*. The group's letter is quoted verbatim here below:

Dear Professor Leakey,

It is with great concern that we have again learned of your support for an elevated highway across the Serengeti National Park.

Such a project is not only impractical in the extreme, it would undermine the very existence of the ecosystem we all wish to protect. The cost of constructing an overpass would be enormous to the point of being prohibitive. According to a former World Bank transportation expert with years of experience in East Africa, it would cost not forty percent more than a similar New Jersey highway, but up to ten times as much.

Instead of thirty miles in length, it would need to be much longer. As you know, the migration spans a large area outside of the park. Fifty miles is more like the required length. The Frankfurt Zoological Society concurs with us, stating:

"Just absolutely ridiculous from the cost side. We are talking billions. In Germany it is significantly more expensive 120 million €, for 4 km! This reason alone, makes any further thinking useless." •

They cite the Danyang-Kunshan Bridge in China, which is 100 miles in length. It took 10,000 people four years at a cost of about \$8.5 billion.

Here is how the transportation expert describes it:

The foundations and bridge piers would be poured on site, and then concrete precast beams, or steel beams, trucked in to support the concrete deck which would be cast on top of the beams. As for the design, it might be possible to get away with one lane each way, separated by a crash barrier, provided that passing places, a sideways expansion of the bridge, were installed at about 500 meter intervals. Service areas would have to be provided at about five kilometer intervals to allow vehicles to turn around.

The first requirement for such a massive project would be the building of a road to provide large quantities of resources and materials. There is no sand or gravel available in Serengeti, so all the material for the concrete would have to be trucked in. Large quantities of other materials, would need to be produced and transported. Where would the water come from? Camps and catering for hundreds or thousands of workers would have to be set up, with the likely result of a thriving bush meat trade, as commonly happens with such projects.

Adding to the cost is the fact that a highway would be constructed on black cotton soil that is unstable, particularly in the rainy season. Engineers say it would shift and move causing cement pillars to crack and fall. This is also a highly active volcanic area that includes earthquakes – a 6.0 was recorded in 2007.

Who then would bear the enormous expense of maintaining such a highway? Tanzania has so little money now that it can barely keep its electric grid running. Accidents and breakdowns are common in Africa. What happens when a huge truck jackknifes in the middle of an elevated road?

Construction would last years, with a large swath of destruction from heavy machinery and trucks – all this during several seasons of migration across this critical area.

Both the construction and the highway would have long term impacts. As pointed out by Andrew Dobson of Princeton University in his published study, habitat fragmentation of the Serengeti ecosystem would likely mean the collapse of the migration. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0016370>

The project would be a terrible waste of scarce funds. What a huge opportunity cost this would represent, using funds that could be used for real development.

Who would visit the Serengeti during the years of construction? But not just construction would impact tourism, a huge international protest would cause a drop in tourism income and jobs. The Serengeti would be taken off the UNESCO World Heritage List. It would no longer be regarded as a unique wilderness area, but a monument to a useless engineering project. A priceless heritage would be irreparably scarred and ultimately lost.

Finally, the big question – why would one build such a project in the name of development when a superior alternative exists?

A highway to the south of the Serengeti would not only connect populations to the west of the park, it would benefit vastly more people, connecting the Lake Victoria region to the central and eastern parts of the country.

<http://www.savetheserengeti.org/?p=227>

The advantages of such a route are clearly documented in a presentation by the Frankfurt Zoological Society. See the attached for a detailed socio-economic analysis.

What's more, the government of Germany has offered to build local roads for communities around the Serengeti and the World Bank has offered help to build a southern route.

We trust that the facts speak for themselves – the tremendous impact of an elevated highway, tunnel, railway, any sort of commercial corridor, would be devastating to a place we all wish to preserve for future generations of Africans and visitors.

We urge you to join the Frankfurt Zoological Society, our organization and many others in supporting a southern route around the Serengeti.

Sincerely,

The two responses by email to the letter, seen by this correspondent but not cleared for publication by the recipients, can at best only be described as rude, offensive and condescending and at worst as fame gone to the head, a head swollen with an inflated ego or a head gone soft with age. Playing on the cheapest sentiments, otherwise perhaps found in bar conversation just before closing time when the discussants are sufficiently inebriated, the good Dr. Richard wasted no thought on the facts but instead opted to rant about unrelated issues and throw missives at Save the Serengeti. Instead of engaging with the substance of the proposals made by the Frankfurt Zoological Society for the southern route, which has received the full support of the German government, the World Bank and other development partners including offers for soft loans and grants to carry out a full feasibility study before building the alternative road, he decided to go on the offensive by throwing mud and calling the credentials of StS into doubt. Humility clearly is not something the good Dr. Richard has engrained in himself and as a result, the considerable professional respect hitherto accorded is now dented and will, should no substantive focused response still come forth from him, evaporate completely.

The internet has a great capacity for naming and shaming, and like the Tanzanian government has found out such flow of information prevails, even though that government has and continues to bedevil critics and opponents of their scheme to build a highway across the Serengeti and is calling them enemies of progress and worse. Through the Internet, pressure groups have the ability to garner global support for causes, enlist help to lobby key global institutions and in this case has it has played a major role to ground the highway project, at least until an ongoing court case at the East African Court of Justice to obtain a permanent injunction against the Tanzanian government, is decided.

Egomania has been the bane of many failures in the past to make conservation a centerpiece of a new global policy approach in how to protect crucially important ecosystems for future generations. It is reminiscent of the failure of CITES to not just totally ban the trade with ivory but challenge the main culprits by naming and shaming them.

They got away because of, among other reasons, too many egos needing to be stroked of people who continue to sit on the fence or voice their opposition, because their egos have, or so they perceived it, been rubbed the wrong way. Like in school, there is a bad boy corner on the Internet too, and that is where the good Dr. Richard is headed for, unless he can come to terms that even he does on occasions talk utter rubbish. Time to make swift amends or else bear the stain of complicity in the attempt to ruin the Serengeti. Watch this space.

POACHING REPORT DEMANDS GOVERNMENT ACTION ON CHINA CONNECTION



The following media report by Florian Kaijage is repeated here in full to have readers appreciate what others have to say about the poaching tsunami which has hit Tanzania:

Dar's secret poaching report implicates China

BY FLORIAN KAIJAGE, 18th May 2013,

<http://www.ippmedia.com/frontend/index.php?l=54837>

Investment relations between China and Tanzania have been cited in elephant poaching in Tanzania, calling for serious government intervention, a report on the elephant poaching crisis has revealed. According to a well-detailed report authored by the Tanzania Elephant Protection Society (TEPS) made available to the Guardian, though the Chinese investments were important in the country's economy and development, they shouldn't compromise country's natural wildlife conservation efforts.

The report -- which states clearly the current rate of 30 elephants killed every day and 850 elephants shot every month -- poses unprecedented risk of the country's elephant population perishing in the next seven years notes: "China is the number one investor in Tanzania ... but the majority of tusks exported illegally from Tanzania end up in China due to the huge demand for Ivory in China" It affirms: "Tanzania's partnership with China is of great benefit to the country's economy and development but it must not be at the expense of Tanzania's vital natural resources and tourist industry ... this requires political will and strong leadership."

The document, whose was availed to The Guardian recommends: "Tanzania government should make investment from China and other countries strictly conditional on China tackling its demand for ivory at home , and stronger law enforcement collaboration to halt the flow of ivory from Tanzania to China." Experts also recommended for the presence of sniffer dogs working 24 hours at every port and airport.

In one of its four recommendations to the government, the report says: "Ivory is a big business for major criminal ... also involved in trafficking drugs and violent crimes. The issue must be treated as a serious crime which is a major threat to the nation. "These syndicates are able to engage in corrupt practices to ensure that their consignments are not subjected to law enforcement intervention in the countries of origin, on transit and destinations. We hope thae statistics presented would raise the hairs of the policy and decision makers and cause them to quickly act to rescue the situation" says the report.

Winding up debate on the 2013/2014 fiscal year, the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Khamis Kagasheki, said a kilogramme of a tusk is traded at \$1,000 at the international market, whereas a kilogramme of rhino horn is worth \$1 million, a revelation that the poaching and illegal trade of natural resources involves people with big money.

The report also recommends enactment of emergency laws providing for sentences of up to 15 years imprisonment for illegal hunts of an elephant or trading in ivory -- plus a fine of minimum international value of ivory per kilo -- and emergency powers for the judiciary to fast-track these cases, refusal of bail for poaching and possession of ivory.

According to the report this recommendation was based on the fact that currently very few captured poachers or traders have been convicted. Many are granted bail and return to poaching or trading. It presents that court sentencing is weak and fines are very low, usually less

than the price of the tusk implying that there is little deterrence against these criminal activities.

The documents show that in China, sentence for killing a panda is death penalty whereas in India, sentence for killing a tiger is 35 years in prison and a fine of \$35,000.

Some of the affected areas were cited as Moyowosi in Kigoma region, Ugalla ecosystem which has less than 500 elephants left; Katavi -- Ruungwa in the Ruaha; the Selous Game Reserve where elephants are almost gone, Kilombero Valley, Southern Selous and the Selous Niassa corridor which are currently under threat.

On April 30, this year, the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee for lands, natural resources and environment, James Lembeli told the House that poaching activities had reached alarming proportions, and should declared a national disaster. Lembeli, a legislator for Kahama, said statistics by the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI) had revealed that 30 elephants were being killed every day --or 10,950 will be killed by 2013 -- if the slaughter was allowed in the next seven years. "The wanton decimation of the country's elephants herd will impact on the national economy (declining tourism revenue and diminished employment prospects) and the country's reputation as a beacon of conservation in Africa," he says.

SERENGETI HIGHWAY SUGGESTIONS BY RICHARD LEAKEY CALLED *LUNATIC EXPRESS 2.0*



Hitherto respected conservationist Dr. Richard Leakey earned himself howls of laughter, mockery and acid comments from around the world, when – beware the power of the internet – his suggestions to build an elevated highway across the Serengeti became more widely known and went viral among Serengeti supporters.

Leakey apparently repeated comments made much earlier already but quickly hushed up at the time, in a speech in the United States last week, that he felt an elevated highway across the Serengeti's migration routes would be a viable solution. Leakey was quoted to have said during an international conference on poaching and wildlife related crimes at the Rutgers University ***'It would be a grand spectacle, to see animals migrating by underneath, and signal Africa's commitment to wildlife. If I can drive over 30 miles of elevated highways in New Jersey, why not in the Serengeti?'*** Leakey then reportedly went on to accuse all and sundry to ***'Talk, Talk, Talk'*** but failed to acknowledge that a viable and financeable option had been presented to the Tanzanian government by, among others, the German government and the Frankfurt Zoological Society, to build a road around the southern edges of the park instead of insisting to build a highway across the main migration routes of the Serengeti.

Leakey was saying that the cost of an elevated highway would *only* be 40 percent higher than a regular highway, clearly exposing a serious deficit in knowledge and understanding of the topographical situation of the route proposed by the Tanzanian government as well as the soil composition along the route, mainly the notorious black cotton soil. This soil type would require massive steel reinforced concrete pylons to be anchored very deep into the ground to avoid shifts of the structure when the soil gets soaked during the rainy season. Leakey also forgot to say how motorists, while driving, were to enjoy the views he proposed for the ***'grand spectacle'*** safely, without driving over the rails and crashing into the migrating animals, unless he had the creation of major stopping points, perhaps including elevated restaurants and even hotels as found along European highways in mind, something environmentalist and truly committed conservationists would have a lot more to say about.

www.savetheserengeti.org, a conservation pressure group with more than 51.500 followers on their Facebook page, had in 2011 undertaken a study to show that significantly more people and population centres would be served by a southern road solution, but big mining business appears to insist on a direct access route connecting concession

areas between the Serengeti and Lake Victoria with a route to the coast, dubbed by this correspondent as the ‘*Corridor of Destruction*’. (<http://wolfganghthome.wordpress.com/2011/05/01/tanzania-conservation-breaking-news-the-corridor-of-destruction-from-the-coast-to-the-lake/>).

One regular conservation source from Arusha immediately called the proposal ‘*Leakey’s Lunatic Express*’ while another, almost at the same time, had similar sentiments when calling it ‘*Lunatic Express Reloaded 2.0*’. *‘This is not a compromise. A costed compromise has been on the table when the data for a southern route was put to the TZ government. This is a lunacy and Leakey has done himself and his reputation no favours here. The cost, for one, would be massive and because of soil and topography a multiple of what a surface highway would cost. The Serengeti is not Jersey with flat surfaces. This is a hilly area, dissected by dry river beds, and the soft soil would require very very deep foundations. To top it, this is an earthquake prone area, so the construction would have to take this into account, driving the cost up even more. Not Leakey’s finest hour I must say’* did a source wishing to remain unnamed write in response to a request for a comment, since the news broke last Thursday. According to other conservation sources in Tanzania, requests for clarification to the Leakey Foundation went unanswered, at least by the time of uploading this article, though there is clearly little they can say in mitigation, unless their principal would be ready to withdraw his ill considered off the cuff remarks.

In comparison, the new Gotthard tunnel, the world’s longest, took the Swiss, experts in tunnel highways, some 15 years to complete at a cost of over 20 billion US Dollars, and covers a length of some 54 kilometres, a distance similar to the crossing of the Serengeti – this being said in case other brainiacs come up and try to float the tunnel version under the migration paths once again. The Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania had, in earnest, proposed a tunnel version in July 2011, giving the cost and technical challenges of their proposal apparently as little thought as Leakey now did with his elevated highway talk.

Meanwhile has the Tanzanian government made no binding firm commitments to spare the Serengeti of the highway, other than vaguely say it would build a gravel road, not a paved highway – for now that is – and has equally failed to conclusively state that the planned railway route from Tanga to a newly planned port at Musoma / Lake Victoria, would NOT run in parallel with the initially proposed highway route.

Much fodder for thought again in a fight which can only be equated to a fight of good and evil, or dark and bright forces, the good guys being the ones to preserve the Serengeti as the UNESCO World Heritage Site it is and honouring the Tanzanian nation’s founding father’s commitment to Prof. Grzimek of ‘*Serengeti Must Not Die*’ fame to preserve the Serengeti for future generations. Watch this space.

Rwanda News

KWITA IZINA 2013 WILL NAME A DOZEN NEW GORILLA BABIES



When the Rwanda Development Board’s Tourism and Conservation Department holds their annual Kwita Izina Gorilla Naming Ceremony on Saturday, the 22nd June at Kinigi / outside the Volcano National Park, exactly a dozen newborn gorilla babies will be named this year. One of them was only born two days ago to the joy of the park staff and the conservation and tourism fraternity at large. It was Muganga of the Isabukuru group who has given birth to a baby of yet to be determined sex. Namers selected by RDB to perform the actual naming during the high profile ceremony are normally given a choice of two names, at times three, proposed by the rangers and wardens looking after the gorilla groups, and reflect often the circumstances of the birth, make reference to the location or reflect the mood of the group at the time.

Kwita Izina has over the years developed into a weeklong celebration, during which conferences and workshops dedicated to conservation take place, community projects benefiting the people living around the Volcano National Park are handed over, or launched and where sporting and society events are used to mark Rwanda’s unwavering commitment to looking after the gentle giants of the Virunga mountains.

Travelers from around the world are now regularly planning visits to Rwanda to coincide with the annual Festival of the Gorillas which is unique in the range countries where mountain gorillas are found. Visit

www.rwandatourism.com for more information about the country's tourism attractions, how to get there and how best to travel across the *Land of a Thousand Hills*.

RWANDAIR SETS DATE FOR ACCRA INAUGURAL FLIGHT



RwandAir has today announced the date of the inaugural flight celebration for their new route to Accra / Ghana as 15th of June. The airline already flies to Brazzaville, Libreville and Lagos and will shortly commence regular scheduled flights to Accra and Douala, bringing their West African destinations to five and 16 overall. Next in line will then be South Sudan's capital city of Juba, but no date has yet been given when flights will be launched. The Rwandan national airline has been expanding their network to key African destinations from where passengers can not only fly to Kigali but connect across the continent, and importantly daily to Dubai, with short transit times. After taking delivery a few months ago of two brand new CRJ 900NextGen, RwandAir more recently exchanged two leased B737-500 against two of the more advanced B737-700NG aircraft, which not only offer a significantly expanded range but also more seats and cargo capacity.

Last month did RwandAir place a firm order for a Bombardier Q400, which, when delivered later this year, will boost capacity on the domestic routes to Gisenyi and Cyangugu / Kamembe as well as to the nearer regional destinations like Bujumbura, Entebbe and Mwanza.

The airline is presently considering converting an option for a further two CRJ 900NG, likely for delivery in the second half of 2014, and also has two B787 Dreamliners on order, due for delivery around 2015/16.

The Rwandan government, which owns the airline, is supporting aviation development even more through the construction of a new airport in Bugesera, for which a main contractor has only recently been named after completion of the tender process. The new airport, construction for which is due to start later this year, is expected to be operational by around 2016/17, adding much needed capacity to the airlines presently already flying to Kigali.

Kanombe International Airport, in spite of short term expansion measures like new lounge and check in areas, is progressively reaching capacity limits during peak arrival and departure times.

Expect live updates from the inaugural flight celebration, so watch this space.

BRUSSELS AIRLINES AND RWANDAIR ORGANIZE FLYING VISIT TO NAIROBI



During the just ended week did Brussels Airlines, in conjunction with codeshare partner RwandAir, operate a flying visit from Kigali to Nairobi, showcasing their award winning business class and inflight service to a group of 14 Rwandan travel agents. Both the RCAA and the KCAA granted special dispensation, as this flight ordinarily cannot carry traffic between Kigali and Nairobi, so that the agents could experience the level of comfort on board as well as get an idea on the catering and crew service their clients can expect when traveling with SN to Brussels.

Rwanda's national airline has for some time been selling tickets on the codeshared flight to the European capital and the partnership according to the respective country managers in Rwanda and Kenya has been yielding positive results for both sides.

While in Nairobi the group enjoyed the hospitality of event partner Serena Hotels, staying a night at the Nairobi Serena Hotel, itself due for expansion with a new wing starting soon, before exploring the exciting new shopping malls and seeing the main sights of Nairobi, courtesy of Centurion Tours, including the ongoing construction of new cross city highways, which will hopefully one day soon reduce the eternal traffic jams.

At the time of uploading this article the group had just returned home to Kigali on board one of RwandAir's new aircraft, completing the trip with an inflight experience of their own national airline.

Pierre Declerck and Connie Potel, the Kenya country managers of Brussels Airlines and RwandAir respectively, expressed their satisfaction with the trip, a replica of a media trip earlier in the year when key travel editors from print and electronic media across the region were invited to equally sample this experience.

Brussels Airlines flies 5 times a week between Brussels and Kigali, with the return flights routing both via Entebbe (3 times a week) and Nairobi (twice a week), offering immediate onward connections to a growing network of

European destinations, some in code share with parent company Lufthansa. The airline, using Airbus A330-200 aircraft on their routes to East Africa, also offers daily connections to New York and will in June commence flights to Washington DC, their second US destination, making visits to the United States, on business, on pleasure or as a preferred study place, easy for East African travelers.

Burundi News

BURUNDI ENACTS NEW AIR SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH QATAR



The Burundi government has now formally signed a new air service agreement with Qatar, allowing the two national airlines to fly up to seven times a week between Doha and Bujumbura. The agreement covers passengers and cargo services and allows for intermediate stops enroute from and to Bujumbura.

Burundi is currently the least connected country in Eastern Africa, with regular air services only provided by Brussels Airlines from Europe, by Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, RwandAir and Air Uganda from within the wider Eastern African region and by South African Airways from within Southern Africa.

The formal enactment of the agreement now permits Qatar Airways – Air Burundi does not operate long haul aircraft – to commence flights to Bujumbura, a prospect already warmly welcomed by the country's nascent tourism industry. The agreement was signed by Burundi's Minister for Transport, Public Works and Equipment Deogratias Rurumunzi and the Chairman of Qatar Civil Aviation Authority Abulaziz Mohamed Al-Nuaimi.

Ethiopia News

ETHIOPIAN SET FOR SEOUL FLIGHTS FROM MID JUNE



Ethiopian Airlines will commence flights between Addis Ababa and Seoul, South Korea's capital city, from 18th of June onwards in an effort to further expand their network by adding new key destinations. No information could be obtained by the time of uploading the article of the type of aircraft to be used, but it will either be the B737-300 or the new B787, of which Ethiopian already operates 5 and is expecting more as delivery of an order for 10 of these aircraft are ongoing. Initially the route will be served with four flights a week but is expected to go daily when demand is growing.

Seoul will be Ethiopian's 73rd destination as the race for continental superiority is intensifying between the leading African airlines. The only other airline from Eastern Africa to fly to South Korea, albeit by code share arrangement with Korean Air, is Kenya Airways, which has tried to catch up with ET in becoming a Pan African airline of choice.

Both Kenya and Ethiopia are also racing to improve their aviation infrastructure and a new airport in Addis Ababa will need to be matched by the planned expansion of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport's **Project Greenfield** which seeks to add a second runway and a new mega terminal over and above Terminal Four which is presently under construction. Visit www.ethiopianairlines.com for more information on traffic days, for bookings and other details.

Mauritius News

MAURITIUS TOURISM REVENUES DOWN BY 12 PERCENT IN FIRST QUARTER



Figures just out about Mauritius' tourism revenues, which show a decline of arrivals during Q1 of 2013 by 12.4 percent, have caused a storm of outrage across the island's tourism sector, and from calls and emails it is clear that the knives are now out for those thought responsible for the reverse of fortunes of the Indian Ocean's erstwhile tourism giant. While arrivals for the same period are still up by 1.5 percent, according to the same sources, it is clear that those tourists coming to Mauritius are not the heavy spenders compared to the island's European core markets, which have again declined by a staggering 7.5 percent vis a vis the first quarter of 2012. Forecasts for the entire year 2013 are now being revised to just about 900,000, compared to earlier expectations of 1 million arrivals, projecting a critical occupancy drop for the resorts already struggling to stay within financially viable occupancy range.

'I know you are often blamed as very negative towards MTPA, but from where I stand you have reported nothing but the truth. Our country's tourism industry is led down a dead end road by the MTPA leadership. They have failed us. We have lost our leader position to the Maldives and the way things are going, Sri Lanka will overtake us this year to take the runner up spot for most tourist arrivals. Every action by Karl has failed to generate additional traffic. Our markets have seen that we used copy and paste for carnival and the festival of the sea and reacted. They are going to the original places where these activities were conceived and developed. For us in Mauritius all we have to show for is a lot of money spent and nothing in return.

When Seychelles in 2008/9 looked at a steep decline, they acted decisively. They removed those responsible and brought in a new team. We must do the same here and with no delay. If we want to survive as a tourism industry, fundamental change has to come. Our resorts are suffering from lower occupancies, the airlines are suffering from lower load factors if the new arrival projections become reality and that is the truth. We have to go back to our core strengths, and we have many or we would never have reached the top and stayed there for so long.

We got fabulous beaches, fabulous luxury 5 star resorts and we have a lot of history on Mauritius worth exploring. We have forests and sugar cane factories worth visiting, to see how rum is being made and our people are fundamentally friendly to tourists from abroad. We have golf, deep sea fishing, diving on offer and our air connections are world class too. Emirates comes twice a day, so we can be reached from anywhere around the world with one stop in Dubai. Air Mauritius was crowned as leading Indian Ocean airline and we are modernizing our airport. There is a lot to build on but we need new builders, a new contractor. The present people have failed Mauritius in a big way' said a regular source with insight into the reality of the fragmented and divided tourism industry of the island.

Worth watching and waiting for those long expected and equally overdue changes it seems but for sure, Mauritius was and remains for many a favourite destination and is truly worth visiting. And those looking for special deals, this surely is the time to find excellent bargains and get a holiday of a lifetime without spending a lifetime of savings. Go Travel.

OFF AGAIN AND ON AGAIN – MORE U-TURNS BY MAURITIUS TOURISM CONFUSE MARKET



In yet another U-turn of sorts has the Mauritius Tourism Minister Michael Sik Yuen over the weekend announced that the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority will after all hold a festival later this year, known as the Festival of the Sea. Only a few weeks ago, as reported here at the time, did the same minister state before parliament that the flopped Carnival plus Shopping Festival last year would not be repeated, as the organization of such events was, or

so it was understood by the public, beyond the capacity of MTPA. At the time it was felt by many in Mauritius that such an admission of failure was plain and simple a catastrophe for the hugely important tourism sector, as it, in the words of one ardent critic of the tourism administration in Port Louis was ***‘reducing our past standing as the Indian Ocean’s leading tourism destination to ashes. If our tourism authority is not capable of organizing a simple festival, they have no business to be in this business’***, a stinging retort if not an outright slap, though not a single incident as the opposition against the institutional fragmentation of the sector is growing.

Only last week did the Maldives take the lion’s share of awards and recognitions during the annual World Tourism Awards, including being named as the region’s best tourism board, considered to be a personal failure by Karl Mootosaamy, the CEO of MTPA, who had vigorously campaigned to have Mauritius, and by prolongation himself, to be crowned the winner. Mauritius also lost the race for the highest number of tourist arrivals to the Maldives, attributed by sections of the tourism industry to the failure of MTPA to develop a compelling new concept of promoting the island and build on the considerable strength of past excellence. ***‘MTPA has gone stale, their leadership has run out of ideas. To rescue tourism Mauritius has to do what the Seychelles did between 2008 and 2010, remove the deadwood, inject energetic and inspired new people and make the authority part of all of us, not just a domain for a selected few with the right political connections. Let us copy that revival of the Seychelles Tourism Board, not their ideas on festivals which will look to the market like we steal their ideas and are unable to create our own events’*** roared a regular contributor from Port Louis when asked to comment on these latest developments.

Like the ultimately failed carnival idea, the Festival of the Sea in Mauritius concept too appears to be copied and pasted from neighbours Seychelles, which has scheduled ***SUBIOS***, The Seychelles Festival of the Sea, for the period of 22nd to 24th November this year. ***SUBIOS*** will this year celebrate its 24th edition and has gained global recognition as one of the world’s foremost underwater festivals, where film makers and renowned photographers come to the archipelago year after year to capture the biodiversity under water. Launched in 1989 as ***Sub Indian Ocean Seychelles***, the event was rebranded in 2011 as ***SUBIOS Seychelles Festival of the Sea*** and is one of the Seychelles key dates on their annual calendar of festivals and events.

‘I think Sik Yuen was frankly stung by the success of the Maldives and how Mauritius was relegated into a distant second. But the lack of capacity at MTPA he publicly stated a few weeks ago in parliament will still be his biggest challenge. There were no changes since then at MTPA. How have they now gained capacity to organize a festival of this magnitude within a few weeks. Will tax payer money again be wasted like it was the case last year with the failed carnival? Will the tourism sector be fully involved and consulted in his new idea? When will there be change at MTPA to relaunch Mauritius tourism? Why did he change his mind now and who is to gain from this and can the public be given a budget estimate of what this will cost?’ contributed another source, like all others wary of the consequences of being named, not unusual considering the stories of the past about a vicious backlash against critics of MTPA’s leadership.

A mindboggling scenario of U-turns, twists in the tail and inexplicable actions, retractions and then more activism. Time will tell where this one is going, so watch this space for what will come next out of Port Louis.

Seychelles News

KENYAN MASAI GROUP PERFORMS AT SEYCHELLES ‘FETAARIK 2013’ FESTIVAL



A group of Masai dancers, normally attached to the Bomas of Kenya, are presently in the Seychelles to perform at the archipelago’s annual Africa Festival, aka ***FetaAfrik***.

The Seychelles, a member of the African Union and geographically belonging to the African continent, has for some time now celebrated Africa Day with a dedicated festival and has increased the footprint of the celebrations to a three day festival to which year after year performing arts and dance groups are invited from the mainland. South Africa, already closely allied to the Seychelles in tourism and political terms, this year has sent a chef, a designer and artists to showcase African cuisine, fashion and arts during the festival.

The Seychelles has in recent years developed an annual calendar of events, some very high profile like the Carnaval de Carnivals – The Carnival International de Victoria, in which several African countries appeared in the past as co-hosts, like Zimbabwe, Zambia, Madagascar and from day on La Reunion, while others appeal to a special market

like SUBIOS – The Festival of the Sea or the Festival of Assumption, celebrated in August every year on the island of La Digue. Sporting events like the Seychelles Regatta, sailed biannually, round up the picture. For more information on the wide range of cultural and performing art events and festivals in the Seychelles visit www.seychelles.travel

EMIRATES SEEKS CLOSER TIES WITH SEYCHELLES THROUGH NEW RESORT PROJECT



The top leadership of Emirates, led by Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Vice President of Dubai and Chairman and CEO of the Emirates Group and accompanied, among others by Mr. Tim Clark, President of Emirates and Mr. Marc Bennet, VP in charge of Emirates' leisure division, is currently on the island of Mahe on a high profile working visit to meet Seychelles government officials and discuss their plans for a new resort complex. It is expected that they will also meet with President James Alix Michel and hold talk on matters of mutual interest and how to further increase economic and political cooperation.

The airline had in 2006 approached the Seychelles government with a proposal to build, what would have been the island's largest resort complex, comprising 453 villas and luxury suites, a marina and water bungalows extending into the ocean. The outbreak of the global economic crisis however during late 2007 and lasting into 2009 saw the project put on halt for the time being, before the economic recovery and the rising demand for holidays in the Seychelles allowed for the project to be revived. Following intense discussions between the two parties, Emirates has now presented a revised concept of only 183 villas and suites, shelving plans to build water bungalows at the proposed site at Cap Ternay.

The two parties agreed, after meeting with four government ministers (Minister Pierre Laporte, Finance, Trade & Investment, Rolph Payet, Environment & Energy, Christian Lionnet, Land Use & Habitat and Alain St. Ange Tourism & Culture) and their key staff, that all relevant existing guidelines for the development of a new resort will be followed to the letter, and that, after the proposal has received approval by the cabinet, expected in due course, will be subject to the required assessment processes including an EIA to ensure compliance with laws and regulations.

Sections of the Seychelles media had in recent weeks waged a campaign to stop all new developments on the archipelago, which would effectively also halt any future expansion of the tourism industry across the islands, without however acknowledging the crucial importance of new direct foreign investments in the sector, the added job creation – where in particular the efforts of the Seychelles Tourism Academy are exemplary to provide a skilled local workforce for hotels and resorts – and the additional foreign exchange earnings going along with new resorts. The same sources have in the past also been part to accusing the island's government of 'greenwashing' their credentials, allegations swiftly and comprehensively rejected by the relevant government ministries and agencies at the time and reported here in detail including an interview with Minister St. Ange.

'This is a game of politics, nothing else. The people of the Seychelles know how important tourism is for our economy. Our young people need employment opportunities. Those who alleged that all jobs in new resorts will be taken by foreigners are not telling the truth. STA has been intensifying training of Seychellois to start a career in the hospitality industry. We are expanding STA to turn it into a world class training institution with capacity to train twice as many people compared to now. The resorts are not just cooperating but have fully embraced the concept of training up more of our own people to take over positions in their hotels. We are even creating managerial cadres through our cooperation with the Shannon College and other key institutions of higher learning abroad. STA has signed agreements with hotel schools in Shanghai, Muscat and Malta. Yes, there will eventually be a limit for more developments, but not just yet. New resorts means more jobs for our people, more opportunities to even start new businesses related to tourism. Those opposed have not said a word where they would find jobs for young Seychellois if not in the tourism sector. Seychelles has weathered the global economic crisis of 2008 and the Eurozone crisis much better than many other countries. This is a result of a concerted effort to improve the business climate and by finding new markets for our resorts. Success is evident here and while there are challenges, those are met head on. I think we are all aware that environmental protection is the key for our success as a tourism destination. Let me give you an example. When the Constance Ephelia was built, the same people cried that the mangrove forest would be destroyed by the project. You have been there several times and seen that instead, the mangrove forests have increased in size because now they get active protection

from staff of the resort. More mangroves have been planted and this is continuing. It shows that it is possible to find a balance between environment and resorts. It is costly but this is factored into our hotel tariffs. There are always new challenges arising but I think we have the mechanism in the Seychelles to solve such issues. Any new resort, this one at Cap Ternay and the other one at Police Bay, or those on Praslin or other islands, will always be subject to a very stringent process of EIA. We have learned from past shortcomings and will continue to learn as we go along. Trying to stop developments without answering where the bread and butter for our people should then come from is futile' wrote a regular source in a senior position in the tourism industry, requesting anonymity however for not wanting to be drawn into the current debate in sections of the Seychelles media.

Emirates, Dubai's award winning airline, currently connects the Seychelles archipelago 12 times a week with the rest of the world and has become the leading foreign airline flying to Mahe. It is expected that eventually Emirates will come twice a day to Mahe, when demand justifies adding more frequencies. Cooperation between the Seychelles Tourism Board and Emirates has for long been intense and the two partners have forged a close union which saw both sides benefit from the global appeal the airline and the destination Seychelles enjoy. Visit www.seychelles.travel for more information about the destination and www.emirates.com for details on flights from an airport near you to Mahe.

AND in closing today a regular dose of what's going on further down south, courtesy of Gill Staden:

A New Livingstone

Government and Council are working like beavers to make Livingstone clean and tidy for the UNWTO. Driving or walking around town has become a bit of an obstacle course as roads, pavements and buildings are being worked on.

The Livingstone Museum is having a new car park and road.

Last week there were about 100 people spread along the Airport Road cleaning. And, then, this week we found those 100 along the Mosi-oa-Tunya Road doing more cleaning.



The Maramba Cultural Village is finally being completed too.

It seems as if The Waterfront has caught the bug too ... Livingstone's favourite waterhole is being given the Joburg look:



Proflight's New Plane

Proflight is now the proud owner of a Boeing 737-200 which will carry 105 passengers. It made its maiden flight to Livingstone during the week.

Proflight states that the use of the larger plane will mean that fares can be reduced. According to their website: *Proflight Zambia introduces Early Bird Fares! Travel Lusaka/ Livingstone and Lusaka/ Ndola for only K250 pp one way if you book more than 14 days before travel.* But, don't forget that National Airports charges K58 per flight.



Another power plant at big waterfall

From the Zambia Weekly

One of Zambia's biggest waterfalls, the Ngonye (Sioma) Falls, is set to get its own 60-80 MW hydropower station to be developed by the Western Power Company and the Development Bank of South Africa. The project is endorsed by the Barotse Royal Establishment. Western Province is one of the least electrified provinces in Zambia.



Maamba Thermal Plant

Guy Scott, the Vice President, visited Maamba during the week. Maamba has coal and this coal will be used to fuel a Thermal Power Plant. The plant is expected to produce 600 MW (Victoria Falls power station produces 108 MW). The Plant will start operating in 2015.

Guy Scott also commented on the new road which he named 'the bottom road'. He said that tenders will close in the coming week. I found a PDF document from the Roads Development Agency which states that this road runs between Gwembe and Siavonga and is 130 km in length.

Interesting, Guy Scott also commented that this would be the end of load-shedding ... but I think we have heard this before ...

Conservationists petition UNWTO members to boycott assembly

From The Post

ENVIRONMENTAL conservationists led by Ian Manning have petitioned members of the UN World Tourism Organisation to boycott the general assembly scheduled to take place in Vic Falls Town and Livingstone if Zambia allows mining activities in the lower Zambezi national park.

Meanwhile, the government has released more than KR10 million to the Livingstone organising committee for the UNWTO General Assembly to speed up preparatory works. And tourism and arts minister Sylvia Masebo has directed the Zambia Police and the Livingstone City Council to allow newspaper vendors to sell newspapers freely after reports of harassment since she ordered for the removal of street vendors from the main business corridors.

According to the petition that has been sent to UNWTO's 154 member countries and posted on www.change.org, the UNWTO and its partners, including Zambia and Zimbabwe, must abide by the UNWTO code of ethics that recognise ecotourism as key in the fight against poverty. The petition also accused the government of President Michael Sata of failing to uphold the rejection of a massive open-pit mining project in the Lower Zambezi National Park by the Zambian Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA).

"Its Minister is also failing to make a decision on the appeal made in November 2012. In addition, President Sata personally supervises the Road Development Agency, their priority being to construct a tar road through the park without any environmental or strategic oversight. As the miners - Australia's Zambezi Resources Limited - have made clear, President Sata and his senior ministers support the project," read excerpts of the draft petition. "Therefore, the only reason for the minister not upholding the appeal by the miners within the statutory two weeks is to save Presidents Sata and Mugabe from being embarrassed at the Victoria Falls and Livingstone UNWTO general assembly meetings. In the absence of an immediate undertaking to prohibit mining in the Lower Zambezi Park and to halt the building of a tarred highway until the normal Environmental Impact Statement procedures are followed,

I call on member countries and affiliate members to be bound by the UNWTO global code of ethics and BOYCOTT the twentieth general assembly."

It advised people to sign the petition aimed at protecting the environment and the promotion of sustainable development.

"This document should also insist that Zambia give an immediate undertaking that no mining or unplanned and unsanctioned road programmes will be allowed in the Lower Zambezi National Park. Failure to do so will require a boycott of the August UNWTO/Zimbabwe/Zambia general assembly by member countries and affiliate members," it stated.

It stated that Zambezi basin's massive area of primary nature was threatened by mining, hydro-electric schemes and gross infrastructural development.

"While gathered on the Zambezi River at Victoria Falls and Livingstone, many members will be unaware that downstream is the mid-Zambezi wonderland of nature in which ecotourism thrives - supposedly secured by a broad array of protected areas, including a world heritage site, and with the massive support of 17 chiefs of the Zambezi Basin who in October 2008 called on their governments and SADC to ban all mining there," it stated.

And Manning stated that the petition had created an awareness of the threat to the Lower Zambezi National Park but it has not had much effect on the Zambian Patriotic Front Government.

"I have therefore opened up another front in the battle by calling for a boycott by some member countries and affiliates of the UN World Tourism Organization of their general assembly to be held in Vic Falls and Livingstone in August 2013," stated Manning. "As you may know, Presidents Sata and Mugabe have formed a tripartite partnership with UNWTO. A call has already been made for a boycott of the Vic Falls event by some Zimbabwean conservationists, but not yet on behalf of Zambia. This I have now rectified and I urge you to sign my new petition." ...
