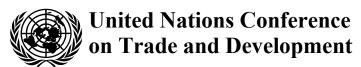**United Nations Conference
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Economic development in Africa:
Tourism for transformative and inclusive growth

Exploiting the potential of tourism for transformative growth in Africa

Executive summary

Tourism is a multifaceted industry that can have an impact on most of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Agenda 2063 envisages a substantial increase in tourism's contribution to gross domestic product, for which tourism in Africa must grow at a faster pace. The present background note outlines specific areas for discussion during the meeting and the expected accomplishments and proposed policy recommendations.

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1.   Tourism is a multifaceted industry that can have an impact on most of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. The tourism sector is also a key component of the African Union's Agenda 2063 for the socioeconomic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years. Agenda 2063 envisages a substantial increase in tourism's contribution to gross domestic product. To realize this vision, though, tourism in Africa must grow at a faster pace. This meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss how to boost tourism in Africa in light of new insights from recent research and best practices across the sector in Africa and elsewhere, particularly (a) how to strengthen linkages of tourism and reduce leakages out of the domestic economy, (b) how to tap the potential of intra-African tourism given that it is increasing and offers comparatively stronger linkages than tourism from outside Africa and (c) how tourism can contribute to an environment that fosters peace.

Questions to be addressed by the panel

2.   The questions to be addressed during the meeting by a high-level panel are as follows:

        (a)   How can tourism contribute to the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063?

        (b)   Considering the heterogeneity of the continent, how can African countries create better linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy and reduce leakage out of the economy, while promoting economic diversification?

        (c)   How can African countries tap the potential of intraregional and intra-African trade in tourism services, including through a more conducive environment for greater diaspora engagement?

        (d)   How can the virtuous relationship between a peaceful and secure Africa and tourism development be enhanced?

Expected accomplishment and recommendations

3.   Through the high-level panel session, the aim of UNCTAD is to bring together tourism public and private sector players to exchange information and ideas and to debate some of the most important present and future challenges of tourism development in Africa. The outcome of the panel session should provide an opportunity for African countries to envisage ways of addressing issues raised above, at the national, regional and international levels.

4.   Given the heterogeneity of the continent, debate at the high-level panel session will focus on best practices, highlighting opportunities and challenges in strengthening tourism linkages and reducing leakages of the tourism sector in Africa. Participants will also consider how best to elaborate a regional policy framework aimed at exploiting the untapped potential of intraregional and intra-African tourism.

5.   UNCTAD, in collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies and other international organizations, as well as with the support of donor countries, should enhance its activities to support multilateral efforts for development of sustainable tourism. UNCTAD will promote a portfolio of services for the development of tourism in Africa through research, analysis and technical assistance across the following areas: tourism governance, trade, investment, competitiveness, employment, decent work, capacity-building, data, poverty reduction and inclusive growth.

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