

# CANADA WITHDRAWS FROM UNWTO OVER MUGABE APPOINTMENT



Canada has formally withdrawn from the UNWTO (United Nation World Tourism Body) after the body invited President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to become a global leader in the tourism sphere. The UN body, it is reported, also sent the Zimbabwean leader a letter in recognition of their co hosting, together with Zambia, of next year's UNWTO general assembly.

The Canadian foreign minister, John Baird said that the UN tourism office correspondence in which the body's secretary general on Tuesday reportedly praised President Sata of Zambia and President Mugabe for their role in tourism at Victoria Falls was the 'last straw' in Canadian participation at the UN body.

Joseph Lavoie, Baird's spokesman said that after the foreign minister heard that Mugabe had been invited to this global leaders group and was honored at an event, he immediately signed the order in council, the mechanism needed to formalize Canada's notice period for withdrawal.

He further added that by enlisting Mugabe to promote tourism, they were legitimizing him.

Canada's reasoning was disputed by the UNWTO which pointed out that Mugabe had not been given any special title or even appointed as a special ambassador for tourism as it is being claimed.

The UN body in a statement said that it does not have an ambassadorial program and that the Victoria falls event was held for the purpose of signing an agreement between Zambia, Zimbabwe and the UNWTO in order to permit the holding of next year's general assembly at the Victoria falls which stretches along the borders of both countries.

The body further added that the letter sent to President Mugabe had also been sent to other world leaders as part of the body's 'global leaders for tourism campaign' which is aimed at raising awareness of the potential of tourism for economic growth, job creation and development.

The 88 year old Mugabe is under a US and EU travel ban for his alleged human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. Walter Mzembe, Zimbabwe's tourism minister was quoted brushing off Canada's snub of the UN body and terming it as an inconsequential move by a 'small player' in the global tourism industry.

Mzembe further added that Canada was not a player in the sector and only wanted to use the Mugabe brand to put them in the global map. The tourism minister was quoted on [newzimbabwe.com](http://newzimbabwe.com) as saying that if Canada wanted to withdraw, they should go ahead.

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