

# Africa: Development of Tourism Contributing to Peace

Peace is a fragile commodity – it breaks easily and must be protected and defended against its many enemies. It is of vital importance that we make our peace as strong as possible – that we build our peace on rock, and not on sand – to use a biblical expression. The intermittent outbreaks of violence, conflicts and terrorist attacks in different parts of the world, and the increases in crime and violence, remind us that we live in an uncertain and dangerous world. The challenges the world is facing today are immense and varied.



There are crises in the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula and Africa; threads of terrorism and religious radicalism continue; there are clear and irrefutable signals that our present lifestyles and consumption patterns are causing dangerous harm to the fragile ecosystems that support life on Earth. The consequences are to be seen in global warming and the struggle for sustainability. And then, overriding it all, the vast and worsening divide between haves and have-nots with the explosive potential that unfulfilled needs and expectations are creating.

Poverty, with all its problems of malnutrition, disease, crime, social collapse and the breeding ground for violence and terrorism – constitute a real threat to long term peace, stability and freedom. Addressing this problem has moved to the top of the world agenda, It was against this background that the 189 members of the UN General Assembly unanimously agreed to the Millennium Declaration in 2000 – as a declaration of intent and a commitment to work for a better world in the 21st Century.

Regarding peace the declaration say: “We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter”

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) was drawn from the Millennium Declaration. These Goals constituted an unprecedented promise by world leaders to address, as a single package, peace, security, development, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The key to unlock the implementation of the Millennium Declaration is Peace and security. Without a climate of peace we will not succeed in meeting the Development Goals – they will stay outside our reach.

One may ask – how does tourism fit into this picture. Well, as a truly global business and a core sector of the world economy tourism has become a major international role player. Over more than half a century tourism has been the fastest growing economic activity. In 1950 International tourist arrivals (the way in which tourism growth is measured) were 25 million arrivals. In 2005 (55 years later) it broke through the barrier of 800 million and reached 843 million in 2006. And, the long term trends for the tourism industry are incredibly positive. The tourism industry is expected to double in size over the next 12–14 years – faster in some regions than in others – simply because boundaries are going down and disposable incomes are going up.

According to the figures of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) tourism has become the biggest export industry – bigger than the chemical or motor industries. Tourism is highly labour intensive and one of the biggest employers in the world – particularly for women and young people. Tourism consists of more small, micro and medium sized businesses, providing more products and services to the tourism industry, than any other economic sector. It has a strong impact on local farming, fishing, handicrafts, services and even on the construction industry.



Tourism is also a frontline industry when it comes to poverty–reduction. International tourism receipts for Developing countries amounts to about US\$ 250 billion. In the 49 LDC's (Least Developed Countries) – of which the vast majority are in Africa – 46 (that is 46 out of 49) have tourism as one of their three leading sources of foreign exchange. For many poor countries tourism remains one of the few – if not the only – opportunity for development.

The contribution of tourism to conservation and sustainable development is critical – the natural environment is the most important product on which the tourism industry depends – whether it is in the form of beaches, mountains, ski–slopes, or game parks, to name but a few. Tourism has shown its capacity to serve as a tool that can be used to achieve the right balance between social, economic and environmental goals.

Tourism has the ability to build bridges of understanding and tolerance between peoples and nations – it promotes world peace. Think about it for a moment: Every peace agreement includes tourism exchanges as one of its first components. It is people–to–people contacts that establish the first bridges to cultural understanding and tolerance. That is why UNWTO has quietly been driving tourism projects to help build post–conflicts development in East Timor, Sri Lanka, Rwanda and even in DPR Korea.

And when it comes to development, Tourism is one of the best – and often the only option – for many of the world’s poor countries to create new jobs, provide opportunities – particularly for women – and to help lift people out of poverty. That is why UNWTO is helping countries to place tourism at the core of their Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies

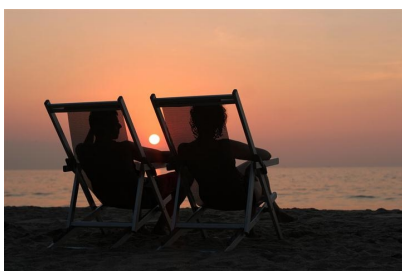
When it comes to the MDG – tourism is – directly or indirectly – related to all the goals. Peace and Tourism belong together – they are inter-related. Without peace there can be no tourism, but tourism can also contribute to the peace process.

Peace is a journey that demands continued effort. It requires that we vigorously protect and advance those rights and values that form the foundation of real peace. In such a climate tourism will flourish, as will other economic activities.

Africa is well positioned to derive more value from tourism. Its tourism strength however, is above all to be found in its originality and authenticity. It has a lot to offer that can no longer be found elsewhere. Africa still has a legacy of romanticism as the continent of the explorers and as a place for adventures.

Africa is an exciting continent but its progress and development are hampered, amongst other, by the impediments created by poor or non-existent infrastructure and fragile developing economies. However, most African countries have one, common, unique selling property, namely an abundance of Africa’s diverse and fascinating fauna and flora. If this great natural wealth can be correctly conserved and managed, their sustainable utilization should contribute significantly to the long-term development of the continent.

One of the most successful and powerful initiatives to utilize the immense value of Africa’s natural potential comes from the concept of Peace Parks and Transfrontier Conservation Areas. The principle is to integrate large tracks of land crossing national boundaries into Peace Parks. The goal is to advance sustainable economic development, the conservation of bio-diversity and regional peace and stability.



The concept of Peace Parks has the potential to open many new doors for Africa’s development. Peace Parks can be created across the continent and linked together to create unique animal kingdoms and make Africa the world’s leader in the protection of fauna and flora. The economic benefits would be enormous – mind-boggling. The world has lost more than 30% of its plant, fish and animal species over the past 30 years. It has lost more than 30% of its forests. Suffice to say that with Peace Parks across Africa we would create “lungs” for the world – lungs that can become the backbone of Africa’s economic

growth over the next three decades.

Tourism is already making a major contribution towards achieving the MDG – it could be used more effectively in many developing countries. It is crucial for our generation to fulfill the dream and make the MDGs a reality.

The opportunity is ours to make the Millennium Development Goals a reality. We must not wait for others – we have to do it ourselves – not by blaming others – but by using our opportunities to make Africa a continent of peace and progress. To achieve that goal the strength of tourism should be more effectively used as a tool for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. This challenge is our opportunity.

(Address presented at the Fourth African Conference, Uganda 2007; text shortened)

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<http://www.iipt.org>

Date: 2011-04-25

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-africas-tourism-projects-contributing-to-peace-article1511>