

Revival of Uganda Airlines will promote tourism, say officials

BY MISAIRI THEMBO KAHUNGU
mkthembo@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. The revival of the Uganda Airlines will make the Uganda tourism sector more marketable to the rest of the world, the Uganda Tourism Association president, Mr Boniface Byamuka, has said.

Mr Byamukama made the remarks yesterday at the Uganda Media Centre in Kampala during a press conference jointly addressed by Uganda Tourism Board, Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Uganda Hotel Owners Association.

The press conference was aimed at rallying Ugandans to visit the different tourism sites and national parks in order to receive a good adventurous experience in the festive season.

Mr Byaruhanga said despite Uganda being one of the key tourism destinations in the world, there is a challenge

of accessibility by the prospective tourists facing high ticket costs by airlines from competing countries.

He added that Uganda receives about 1.2m tourists annually but they face difficulties in connecting to the country that has limited direct flights from other tourism sites in Africa.

"Our challenge is about the easy bringing of tourists to Uganda. No country has developed tourism without a national carrier. Our neighbour Rwanda is benefiting from the national carrier because RwandaAir directly flies in tourists from Serengeti National Park in Tanzania to Kigali," Mr Byamukama said.

He urged government to expedite the process of reviving the Uganda Airline, saying it will not only bring "enormous returns" on investment but also make "Uganda visible" to the rest of the world.

The Executive Director of the

Uganda Tourism Board, Mr Stephen Asiimwe, said the national carrier is a strategic asset to the tourism sector because it is a marketing brand wherever it lands with passengers.

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A national carrier is a strategic asset that the country needs because the airline is a brand. Our country is under siege by other airlines that market the products

of their countries.”

STEPHEN ASIIMWE, ED OF UGANDA TOURISM BOARD

He said Uganda has been under "siege" by other airlines which advertise the tourism, agriculture and business of their original countries whereas the Ugandan products are not known to their passengers.

He said with the expansion of Entebbe International Airport, the plans to build another airport in the oil rich Hoima District and the planned upgrading of several airfields in the

country, the national carrier would ease transportation of tourists.

Cabinet early this year approved the revival of the Uganda Airline. Uganda Airlines, which was established under President Idi Amin in 1977, was liquidated in 2001 after government failed to get private investors to revamp it.

During the same press conference, Ugandans were urged to visit the different tourism destinations in the country so as to enjoy the best of nature that Uganda sells to the rest of the world.

The chairperson of the Uganda Hotel Owners Association, Ms Susan Muhwezi, assured Ugandans that the hotels and safari camps have offered discounts on the cost of both food and accommodation this season.

Mr Stephen Masaba, the director of tourism in Uganda Wildlife Authority, said the park entry prices are pocket friendly for Ugandans.