

Uganda targets a million Chinese tourists by 2020

By Gerald Tenywa

The Minister for Tourism, Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu is hunting for one million Chinese tourists to increase Uganda's visitors to four million by 2020. Currently, Uganda gets 1.7 million tourists mostly from Europe and the US.

Kamuntu is heading a delegation at the China Guangdong International Tourism Expo as part of promotional efforts to get at least one million tourists from the world's largest tourist nation.

Speaking on the sidelines of the expo attended by over 500,000 people last weekend, Kamuntu said: "We are going to embark on an aggressive marketing campaign in the tourism market. The Government is looking at the Chinese tourism market contributing to our GDP."

The minister was accompanied by Stephen Asiimwe, the chief executive officer of the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Ambassador Solomon Rutega, Uganda's Consul General in Guangzhou and officials from the Uganda Embassy in Beijing.

The Expo and conference was held at the Pazhou Exhibition Complex in Guangzhou, the



Chinese attending a cultural show during the China Guangdong International Tourism Expo. UTB photo

capital Guangdong, China's richest province with a GDP of \$1.15 trillion, and a population of over 110 million people.

The side event was organised as part of ongoing activities by the consulate to create further awareness about Uganda as a favourable tourist destination.

Kamuntu reminded his audience, of mostly tour and travel operators, of the peace and stability that Uganda has enjoyed over the years and reassured them of unforgettable experiences. He called on tour and travel operators to establish links with their counterparts in

Uganda to develop itineraries that suite the Chinese market.

Ambassador Rutega said since the establishment of the consulate, trade, investment and tourism had increased tremendously.

The tourism administration of Guangdong province was represented by Liang Yongzhong, who expressed the readiness of the government of China to support Uganda's efforts to attract Chinese tourists.

UN - World Tourism meet
The minister is in Guangzhou,

as part of his visit to China, during which he will attend the General Assembly of the UN World Tourism Organisation in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. He will also preside over another consulate-organised conference on promoting Uganda's investment and tourism opportunities in Nanning City, Guangxi Province on Thursday.

China's 120million tourists

Last year, 121 million Chinese travelled overseas, that is more than any other country in the world. It is forecast that it will grow to 150 million, in the next few years, according to World Travel online.

According to "China file", an internet publication, the number of visitors who came to Africa in 2016 increased due to less visa restrictions and new direct flights between China and Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa, among other popular destinations.

Tourism contributes 10% of Uganda's GDP. In 2015, the tourism sector emerged the top foreign exchange earner with \$1.35b (about sh4.9 trillion), accounting for 23% of the total exports of the country. It was followed by remittances from abroad that fetched sh4 trillion.