

Tourism sector on course to achieve NDP targets

Call to action

Ronald Kagwa, the manager of production, trade and tourism planning at the National Planning Authority, noted despite being underfunded the sector is progressively growing and realising higher returns than any other sector.

He proposed an increase in funding to help boost the aggressive marketing initiatives for both the domestic and international visitors.

"It is a low cost investment with a high return," Kagwa said. He proposed the formation of private and public sector partnerships to develop the tourism value chain in order to be able to meet the sector targets.

John Makombo, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) director for conservation, called for the improvement of accommodation facilities in the parks and game reserves.

Makombo called for training of human resource and equipment of game rangers to be able to satisfy the needs of visiting tourists.

Godfrey Kiwanda, the tourism state minister, asked for a collective effort from all Ugandans to give a boost to the sector.

Ephraim Kamuntu, the tourism minister, noted that they are looking at increasing the annual tourism arrivals from 1.3 million to 4 million arrivals by 2020.



Kamuntu

Wildlife Act amended to include tough penalties for those who destroy the sites.

Kamuntu revealed that the Government is developing the source of the River Nile to maintain it as a historic site and a permanent tourist attraction.

He explained that the ministry has engaged consultants to develop a 20-year master plan including architectural design and public infrastructure to guide their activities.

They are also developing Rwenzori infrastructure by introducing a cable car that will enable tourist reach the mountain peak in a day instead of the gruesome seven days it currently takes to walk there.

He said this will enable the physically weak and the old tourists to easily climb the mountain.

Hospitality

Crested Crane Hotel Jinja is being renovated and upgraded to three-star status and will be designated as a centre of excellence.

The hotel will be a training centre for students. It is expected to graduate over 300 students annually.

"A curriculum has been reviewed and accreditation with international institutions done," Kamuntu said.

He noted that 81 accommodation facilities have so far been classified as per the international standards. There is also an ongoing sensitisation of hotel owners on the required standards. Five have been made five-star hotels, 35 three-star hotels and 26 upgraded to two star hotels.

He noted that they are currently sensitising hotel owners to upgrade their facilities to meet the internationally required standards.

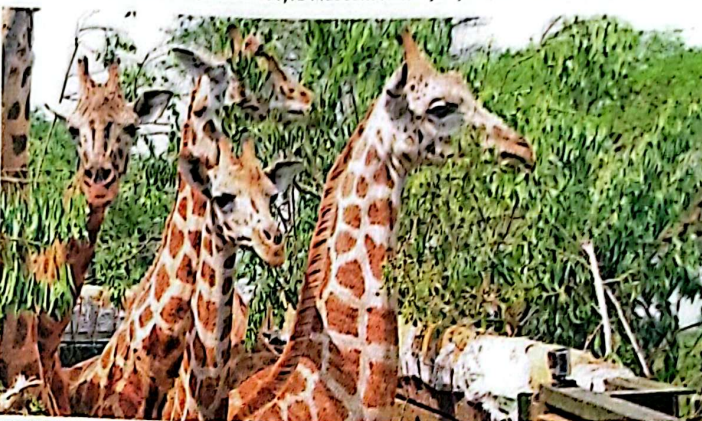
Challenges

He said conflicts between humans and wildlife have increased. Many animals have been killed and they have now increased the number of scouts to manage the problem.

They are also planting garlic which is palatable to act as a buffer for the animals as



The newly refurbished Uganda Martyrs Museum Namugongo is a source of local tourism



Giraffe from Murchison Falls National Park are a big attraction

HOTEL OWNERS ARE BEING SENSITISED TO UPGRADE THEIR FACILITIES TO MEET GLOBAL STANDARDS

the Muslim shrine toilets.

Expanding the sector

Kamuntu said the Government is also expanding the sector to include music and dance, museums, food festivals, hot air ballooning, canopy walks, as well as cultural and natural sites.

"Over 705 natural and cultural heritage sites have been identified and protected. Work is also going on a number of museums such as Mugabe Palace, Soroti and Barlonyo," he said.

Kamuntu said the Government is funding the Buganda Kingdom to help restore Kasubi tombs that were burnt, rebuilding the former Ankole Kingdom palace and modernising Nyero rock as well as Kabale Museum.

He noted that apart from just developing the cultural and natural sites, the Government is also in the move to strengthen their conservation. There are consultations to have the

tourism potential," he said.

Diversity

On increase of diversity of tourism products, Kamuntu said the ministry has ventured into faith-based tourism with a focus on the Catholic and Protestant shrines.

He said instead of having people visit the historic sites once a year in celebration of Martyrs' Day, the ministry is looking for ways of attracting tourists to visit the place daily.

Kamuntu said plans are underway to redevelop the sites to international standards.

"Faith-based tourism

is a growing trend in the world. We all know about the pilgrimage to Mecca by the Muslims. In Uganda we have the Uganda Martyrs' Day where more than three million faithful congregated at the three Martyrs' shrines," Geoffrey Byarugaba, a member of the martyrs' day organising committee, said.

Byarugaba said the Government is redeveloping the three religious shrines — Anglican, Catholic and Muslim shrines — at Namugongo to befit the martyrdom of the saints. Ongoing developments include landscape beautification and building of

By Betty Amamukirori

The National Development Plan II (NDP) target for the tourism sector envisages an increase in market share, diversity of tourism products and stock of human capital along the tourism value chain.

It also envisions an increase in co-ordination, regulation, management and an increase in conservation of natural and cultural heritage of the country.

While addressing the media at the Media Centre on Tuesday, Ephraim Kamuntu, the sector minister noted that the ministry is moving in the right direction towards achieving these targets.

By 2020, the tourism sector will become the driving force towards the country's achievement of a middle income status," he said.

Kamuntu noted that the sector contributes 10% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 23% of the country's total export.

Out of every 10 jobs in Uganda, one is a tourism one. We cannot continue to treat the sector casually," he said.

Currently the different sectors are sharing with the public some of their achievements and challenges in regards to the 2016 National Resistance Movement (NRM) manifesto. The following are some of the achievements of the sector.

Achievements

Kamuntu noted that with the current aggressive marketing they are doing coupled with the political stability and the responsible journalism, the sector is registering a boom with over 1.3 million tourists flocking the country annually.

He said nature visits to the country have risen by 17% and this has increased Uganda's tourism sector visibility in the world.

Kamuntu said the three public relation firms that were appointed to market Uganda's tourist potential to the UK, Germany and USA have marketed the country well and there is a noticeable increase of tourism inflow from those countries.

He also said they are now in the process of contracting three more firms to tap into China, the Gulf state and Japan. There is also a plan to empower missions abroad with materials on tourism.

Domestic tourism

Kamuntu said the ministry is also promoting domestic tourism.

This is being done through cultural and regional cluster initiatives, domestic activities and campaigns such as Miss Tourism, Miss Uganda, Tulambule and Pearl of Africa Expo.

"We have so far purchased buses to take people around Kampala. Through Tulambule, we are trying to tell the country about its

well as digging the trenches to prevent them from moving out of the park.

Kamuntu said the wild animals are also abandoning their natural habitats due to climate change, which has resulted into the growth of unpalatable plants such as lantana camara.

He said this has pushed-grass eating animals out of the park in search of pasture elsewhere. Some of the animals have crossed the borders.

"This problem is global and is beyond our control," Kamuntu said.

He said the negative perception, attitude and mindset of Ugandans has also impacted the sector.

"Tourism is looked at as an industry of leisure. This attitude needs to change," Kamuntu said.

He said instability from neighbouring countries such as Sudan and Congo has also destabilised the sector since habitats for animals are currently being destroyed to accommodate refugees.

Kamuntu said the 0.1% annual budget is not enough to market the sector.