

National News

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Private sector advised on reforms to boost Uganda's tourism

BY PAUL ADUDE

KAMPALA. Members of the private sector participating in Uganda's tourism sector have been urged to carry out a number of reforms, including strengthening their governance, resource mobilisation, and professionalism, to position Uganda as Africa's top tourism destination.

The president of Uganda Tourism Association (UTA), Ms Yewagnesh Biriggwa, said the strategy will ensure that the private sector is organised, professional, and fully engaged as equal partners in policy, investment, and delivery to thrust Uganda as the pride of Africa's tourism.

"Tourism already contributes about 78 percent of Uganda's GDP, supports over 15 percent of national employ-

ment, and in strong years earns the country over \$1billion in foreign exchange. These are not just statistics, they represent values, businesses, and communities across the country," she said.

Ms Biriggwa made the remarks during the launch of the UTA strategic work plan 2026 to 2030, aimed at building a more competitive and better organised tourism private sector for Uganda on Thursday in Kampala.

"Ninety nine percent of tourism enterprises are medium-small enterprises, women and youth make over 70 percent of the workforce, yet many remain informal, under-skilled, access to affordable finance remains limited, taxation is fragmented, digital adoption is uneven, and coordination across the sector remains weak," she said.

Ms Biriggwa said the strategy plan,

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which was produced in partnership with Enabel, the Belgian development agency, will see UTA roll out a nationwide membership and engagement campaign over the next five years to ensure all tourism enterprises in the country remain connected and united as

one strong private sector voice.

"We will also prioritise skills development and competitiveness, working with government, training institutions, development partners through supporting training certification, mentorship and digital skills programmes that equip our people, especially youth and women, with the skills required to compete regionally and globally," she said.

The State Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Mr Martin Mugarra, said the government remains committed to providing a good enabling environment for the private sector for business.

Mr Mugarra further urged the private sector to sit down with the government and discuss the implementation of the proposed \$19.72m (about Shs70b) tourism development levy advocacy that will enable them easily implement the

strategic plan.

The vice president of the UTA, Mr Isa Kato, said the plan is set to see the private sector organised, intentional, and ready to lead alongside the government in unlocking tourism's full economic potential.

"In the new strategic plan, we are going to focus on transparent elections, clear constitutions, accountability to members, we shall talk about our limits, the financial transparency and having professional secretariats, strong associations build a strong apex body," he said.

The Enabel Country Director, Mr Nicolas Oebel, said the strategy will strengthen local value chains, generate important international revenue, and create decent employment, especially for young people and for women.