

Tourism boosted as Uganda is elected to World Heritage Committee

By Billy Rwothungeyo

Uganda's shining tourism star just got brighter after the country was elected to serve on the World Heritage Committee for the first time.

The development happened at the just concluded 21st general assembly of the state parties at the UNESCO headquarters in the French capital, Paris.

Alongside Uganda, Australia, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Guatemala, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Spain were elected to the committee, according to a release from the foreign affairs ministry.

The World Heritage Committee, which meets once every year, is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and defines the use of the World Heritage Fund. It also allocates financial assistance upon requests from states' parties.

This committee examines the health of properties on the world heritage list. It has the final say on whether a property is retained or struck off the world heritage list.

Uganda boasts of three UNESCO world heritage sites — Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

National Park, Rwenzori Mountains National Park and the Kasubi Royal Tombs, which is still under construction after the 2013 fire.

The election of committee members is conducted on the basis of the composition of the electoral groups of UNESCO, as determined by the general conference. The groups are composed of countries from Africa, western Europe and north American states, eastern Europe, Latin-America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Arab states.

The Uganda delegation was led by John Chrysostom Muyingo, the state minister for higher education.

Stephen Asiimwe, the chief executive officer of Uganda Tourism Board, said Uganda's election to the committee comes at the right time "when the country is stepping up efforts to increase tourism numbers".

"This is one of the best things that have happened to this country. As a member of the World Heritage Committee, we shall have a chance to sell our country to the rest of the world, we shall get more visibility," he said.

"Beyond the three UNESCO world heritage sites, we have so many cultural sites, wild animals and so many tourist



A gorilla at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park. Bwindi is one of the three UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Uganda

attractions that we have to offer."

In October, Uganda hosted the Giant's Club Conservation and Tourism Investment Forum, which attracted potential investors from several parts of the world. At the meet, President Yoweri Museveni

launched a new framework for investing in the country's protected area network.

The framework is aimed at attracting investors to develop facilities in the country's wildlife area so as to attract more tourists from across the world.