Kashari, Mbarara District.

Uganda draws lessons from Zurich Expo

BY PHILIP WAFULA

KAMPALA. Uganda has drawn lessons from the four-day 34th FESPO and Golfmesse 2026 which ended last week at the Messe Zurich Exhibition Centre.

For the first time, Uganda joined Italy, Jordan, Australia, and Indonesia, among other big players, to showcase her adventure products to high-end tourism enthusiasts at Switzerland's largest tourism expo with more than 42,000 visitors and over 500 exhibitors.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs describes Uganda's participation as a "strategic move to aggressively penetrate the Swiss tourism market, introduce its adventure, sports portfolio, and attain familiarity and name-recognition among Swiss travellers".

At the FESPO, Uganda promoted scenic views, trails, cycling tours, golf course hotels, and international sports events alongside its premium coffee, cultural heritage, enhancing her overall brand identity to the high-end traveller.

Mr Stephan Amstad, the exhibition manager, said Uganda was the second African country, after South Africa, to have a pavilion at the Zurich FESPO, a development he hailed as "historic" and "welcome".

The Minister of State for Tourism, Mr Martin Mugarra Bahinduka, who led Uganda's delegation, said the country's presence in Zurich provided it with an opportunity to establish first-hand the Swiss travellers' profile and customise product development and market infrastructure interventions accordingly.

The Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Ms Juliana Kaggwa, said acquiring first-hand market insights gives them an opportunity to benchmark marketing material and improve on what they already have, while networking with Swiss tour operators selling African destinations.

"We realise that producing materials in three different languages is important for this market despite its seemingly small population," Ms Kaggwa was quoted in a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Uganda's deputy Ambassador to the Swiss Confederation, Mr Arthur Kafeero, cautioned against using a one-size-fits-all approach in promoting tourism in Switzerland, saying that venturing into markets without adequate research can lead to wrong product design.

"As a Mission, we have used Economic and Commercial Diplomacy (ECD) resources to do our homework to guide the UTB on how to develop tourism products that show an understanding of the Swiss demographics," he said.

According to the Ministry of Finance, tourism earnings reached $1.7b in the Financial Year 2024/25, which was attributed to increased investments.

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