



MINISTRY OF TOURISM & WILDLIFE
Office of Public Communications

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday, 28th April 2020.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DOMESTIC TOURISM TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE POST-COVID-19
CS Balala Hosts Webinar Series To Lay Out Vision For Sector Recovery

NAIROBI, 28th April, 2020 – Tourism & Wildlife Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Najib Balala, hosted a stakeholder webinar, Monday, to lay out the ground-work for the sector's recovery.

Speaking during the webinar, Balala singled out the domestic and regional tourism as the key to the sector's immediate recovery:

"The international market will take a while to recover and we should therefore bank on the domestic and regional travelers. However, affordability and accessibility will play a vital role in this", he noted.

His sentiments were supported by Damian Cook, Founder & CEO E-Tourism Frontiers, and a leading international tourism consultant:

"We need to take stock of Kenyan products, see what is going to work during recovery and capitalize on them", he said.

The webinar, under the banner 'Leap Forward' brought together over 500 stakeholders to listen and interact with 6 local and international tourism experts who made compelling presentations on the way forward for Kenyan tourism:

- Damian Cook : Founder & CEO, E-Tourism Frontiers
- Chad Shiver : Destination Marketing Head for Africa, Trip Advisor
- Alexandra Blanchard : Destination Sales Manager - EMEA, Trip Advisor
- Ninan Chacko : Senior Advisor, McKinsey & Company
- Hugo Espirito Santos : Partner, McKinsey & Company
- Karim Wissanji : Founder & CEO, Elewana Group
- Maggie Ileri : CEO, TIFA Research Limited
- Joanne Mwangi-Yelbert : CEO, PMS Group.

Data presented by TripAdvisor's Destination Marketing Head for Africa indicated that in terms of recovery, Africa leads in the number of respondents (97%) ready to take short domestic trips within six (6) months of the end of COVID-19. The data also indicated that most travelers were seeking road trips and beach experiences, because of concerns about boarding planes and the need to unwind, respectively, post-COVID-19. This data further supported CS Balala's call for a focus on domestic and regional tourism.

Ninan Chacko of McKinsey, called for re-imagination and reform of Kenya's tourism to have a more diversified tourism product that offers options and more value to travelers. He gave the example of Tourism Australia and said that in tandem with the focus on domestic and regional tourism, Kenya could position itself as the hub for East African tourism given its national carrier's network and resilience and its developed tourism infrastructure.

Hugo Espirito-Santos, of McKinsey further noted that one of the ways to re-imagine and reform the tourism product would be by focusing on experiential tourism – giving tourists a better experience by reducing density in tourism sites such as the Maasai Mara and laying out strategies that take into consideration geography, consumer segments and culture and food experiences.

Damian Cook of E-Tourism Frontiers, gave an elaborate strategy centred on react, rethink, and recovery to get the sector back on its feet and called for all players to develop a new paradigm for their businesses noting that the post-COVID-19 world will bring changes on the scale of 9-11 in 2001. This he said would include bilateral tourism agreements and COVID-free certifications for countries.

Maggie Ireri, of TIFA Research Limited, took participants through the results of an online poll which gave them an indication of the tourism stakeholders' pain-points. Pain-points which had earlier been brought to the CS's attention by the sector and he has already presented them to the National Treasury for consideration.

CS Balala laid out the six-point agenda his Ministry is pursuing for the sector, that employs over 1.6 million Kenyans and represents 20% of the country's GDP:

1. Creation of a Tourism Recovery Revolving Fund
2. Deferring of Tax and Reduction of Input Costs and Fees
3. Incentives for Tourism Sector Investors
4. Enhanced Domestic Tourism Marketing Budget
5. Better support and coordination with the aviation sector
6. Primacy and investment in Conservation & Wildlife as the backbone

In concluding his remarks, Balala called for change lest, Kenya loses its ground forever:

“We must leap. We must transform and adopt a new mindset or else we will perish”, he reiterated.

The 90-minute webinar was hosted by Joanne Mwangi-Yelbert, who in bringing the session to a close, reminded the participants of the need to focus on solutions that will bring Kenya tourism back, bigger and stronger – a product that Kenyans can own and experience.

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