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**Re: Dead
On Arrival:
Air Peace's
Lagos-London
Flights
Controversies**

...Plans Four Flights A Week On The Route

**Lagos State
Commissioned
Its Second Rail Line**







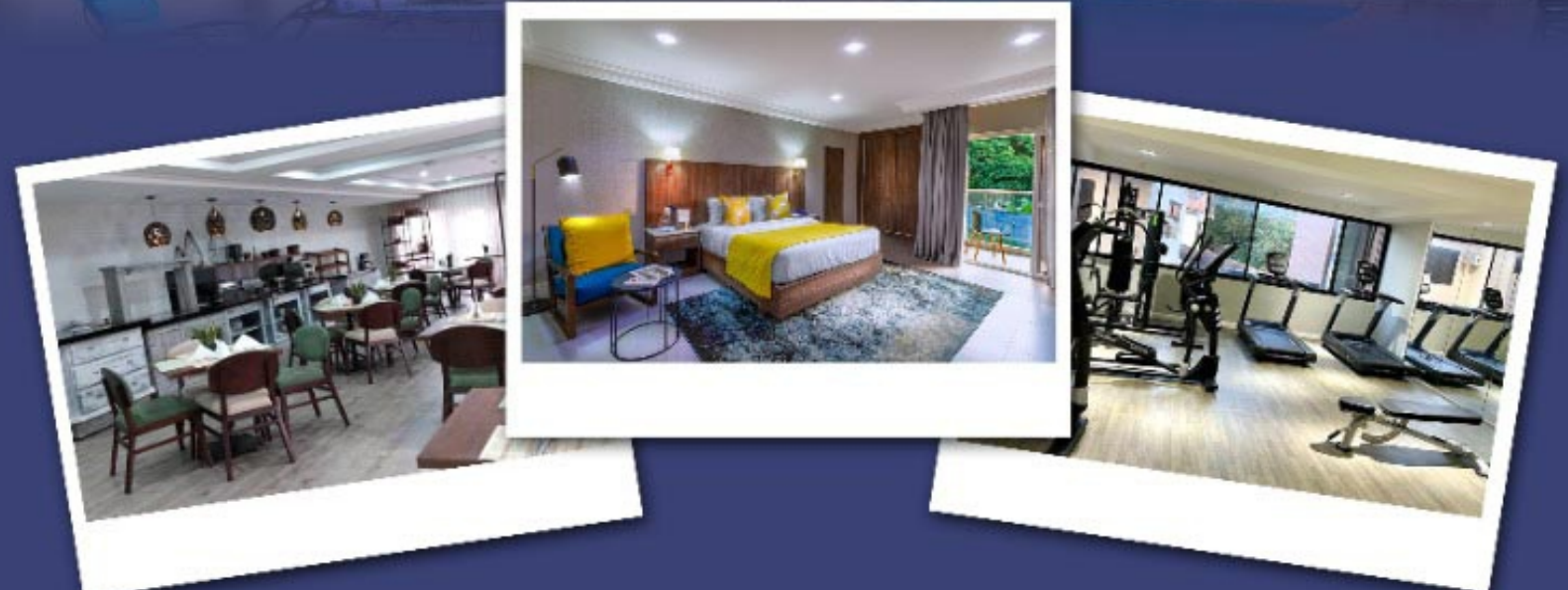



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Dr. Alfred Mutu, UN Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary

Kenya To Chair UN Tourism Competitiveness

Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness, solidifying its position as a leader in the global tourism industry.

The announcement was made at the first meeting of the committee held at the

UN Tourism headquarters in Madrid, Spain. Kenya won the position after two rounds of voting, defeating strong bids from Thailand and Malta.

Commenting on the election, Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet

Secretary Dr. Alfred Mutua said: "This is a historic moment and an important win for Kenya as it put us in a position of decision making in matters that affect tourism across the globe. This vote demonstrates the confidence that UNWTO member states have in Kenya's leadership and ability to steer the organization's agenda on tourism competitiveness."

He added that tourism is a key pillar of Kenya economy and

chairing the committee would allow synergy with other UNWTO members in shaping policy, building partnerships, and promoting best practices in tourism. "We shall champion initiatives that will help in the creation of jobs, protecting of the planet as well as driving inclusive growth that can be felt and be impactful within communities," said CS Mutua

The Executive Director of the @UNWTO@ZoritsaUrošević congratulated Kenya on securing the

chair position acknowledging Kenya's remarkable achievements in the tourism sector. She expressed confidence in the country's ability to lead the Committee effectively.

"I commend Kenya for its commitment to sustainable tourism development.

As one of the important tourism economies in Africa, Kenya will bring valuable experience and expertise that will lead the Committee's work in enhancing competitiveness and

responsible tourism across UNWTO member countries," Urošević said.

@Min_TourismKE had appointed Wausi Walya, Public Relations and Corporate Communications Manager at the Kenya Tourism Board @magickkenya to lead the pitch for Kenya as the designated technical officer and appointed focal person for the technical committee by the Ministry.

Kenya's successful bid was anchored on its tourism competitiveness pillars such as destination marketing, diversified tourism offerings, sustainable tourism practices, cultural and natural heritage, training, and skills development programs as well as innovations and technology among other strengths.

The country's infrastructural development strides in areas of roads, airports and hospitality facilities were also highlighted as key enablers which have unlocked growth potential for the sector.

The UNWTO Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness acts as a platform for cooperation between Member States to enhance the competitiveness of their offering, promote innovation, and ensure the sustainable growth of tourism worldwide.

Kenya takes over the chairmanship for three years and will hold the position between 2024 and 2027.



Ikeja Train Station

Lagos State Commissioned Its Second Rail Line

Lagos State government, the new rail line tagged "Red Line" would help stimulate economic growth, development and job creation, reduce severe traffic congestion in the major activity centres in Lagos metropolis, restructuring, improve the image of public transport and attract more car users to public transport and promote business and tourism through the link between the Ogun and Lagos State.

The government also hinted the new attempt to ease transportation in the city of Lagos would significantly contribute towards urban restructuring, shortening of travel distances and improving city sustainability, improve road traffic safety, increase travel

efficiency and workers' productivity, improve quality of the environment - air and life and comprise a significant part of a holistic transport plan and network for Lagos.

The government noted that Lagos getting two rails within one administration with the Blue Line operational in 2023 is no mean feat and one that no other state [subnational] in the world has achieved on its own. Lagos indeed is rising and setting a precedence for economic progress and prosperity for the people of Lagos State.

The line will serve 250,000 people per day ramping up to 500,000 and eventually to 750,000 per day when connected to Marina. It is set to reduce travel time along that corridor from over 2 hours to less than 45 mins thereby improving productivity and the well being of Lagosian. It is an honour and a privilege to be a part of this project from inception. Congratulations to the people of Lagos.

The second phase to National theatre connecting to Marina was also signed during the commissioning.

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Festus Keyamo, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Nigeria

Re: Dead On Arrival: Air Peace's Lagos-London Flights Controversies ...Plans Four Flights A Week On The Route

The attention of African Travel Times has been drawn to the interview in which Allen Onyema, Chief Executive Officer of Air Peace, Nigeria and West Africa's largest airline, referred to articles by www.cable.ng and www.africantraveltimes.com. These articles cautioned that the airline may encounter difficulties if it proceeds with the plan for the Lagos, Nigeria-Gatwick, London route starting on Saturday, March 30th, 2024.

In the TVC interview, Onyema stated that internal resistance in Nigeria, as well as opposition from the British administration,

contributed to the challenges in securing the route, despite the Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreement [BASA], Memorandum of Understanding [MoU], and their associated implementing procedures providing for technical cooperation between national civil aviation authorities of the two countries.

He noted, "Negative consequences of bad news, such as the tabloid's 'Dead On Arrival' prognosis, which he saw as a symptom of the country's fundamental issues and jealousy."

He further stated, "From Nigeria here, we were being stopped by our own people for 4 years and

they were conniving with whoever to do that.

Referring to the articles, Onyema said, "A Nigerian tabloid was writing, 'Dead On Arrival' that Air Peace will not succeed." He added, "That will tell you the wickedness in the system in this country; and the envy has driven some people to a point that they have lost it."

Onyema argued, "It's not about Air Peace, it's not about Allen Onyema and that Allen Onyema does not own Air Peace any longer that Air Peace is owned by the over 220 million Nigerians."

Unfortunately, Allen Onyema's assertions stem from his failure to

understand the argument advanced by the articles. His uninformed refrain and refusal to heed the ominous warnings raised necessitate this follow-up write-up.

The publications were based on first-hand experiences; several aviation and travel analysts are skeptical about the viability and capacity of Air Peace to see through this difficult and complicated arrangement with the Norwegian low-cost airline.

According to an earlier report attributed to Air Peace, Norse Atlantic, a Norwegian low-cost airline, will provide crew and aircraft to Air Peace for its Lagos-London operations.

Meanwhile, reports suggest that Norse operates under a charter known as an ACMI contract. In aviation terms, an ACIM contract, also known as wet or damp leasing, is an agreement between two airlines where the lessor provides an aircraft, crew, maintenance, and insurance [ACMI] to the lessee in return for payment based on the number of block hours operated.

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Mar 18, 2024

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Dead On Arrival: Air Peace's Lagos-London Flights, Norwegian...

Mar 6, 2024

Apart from the complications and challenges of the arrangement between Norse Atlantic and Air Peace, the anticipated low load factor that Virgin Nigeria once suffered on that route, as well as the purported fares that the airline has been promoting, would not be enough to cover associated costs.

Also, an aviation website, Simply Flying, reported earlier that Nigeria's Air Peace will operate flights to London Gatwick with Norse

Atlantic Boeing 787s and will be using Air Peace's slots at London Gatwick Airport to connect Gatwick and Lagos, Nigeria, initially for two months starting in April 2024, with the possibility of a long-term agreement.

Simply Flying also confirmed that the low-cost carrier will operate four flights a week between London Gatwick Airport and Lagos Murtala Mohammed Airport on behalf of Air Peace.

Already, the advertised fares have risen well above what is being promoted. This reporter attempted to book an economy return ticket for March 30th, returning on April 14th, 2024. The fare advertised at N1.2 million is now going for N1.5 million on the Air Peace website.

Every Nigerian wants a national carrier or Nigerian private airline that would compete with all international airlines, but such an airline must demonstrate capacity, competence, and integrity. Hence, the information provided in our first article for the management of Air Peace to take all necessary precautions, which sadly are not being heeded now.

This African Travel Times reporter witnessed and experienced the catastrophic operations of Virgin Nigeria on the Lagos-Gatwick route several years ago as a passenger and a travel writer.

Without any iota of doubt, Nigeria need a national carrier like yesterday and those masquerading and pretending they have the



Allen Onyema, Airpeace Chairman



Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu, Lagos State Governor, Nigeria.

Lagos State Unveils Ambitious Plan To Launch Commercial Airline And Construct New Airport

A bold move from Mr. Governor: 'Over the last five months, the Deputy

Governor and I have been working to put a concise plan together for the establishment of an airline,

but we did not make the plan open because of the need to get adequate knowledge about the operational procedures of airlines," Governor Sanwo-Olu remarked. "The business plan is viable, and there is no issue about financing. The conversation has gone to an advanced stage, but we need to get the proper information on operations before we go ahead to implement the plan."

Yes, Lagos Air or Eko Air or whatever they decide to call it is coming. And I score it A because it is viable. Yes, Lagos Air is more viable than Nigeria

Air for many reasons which include that a convergence at Lagos does not need any push, since it is already there. As the nation's commercial capital where



Royal Air Maroc Plane

Africa: Royal Air Maroc Plans to Position Itself as 'Ambassador of African Identity'

Royal Air Maroc [RAM], Morocco's national airline, has reaffirmed its dedication

to being the genuine ambassador of the African identity and dream. According to moroccoworldnews.com, the airline aims to play a pivotal role in connecting African nations and fostering cultural exchange by

more than 80% of local flights revolve around, a successful Lagos Air will give the current local operators a really tough competitive moment. You will like that as competition will serve the customers better.

That said, I am not of the opinion that states should operate airlines in Nigeria (excuse Lagos, a top-10 largest economy in Africa if you consider it a country). I will prefer for states to build airports and allow private sector participants to use those

serving as a reliable link within the continent.

Ahmed Anouar Boussof, RAM's regional representative in Nigeria, conveyed the Moroccan company's pan-African ambition on Sunday at the Gala Dinner of the 4th Lagos Biennial.

READ: Africa: Royal Air Maroc Launches #DreamAfrica #MeetMorocco Rebranding Campaign to Celebrate and Elevate Its African Identity in Aviation

During the event, Boussof read a speech on behalf of RAM's CEO Abdelhamid Addou, noting that the company's collaboration with the Lagos Biennial goes beyond mere sponsorship.

"It symbolizes the entire philosophy of RAM as a profoundly African company summarized by our slogan #DreamAfrica #MeetMorocco," Boussof said.

He also renewed the company's commitment to not only connect Morocco to Africa but, more importantly, to connect the African

airports for their airlines. Be the hub and not the spook especially in a place where the customer base is still evolving.

Therecommendation was made by me when I was a part of the team that reviewed Lagos State Tourism Master Plan that was produced by Ernst & Young. I was loud on it and even suggested a name, EkoAir.

For Lagos to become a major destination in Africa I argued, it cannot rely on foreign carriers.

continent to the world.

This ambition, Boussof explained on behalf of RAM's CEO, "aims to showcase its infinite cultural richness and talents, which are increasingly recognized worldwide."

He further recalled RAM's investment in African cultural events in different fields, including cinema and the arts.

"The place of culture and the emergence of talent are crucial in establishing a modern, radiant continental identity, far from the cliches we all know," he said.

Moha Ou Ali Tagma, Ambassador of Morocco to Nigeria, who also attended the event, underscored the essential role of Royal Air Maroc in the development of Morocco's economy as well as the improvement of connectivity in Africa and the world.

"The sovereign's commitment to gradual development towards ideals has laid solid foundations for Morocco's growth and prosperity," Ambassador Tagma said.



Bola Ahmed Tinubu, President of Nigeria

Japa: Over 1,000 Nigerians Stranded In UK Due To Fake Employment – IOM

The International Organization for Migration [IOM], has advised potential migrants to be cautious of a syndicate that specializes in offering fake employment letters to Nigerians seeking to work in the United Kingdom and urging them to seek out proper information before embarking on any migration.

IOM disclosed that over 260,000 Nigerians had approached it in 2023, seeking guidance on how to migrate through regular or approved routes and also undergoing pre-departure medical health assessments.

It said no fewer than a thousand Nigerians are currently stranded in the UK, having gotten visas based on the fake employment letters procured for them, only to get to the respective organizations in the UK and then be denied acceptance because the letters did not emanate from those organizations.

IOM's Chief of Mission, Laurent De Boeck, disclosed this at a news conference Monday in Abuja.

According to him, some of the victims lost as much as \$10,000 each in their desperate attempts to secure foreign jobs.

He said they are consequently stranded in the UK because some of them lack the means to come back, while others are ashamed of coming back to their families.

"There are some of them who lost over \$10,000 only to be given fake employment letters, which allowed them to get visas. They get there, present the letters, and the organizations tell them that the letters did not emanate from the organizations. Over a thousand people are affected," he stated.

De Boeck also added that IOM was working with partners to repatriate thousands of persons, including Nigerians, from Tunisia, which has recently placed a ban on migration.

He said the IOM is working extensively with Italy to develop regular pathways for qualified Nigerians and that it would also engage other countries like Spain, Belgium, France, and others.

According to him,

Ghana's Ashanti King Receives Looted Royal Artefacts From US Museum

"Collaborating with the Federal Government of Nigeria, IOM facilitated the return of 4,431 Nigerians and supported their reintegration. A total of 2,853 individuals received reintegration assistance, engaging in socio-economic opportunities of their choice.

...Ashanti monarch Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, who holds an important ceremonial role in Ghana, said their return would help unite his people.

A California museum on Thursday returned seven royal artefacts to Ghana's traditional Ashanti king to commemorate his silver jubilee in the first planned handovers of Ashanti treasures looted during colonial times.

The ceremony came as pressure grows for European and US museums and institutions to restore African artefacts stolen during the rule of former colonial powers Britain, France, Germany and Belgium.

The Ghana royal treasures from the Fowler Museum, including a gold necklace, an ornamental chair and an elephant tail whisk, were presented during a ceremony of

chiefs at the Manhyia Palace in the city of Kumasi in the Ashanti region.

Royal Ashanti gold objects are believed to be invested with the spirits of former rulers.

The Ashanti monarch Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, who holds an important ceremonial role in Ghana, said their return would help unite his people.

"What just happened confirms what occurred so many years ago when the British attacked us and looted our treasures," he said. "Let's remain united to bring about peace and development in the kingdom."

Ivor Agyeman Duah, an advisor to the king, said the objects were sacred.

"Their homecoming signifies a pivotal moment of reconciliation and pride for our kingdom," Duah told the AFP.

The event, held close to the 150th anniversary of the 1874 Anglo-Asante war, gathered traditional leaders, politicians and diplomats, most adorned in red and black to symbolise mourning.

The returned items have been part of the Fowler Museum's collection since 1965.

Unlike other

institutions negotiating with Ghana, the Fowler Museum imposed no conditions, leaving it to the discretion of their Ghanaian stewards to decide their use for museum displays, palace treasuries, or public celebrations.

Speaking to AFP at the palace grounds, Ghanaian royal historian Osei-Bonsu Safo-Kantanka said: "This is a special moment for the Asante people because it strengthens the bond between us and our ancestors."

The objects will be displayed at the Manhyia Palace Museum as part of the year-long celebration.



Looted Royal Artefacts, Ghana



Dr William Samoei Ruto, Kenya President

'Africa Stands As One Of The Biggest Source Markets For Trade, Business, And Tourism'

... KTB Pivot On West Africa To Boost Tourism Numbers

The Chief Executive Officer of Kenya Tourism Board [KTB], Ag John Chirchir has said that the West African market is integral in the strategy to diversify tourist source markets and broaden the country's destination portfolio.

According to Chirchir during a meeting held to mark the beginning of a series

of roadshows in Nigerian and Ghanaian cities, recently, "with around 1.4 billion people, Africa stands as one of the biggest source markets for trade, business, and tourism. This is why Kenya is targeting to raise tourist arrivals from West Africa by pitching for business and leisure travel that are key interests to the region."

Chirchir noted that Nigeria and Ghana have shown improvements of 6 per cent and 48 per

cent respectively in 2023 and rank among Kenya's potential markets in the African continent. "KTB and Kenya airways are leading over 15 travel trade companies for in-market activations set for February 5th-9th, 2024 and will be held in various cities of the two countries and is expected to attract over 400 trade partners.

We are starting off with West Africa with roadshows in Accra, Lagos and Abuja which are interesting

emerging markets. During the activation, we expect the 17 Kenyan trades to engage in business meetings and direct engagements with potential travellers from the three cities. We cannot ignore the potential that the African Market has for tourism."

Chirchir further said that the regular flights between African cities, the ease in travel restrictions and the Electronic Travel Authorisation will

make it easier for visitors to access Kenya. "We currently have regular direct Kenya Airways [KQ] flights to the three cities. Additionally, other airlines connect Kenya with Accra, Abuja, and Lagos.

The easing of travel restrictions and the Electronic Travel Authorisation will also help us see a strong demand for outbound leisure and business travel from Nigeria and Ghana and other African countries. We look forward to building partnerships and marketing Kenya through these activities."

Also speaking, the Chairperson of the West Africa Roadshow, Consaga Khisa said: "The partnerships between KTB and the private sector are integral in our goals to improve tourism arrivals into Kenya. The Roadshows will provide an opportunity for the Kenyan trade to engage with about 400 West African travel agents and tour operators, showcase products and service offering, and forge new partnerships that will drive growth."

Khisa noted that the engagements are significant, as they will enable travel agents and tour operators from both Nigeria and Ghana to gain valuable insights into the Kenyan tourism industry and the diverse range of experiences that Kenya has to offer.



Lagos, Nigeria



Cape Town, South Africa



Marrakech, Morocco



Nairobi, Kenya



Dakar, Senegal

Unleash the Night: Epic Nightlife Destinations in Africa

By Phumza Dwane

Africa is known for its vibrant culture, diverse music, and lively spirit. When the sun sets, the continent comes alive with an epic nightlife scene that rivals some of the best in the world. From pulsating clubs to trendy bars and unique cultural experiences, Africa offers a plethora of destinations where you can dance, socialize, and create unforgettable memories. Let's explore some of the top places to enjoy an epic nightlife experience in Africa.

Lagos, Nigeria:

Lagos, the bustling metropolis of Nigeria, is renowned for its vibrant nightlife. The city boasts a wide range of clubs, bars, and lounges that cater to various tastes and preferences. From upscale venues in Victoria Island to the trendy nightlife scene in Ikeja, Lagos offers something for everyone. The energy is infectious, with live music, DJ sets, and performances that keep the party going until the early hours of the morning.

Cape Town, South Africa:

Cape Town, known for its natural beauty, also offers a thriving nightlife scene. Long Street, located in the city center, is a hub for nightlife enthusiasts. Here, you'll find a mix of bars, clubs, and live music venues that cater to different genres and styles. From rooftop bars with stunning views of Table Mountain to underground clubs that host renowned DJs, Cape Town's nightlife scene is diverse and exciting.

Marrakech, Morocco:

Marrakech, with its rich history and vibrant culture, offers a unique nightlife experience. The city's medina comes alive at night, with bustling markets, street performers, and traditional music filling the air. The famous Jemaa el-Fnaa square transforms into a lively hub of activity, with food stalls, live music, and traditional dance performances. For a more upscale experience, Marrakech also offers luxurious rooftop bars and clubs where you can enjoy a mix of local and international music.

Nairobi, Kenya:

Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, has a thriving nightlife scene that caters to a diverse crowd. The Westlands area is known for its trendy bars, clubs, and lounges that attract both locals and expats. From rooftop bars with panoramic views of the city to underground clubs playing the latest beats, Nairobi offers a dynamic and energetic nightlife experience. The city is also known for its live music scene, with many venues hosting local and international artists.

Dakar, Senegal:

Dakar, the vibrant capital of Senegal, is a city that knows how to party. The city's nightlife scene is centered around the neighborhoods of Plateau and Almadies. Here, you'll find a mix of clubs, bars, and live music venues that showcase the rich musical heritage of Senegal. From traditional mbalax music to Afrobeat and reggae, Dakar offers diverse musical experiences that will keep you dancing all night long.



Olubunmi Oluwaseun Kuku, Managing Director of FAAN

Lagos Government, FAAN To Create Welcome Desk For Tourists At MMIA

...To Re-Introduce 'Lagride' As Tourist Carrier

To ensure seamless operations for arriving tourists in Lagos, the state's Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Toke Benson-Awoyinka has disclosed plans to partner with the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) with the aim of

creating a welcome desk at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport (MMIA), Ikeja.

The Commissioner who disclosed this during an interactive meeting recently said that the decision is informed by the need to reduce the cumbersome process tourists experience in navigating their way around the

state on arrival at the airport. She said the welcome desk would also cater for every traveller's needs, including making prompt bookings for hotel accommodation, airport transfers, among others.

Benson-Awoyinka said: "This is one of the efforts the ministry is putting in place to encourage tourists'

inflow into the state. We want to showcase Lagos as a choice tourism destination to the world. We will also be partnering with bookings.com for seamless hotel reservations. We want to upgrade our system to say destination Lagos has arrived."

On efforts made to further preserve Lagos history and relay the

same to tourists, Benson-Awoyinka also disclosed plans to plaque the identified heritage sites within Lagos. "There would be a barcode at each of the sites which could be scanned on tourists' mobile gadgets and they gain access to more knowledge on the sites because plaques cannot convey all the history. We will take deliberate steps to ensure Lagos residents know Lagos more and the history of the state."

The commissioner, however, advised Nigerians to look inwards and take deliberate steps to visit tourism sites within Lagos. She said: "Lagos has the best and longest coastline in Africa and there is no difference between beaches in Maldives and Seychelles when compared to what is obtainable in Ibeshe and Ilashe."

While also disclosing plans by the state government to formally introduce 'LAGRIDE' as official tourism ride for Lagos, Benson-Awoyinka pledged to ensure that the state provides an enabling environment and ecosystem around tourism. "With LAGRIDE, when visitors land at the airport, they can book their ride and the taxi will be waiting to take tourists to their destinations. We want Nigerians to see Lagos as global tourism destinations and we should all work toward boosting our economy by visiting our tourism destinations and reducing visits to international ones."



Mount Kilimanjaro

Africa: Kenya Airways, South African Airways Delay Pan-African Airline Formation For Recapitalisation

*Business Day
Africa [Nairobi]*

The establishment of a Pan-African Airline, scheduled to take shape this year, has been delayed as the two carriers intended to form the alliance are seeking to recapitalise.

Kenya Airways [KQ] and South African Airways [SAA] announced the establishment of the highly anticipated Pan-African Airline Group this year, following the initial proposal of the plan three years ago.

Last year, Kenya Airways disclosed the

initiation of the second phase of the partnership framework between the two airlines, a crucial step that would pave the way for the formation of the new aviation group.

Despite the persistence of the plans, the timeline has been adjusted due to the ongoing recapitalisation efforts by both carriers.

"The plans are still on but will be delayed because we are recapitalising this year, and I believe so is SAA," Allan Kilavuka,

CEO of Kenya Airways told Business Day Africa.

To facilitate the recapitalisation, Kenya Airways has extended an invitation to external investors, including existing ones interested in increasing their stake.

This initiative, dubbed "Kifaru 2," aims to inject fresh capital into the airline's operations.

The airline is actively working to restructure its balance sheet, leveraging recent improved performance, which

included reporting a \$6.79 million operating profit in the first half of 2023—its first in six years, marking a 120 percent improvement compared to the same period in 2022.

Similarly, South African Airways has been in pursuit of a strategic investor since resuming operations in 2020 after a period of financial challenges led to a halt. Notably, the carrier received crucial approval for the sale of a 51 percent stake to the Takatso Aviation consortium,

the government's preferred partner.

Led by Harith General Partners, an asset management firm, the consortium is set to acquire a controlling 51 percent stake in SAA Group, injecting \$167 million into the carrier's operating capital.

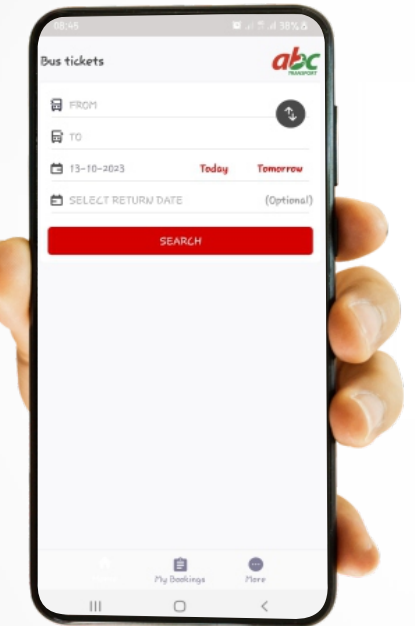
The strategic partnership framework between Kenya Airways and South African Airways was initially signed in South Africa in November 2021, witnessed by President Cyril Ramaphosa and

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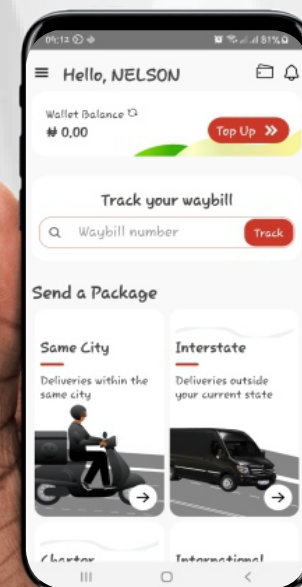
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Cont'd from Page 12 international harmony are key goals that are the fundamental essence of UN Tourism. The organization takes on the role of driving a sustainable force that is now central to many economies."

Borja Borrero, Executive Director at Interbrand, said: "Transitioning from UNWTO to UN Tourism marks a significant new phase for the organization. The revised nomenclature offers several advantages, including simplicity, enhanced comprehension, improved legibility and memorability. It also serves to clarify the agency's sphere of influence within the global tourism industry. The new elements of the brand are the foundations of a distinct and proprietary image—one that is direct, relatable, and relevant for diverse audiences."

The new brand expression is not only limited to words and messages but also expands into a reinvented visual discourse. UN Tourism has a new design language starting from its symbol. "Bringing the world closer" is the new tagline that inspires the concept of a Pangea shaping a human figure in action. This drastic evolution from the former globe symbols reflects the Organization's emphasis on the dynamic nature of tourism and on putting

people first.

Beyond the symbol, the rebrand also includes a revamp of the entire visual system, which is now based on a grid of geographical coordinates meant to help people navigate the brand's touchpoints, both offline and online, such as events, website, reports, social media channels and campaigns. This system unlocks a rich universe of elements including imagery, fonts, colors, and pictograms all designed to personalize social media campaigns, events, posts, and videos.

The new brand will be gradually implemented across all UN Tourism touchpoints over the next few months, beginning with digital channels such as the website, social media accounts and newsletters, followed by physical spaces such as offices and events, and elements such as reports and stationary.

The origin of UNWTO stems back to 1925 when the first international congress of official tourist organisations was held at The Hague. The congress continued to meet annually, and in 1930, it decided to form a formal union, which in 1934 became the International Union of Official Tourist Publicity Organisations [IUOTPO].

Though, the history of organised tourism association did not start until 1925, when the



L: Lai Mohammed, Former Minister of Information and Culture, R: Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism

International Corporation in tourism development had its beginning, and later when a conference took place in London in Oct, 1946 and in 1947 that IUOTO was founded.

This organisation represented over 100 National tourist offices of various countries as full members, and 88 National & International members as associates. IUOTO was the only organisation which grouped together the governmental/private tourist organisations all over the world.

Following the end of the Second World War and with international travel

numbers increasing, the IUOTPO restructured itself into the International Union of Official Travel Organisations [IUOTO].

A technical, non-governmental organisation, the IUOTO was made up of a combination of national tourist organisations, industry and consumer groups. The goals and objectives of the IUOTO were to not only promote tourism in general, but also to extract the best out of tourism as an international trade component and as an economic development strategy for developing

nations.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the IUOTO realised the need for further transformation to enhance its role on an international level. The 20th IUOTO General Assembly in Tokyo, 1967, declared the need for the creation of an intergovernmental body with the necessary abilities to function on an international level in cooperation with other international agencies, particularly the United Nations.

Throughout the existence of the IUOTO, close ties had been established between the organisation and the United Nations [UN]



Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism

Tourism: From IUOTO, To WTO, UNWTO And Now “UN Tourism” Kickstarts A New Era For The Sector Globally

From this new brand, the International Organization reaffirms its status as the United Nations specialized agency for tourism and the global leader of tourism for development, driving social and economic change to ensure that “people and planet” are always centre stage. To achieve this goal, UN Tourism engaged the services of

Interbrand, the leading global branding agency. Interbrand successfully translated the Organization's renewed vision for tourism into a new visual identity and brand narrative. This involved renaming the Organization, transitioning from UNWTO to UN Tourism. At the same time, a new brand narrative was

meticulously crafted, one that seamlessly aligns with UN Tourism's central mission and priorities.

This narrative pivots around three main messages: the UN as a global altruistic organization, the notion of connecting humans around the world, and the concept of proactivity and movement.

By moving away from acronyms, UN Tourism adopts a more approachable stance and capitalizes on its strengths: the “UN”, signifying authority, and tourism, a simple and relatable concept for all.

This change has been endorsed by the Organization's membership, highlighting its united support for the profound transformation and reinvention of UN Tourism in recent years, as it has become more agile, visible, and ever closer to its Member States, partners and the sector as a whole.

With 160 Member States and hundreds of private sector affiliates, UN Tourism has its headquarters in Madrid, Spain, and Regional Offices in Nara (Japan) covering Asia & Pacific, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) for the Middle East, as well as forthcoming Regional Offices for the Americas (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and Africa (Morocco). Its

priorities center on promoting tourism for sustainable development in line with the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Global Goals.

UN Tourism promotes quality education, supports decent jobs in the sector, identifies talent and drives innovation and accelerates tourism climate action and sustainability with: Member States – both as recipients of its services, assistance, and as active stakeholders in the Organization's Programme of Work.

Individuals – specifically travelers and local communities whose lives flourish through the empowerment of the economy through tourism and Private, semi-private, and public organizations – all engaging with UN Tourism's work, including its data and insights, events and products.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, said: “As society progresses, the tourism sector, much like many other sectors, needs to transform to serve as a catalyst for prosperity at a universal scale. Enhancing the well-being of individuals, safeguarding the natural environment, stimulating economic advancement, and fostering

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The Door of No Return in Ouidah, Benin Republic.

Benin Voodoo Festival Rebrands To Draw Tourists

Keeling as she gazes out to sea draped in white cloth and strings of pearls, Simenou Dangnitche has just completed the final stage of her annual ritual.

Every January for the past 15 years, the 48-year-old local has joined hundreds taking part in Benin's famed Voodoo festival.

Participants gather at the “Door of No Return”, an arch built by the beach at Ouidah in Southern Benin in memory of those crammed onto slave ships bound for the New World.

“It's more than just a festival,” Dangnitche told AFP. “The meeting here is a pilgrimage, a rejuvenation, a reconnection with the ancestors to hear them speak to us again.”

Read: Senegal traditional wrestling keeps culture alive

Voodoo, known locally as Vodoun, is a religion that worships gods and natural spirits along with respect for revered ancestors.

It originated in the Dahomey Kingdom -- present-day Benin and Togo -- and is still widely practised sometimes alongside Christianity in coastal towns like Ouidah, where memorials to the slave trade are dotted around the small beach settlement.

This year, Dangnitche said she was “stunned by the organisation and structuring of the festival”.

Benin's government has rebranded the event and changed the format to make the festivities more appealing to tourists in a bid to boost the country's economy.

It opted for a two-day celebration on January 9-10 with a reorganised programme in an event dubbed “Vodun Days”.

According to politician Kakpo Mahougnon, chair of the Benin Vodun Rites Committee, the government is considering further extending the length of the festival.

It's a new way of presenting Vodoun,” said

President Patrice Talon, who took part in the celebration.

‘Nothing Satanic’

“Our intention is to fully reveal to the world what Vodoun is and how it is practised, to explain Vodoun and its spiritual and sociological concepts”, the president said.

“Vodoun is of economic interest to us, since tourism is an important sector,” he added.

Ouidah was given a makeover for the occasion, with several of the town's attractions refurbished.

America n Christopher

Swain, who said he comes every year to “recharge and reconnect spiritually,” noticed “significant changes”.

Ouidah's public squares hosted celebrations including jazz and dancing and even the president joined in.

The religion's 73-year-old spiritual leader Daagbo Hounon told AFP: “We need to prove to the world that there is nothing Satanic or evil about vodoun.”

“Vodoun is about tolerance, sharing, love, generosity and peace,” he said.

“Vodoun is spiritual, but it is also several arts combined, as we can see from the songs and dances of the faithful.”

Alain Godonou, one of the heads of the Heritage and Tourism Agency, said the revamped celebrations “represent a major development in the promotion of Vodoun as a real catalyst for tourism.”

They were “a way of attracting more curiosity so that people come to discover the essence of Vodoun”, he said.

As well as international tourists, the government wants to focus on domestic tourism to boost the local economy and “reveal Benin to ourselves,” as Talon put it.

He declined to give details of the budget allocated to promoting and organising Vodoun Days to attract visitors.



Patrice Talon, President of Benin Republic.



Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt

AFASU Declares Sharm El-sheikh Tourism Capital City 2024

The city of Sharm El-Sheikh, which is a major tourist city of Egypt has continued to enjoy global recognition, with the latest recognition coming from the African-Asian Union [AFASU], with named it Tourism Capital City 2024. Also recognized and awarded as Man of the Year, is Major General Khaled Fouda, the South Sinai Governor.

The event was witnessed by a number of AFASU officials inkling Alain St.Ange, the Seychelles former Minister for Tourism,

Marine of the Seychelles, Dr. Jens Thraenhart, the former Executive Director of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office to the CEO of Visit Barbados, who is also the second Vice Chair of the UNWTO Affiliate Members Board and Founding Partner of Chameleon Strategies and Theodore Koumelis, the Founder and Managing Director Travel Daily News.

The three tourism experts were part of the African-Asian Union [AFASU] team were joined by AFASU President Dr Hossam

Darwish and Major General Hossam Badr El-Din, the Secretary General of the Union. "It is with great honour and privilege that we gather here today to acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable achievements in tourism development, in Sharm El Sheikh, the City of Peace" the tourism experts noted at a press conference after the award ceremony that saw several Egyptian ministers and senior government officials and other leading private sector business and tourism trade leaders.

"As members of the Awards Committee, it is our duty to recognise and commend the

outstanding efforts of Major General Khaled Fouda, Governor of South Sinai, for his exemplary leadership and dedication to advancing tourism in the region. "We have witnessed an amazing transformation of the city the last years with the implementation of smart technologies and sustainable practices.

AFASU Gold Award was presented to Major General Khaled, recognising him as the "Man of the Year" for his exceptional contributions to the development of Sharm El Sheikh as a premier tourist destination. "Under his leadership, Sharm El Sheikh has

flourished, earning the esteemed AFASU award for the safest tourist destination to visit in the world. This achievement is a testament to Major General Fouda's visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to creating a smart and sustainable city and ensuring the safety and security of all visitors to the region.

Furthermore, "we recognise the city of Sharm El Sheikh for its dedication to sustainability, energy conservation, and the safety of tourists. Through initiatives aimed at sustainability, clean energy adoption, and the implementation of smart technologies, Sharm El Sheikh has emerged as a beacon of responsible tourism practices.

"These efforts align closely with the mission of the African-Asian Union [AFASU], which seeks to promote and reward policies and best practices that drive tourism, economic prosperity, and community development" as words that were echoed in the speeches." Alain St.Ange, who now heads his very own Saint Ange Tourism Consultancy, added, "I had the honour of sharing a podium with the Governor at another event and saw a person who never missed the opportunity to go after what would be good for Egypt and the People of Egypt as he displayed his unconditional love for his country."



Rishi Sunak, British Prime Minister.

Britain To Pay Libya To Stop Migrants Crossing The Mediterranean.

Charles Hymas

Britain is to pay Libya to stop migrants crossing the Mediterranean and instead repatriate them to their home countries under a pioneering deal with the North African state.

Announcing the agreement in an article for The Telegraph below, Michael Tomlinson, the illegal immigration minister, said the scheme involving the voluntary returns was a "fundamental tool" in driving down migration numbers.

Libya is one of the main embarkation points for migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean. Nearly 40,000 reached Europe last year from the country despite the dangers of the boat journey. They accounted for more than a quarter of the record 150,000 who crossed the

Mediterranean in 2023.

Under the agreement, Mr Tomlinson said the UK will pay Libya £1 million to help fund the return of migrants from the North African state to their countries of origin.

"These voluntary returns are one of the most fundamental and important tools at our disposal for driving down migration numbers globally," he said.

"Tackling the global migration crisis and smashing the evil gangs who drive it are shared challenges that must be met with a shared response. The work I have seen first hand here in Libya and across North Africa is critical, but we know there is more that must be done.

"The funding and support we are providing will mean Libya is better equipped to stop people

risking their lives to reach Europe. It also demonstrates our commitment to crack down on people smugglers operating not just in the English Channel, but across the whole world."

Britain has signed "upstream" deals with other countries to target people smugglers. These include Turkey, the source of up to 90 per cent of the small boats that cross the Channel.

A new centre, backed by £3 million in UK Government funds, is being set up by Turkish police to help coordinate joint operations to cut off the supply of boats and boost intelligence sharing on the gangs between UK and Turkish border force and police.

Last October Rishi Sunak agreed similar bilateral initiatives with Belgium, Bulgaria and

Serbia aimed at tackling organised crime linked to illegal migration.

It comes on top of returns agreements with countries including Albania, Georgia, India and Pakistan to deport and return illegal nationals from those states.

The new deal with Libya was concluded this week by Mr Tomlinson on a visit to the country where he held talks on illegal migration with Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh, the prime minister.

The minister met with officers from Libyan law enforcement and the National Crime Agency who are working to disrupt and dismantle people smuggling gangs driving illegal migrants towards Europe.

Migrants line up after being brought to shore in Garaboli by a Libyan coast guard from the Mediterranean Sea.

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