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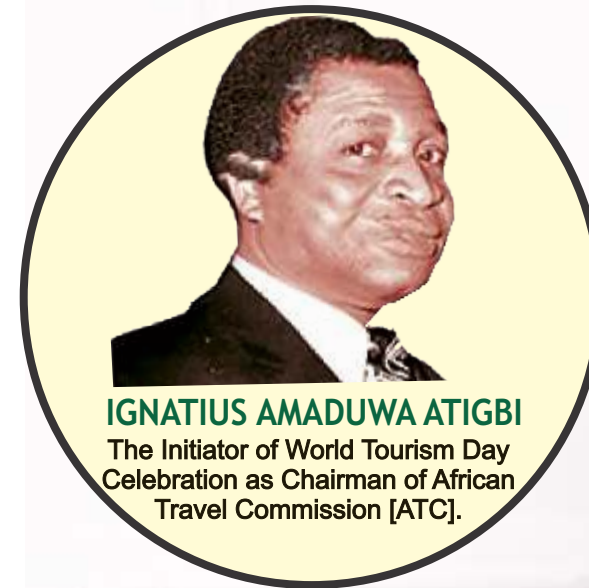
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IGNATIUS AMADUWA ATIGBI
The Initiator of World Tourism Day
Celebration as Chairman of African
Travel Commission [ATC].

**September 27:
WORLD TOURISM DAY**



LUCKY ONORIODE GEORGE
Executive Director, African Travel Commission [ATC]








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NIGERIA-BENIN TOURISM FORUM, Held from September 12-14, 2024 in Cotonou, Benin Republic



Hon. Dine Bouraima, President of Consortium Touristes Par Millions Au Benin and Vice President of the African Tourism Board [ATB], with Nkereuwem Onung, President of the Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria [FTAN] and Ghana Tourism Federation delegation.



L-R: Kazeem Kola Balogun; Amb. Ikechi Uko, Founder; Convener of Akwaaba African Travel Market and Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director Africana Travel Commission [ATC].



Dine Bouraima; Nkereuwem Onung and some guests.



Dine Bouraima, President of Consortium Touristes Par Millions Au Benin and Vice President of the African Tourism Board [ATB], with Nkereuwem Onung, President of the Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria [FTAN] receiving his award from His Majesty Daagbo Hounon Hounan II, Supreme Chief of Vodun Hwendo.



Dr. Olanma Ojukwu, CEO, GOTA Voyage International Group and her husband with Nkereuwem Onung.



His Majesty Daagbo Hounon Hounan II, Supreme Chief of Vodun Hwendo with the convener and the Host Hon. Dine Bouraima, owner, Benin Royal Hotel, Cotonou.



Kazeem and Hon. Dine Bouraima.

World Tourism Day Is African Travel Commission Gift To The World - George

Since 1980, the United Nations World Tourism Organization has celebrated World Tourism Day as international observances on September 27. This date was chosen as on that day in 1970, the agreement of the World Tourism Organisation [WTO], now United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO] was adopted.

The adoption of the agreement is considered a milestone in global tourism. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness on the role of tourism within the international community and to demonstrate how it affects social, cultural, political and economic values worldwide.

The late Ignatius Amaduwa Atigbi, a Nigerian national, was the one who proposed the idea of marking September 27 of every year as World Tourism Day.

Meanwhile, after a 45-year hiatus, the African Travel Commission [ATC], was revived and now repositioned to promote intra-Africa travel and tourism activities; as well as, to the rest of the world in 2021.

Lucky Onoriode George, Executive Director of ATC, said that Africa has now found its voice following the revival of the once-powerful continental body that helped shape global tourism activities between 1965 and 1975.



Lola Ade-John, Minister of Tourism

He noted that ATC was established as a regional voice for Africa, and due to the reforms, it initiated then, the International Union of Official Travel Organizations [IUOTO] was transformed into World Tourism Organization [WTO] before it was retransformed in 2014 into the United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO].

ATC's contributions also led IUOTO to initiate September 27 every year as the globally celebrated World Tourism Day. The ATC Executive Director reiterated that the newly revived commission, working with stakeholders in both the private and public sectors in the tourism industry on the continent would actualize the

dreams of improving intra-African tourism. ATC is now a Non-Profit Organization [NPO] established to provide a platform where tourism officials and business professionals could meet and collaborate; as well as, connect experts and stakeholders that have shared vision across the travel and tourism industry in Africa.

Following a final push by a letter written by the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation in 2006, orchestrated by a Nigerian travel and tourism journalist, Lucky Onoriode George, now the executive Director of the African Travel Commission [ATC], to the United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], on the need to honour late Ignatius Amaduwa Atigbi, a Nigerian who proposed the idea of marking September 27 of every year as World Tourism Day, the UNWTO finally honoured Atigbi at the 2009 International World Tourism Day Celebrations in Accra, Ghana.

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Olojo Festival: A Celebration Of Dawn And The Birth Of The Crown - Ooni

The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi [Ojajá II], recently described the Olojo festival as a celebration of dawn and the origin of the crown known as “Ade Aare.” He emphasized that this crown is the source of all crowns globally, representing a vibrant spectrum of colors akin to a rainbow.

During the unveiling of sponsors and the launch of the 2024 Olojo festival, themed “Evolving Transformational Domestic Tourism with Community Festivals,” held on

September 19 at his palace in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Oba Ogunwusi highlighted the festival's significance in honoring Ogun, the god of iron and the first son of Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yoruba people.

“In Yoruba culture, we cherish our heritage, which is why we celebrate the first dawn,” he stated. “This dawn marks the moment the Aare Crown is blessed, a crown that has held life and meaning since ancient times.”

The Ooni elaborated that the festival's origins are

intertwined with the first dawn discovered by our ancestors, symbolizing a time for thanksgiving that, for the Yoruba, represents the most significant celebration after the Ifa festival.

He explained the spiritual essence of the crown: “The crown embodies the actions of humanity; it is sacred and powerful. I have personally charged it with my prayers, seeking specific outcomes.”

As he approaches his tenth year on the throne, Oba Ogunwusi shared that he has witnessed numerous blessings

linked to the crown, stating, “I pray to Olodumare through the crown, and I have never encountered failure in this sacred tradition. It is our heritage, our culture, and we will continue to uphold it.”

The Ooni expressed gratitude to the sponsors of Olojo Festival 2024, acknowledging their support for this cultural celebration. Notable sponsors revealed during the press briefing include MTN, Adron Homes, Grand Oak Limited, and Nigerian Breweries Plc.

In closing, Chief Festival Administrator Otunba Ayo Olumoko invited all Nigerians and international visitors to join in the festivities of Olojo Festival 2024 in Ife.

This year's festival will feature various events and activities.

The Grand Finale for the 2024 edition of the annual Olojo Festival in Ile-Ife, will hold between Thursday 26th and Monday 30th of September, 2024.

On Thursday, 26th September, 2024 there will be Ayo Olopon Traditional Game, Festival Cultural Talent Hunt [Audition], Olojo Festival Colloquium.

Friday, 27th September, 2024 – Ojo Ilagun, Iwode Ile-Ife [Community Cleansing], Oonirisa's Terrestrial Message to the World.

Saturday, 28th September, 2024 – Festival Grand Finale Official Ceremony, Ojo Okemogun, and the Aare Cultural Procession.

Sunday, 29th September, 2024 – Ojo Ajoyo [Asekagba], [Grand Royal Reception – Invitational], Adire Oodua Cultural Exchange Exhibition, Oonirisa's Ife Award for Community Service, 2024

Monday, 30th September, 2024 – Ojo Ibile [Oonirisa's Ancestral Traditional Propitiation], Cultural Talents Hunt.



His Excellency Saidu Tiggi, Ambassador of Nigeria to Benin Republic

Nigeria, Benin Stakeholders Unite To Leverage Tourism For Mutual Development

In a major effort to deepen ties and promote economic growth through tourism, stakeholders from Nigeria and Benin have agreed to collaborate on bilateral tourism initiatives aimed at mutual development. This consensus was reached at the first-ever Nigeria-Benin Tourism Forum, held recently at the prestigious Benin Royal Hotel in Cotonou, Benin, themed “Harnessing Tourism Potential for Mutual Development”.

The forum brought together key figures from both countries' tourism sectors and diplomatic corps, who addressed various challenges and opportunities to foster regional tourism cooperation.

Historical Ties and Tourism Potential

The historical connection between Nigeria and Benin is

rooted in centuries of cultural, social, and economic interactions. Long before colonial borders were drawn, the region now spanning Nigeria and Benin was part of thriving African kingdoms, such as the Oyo Empire and the Kingdom of Dahomey. These empires engaged in trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange, laying the foundation for the strong cross-border ties that exist today.

Aristide Ajibodou, General Secretary of Benin Ministry in Charge of Tourism Affairs speaking at the forum in Cotonou

As modern nation-states, both Nigeria and Benin have carried forward this historical connection, and tourism has emerged as a powerful tool to further strengthen their relationship. The Nigeria-Benin Tourism Forum represents a new chapter in their bilateral cooperation, as both nations seek to harness the potential of their

shared history, culture, and geography to attract tourists and spur economic development.

Consensus for Bilateral Tourism Development

Convened by Ambassador Kazeem Balogun of Nigeria and Paulin Vissoh of Benin, the forum featured several influential speakers who highlighted the need for practical solutions to overcome existing barriers between the two countries. Key speakers included:

Saidu N. Tiggi, Ambassador of Nigeria to Benin after his speech at the forum in Cotonou emphasized the importance of setting aside challenges, including infrastructural and policy differences, in order to pursue joint tourism initiatives. They proposed practical solutions to enhance tourism cooperation, such as simplifying cross-border travel, harmonizing visa processes, and

developing joint tourism products that celebrate the rich cultural heritage of both nations.

The Nigeria-Benin Tourism Forum was organized by Kalo Africa Media and Partners, in collaboration with Consortium Touristes Par Millions Au Benin [CTM-BENIN] and the African Tourism Board [ATB]. Their efforts were instrumental in bringing together tourism stakeholders from both nations to foster dialogue and cooperation. The success of this forum underscores the growing recognition of tourism as a vital economic sector capable of driving regional development and integration.

Future Engagements and Regional Impact

This groundbreaking forum is expected to serve as a catalyst for further engagements between Nigeria and Benin, heralding a new era of bilateral tourism cooperation. Future initiatives are likely to include collaborative marketing campaigns, cultural exchange programs, and joint tourism infrastructure projects. Moreover, the success of this forum could inspire similar cross-border tourism collaborations throughout the West African region.

Hon. Dine Bouraima, President Consortium Touristes Par Millions Au Benin and Vice President, African Tourism Board speaking at the event

By working together, Nigeria and Benin are poised to position themselves as leading tourism destinations in West Africa, attracting visitors from across the continent and beyond. With the right support from their governments and continued collaboration among stakeholders, the tourism sectors of both countries could become significant drivers of economic growth, job creation, and cultural preservation.

The Nigeria-Benin Tourism Forum marks a pivotal moment in the history of Nigeria-Benin relations. Through this initiative, both nations are not only honouring their shared past but also paving the way for a future of mutual prosperity driven by the power of tourism.



Festus Keyamo, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development

Nigeria Air Controversy: Operators Push For National Flag Carriers

Following the controversy surrounding Nigeria Air, industry operators are increasingly advocating the establishment of flag carriers to strengthen the country's international aviation presence.

Nigeria Air had been set to begin flight operations in October 2024 amidst ongoing controversies over its viability. The national carrier, which was first unveiled at the Farnborough International Airshow in London in 2018, was officially unveiled by former Minister of Aviation Hadi Sirika in May 2023, just 48 hours before the end of his tenure.

However, this sudden launch sparked significant nationwide debate.

According to reports at the time, Nigeria Air was

expected to start operations with two wide-bodied planes and six narrow-bodied aircraft. Ethiopian Airlines, which held a 49 per cent stake in the airline, was to manage its operations under a management contract, aiming to connect the local Nigerian market with international destinations.

The Nigerian government owned a five per cent stake, while the remaining shares were held by other institutional investors. The goal was to establish Nigeria Air as a successful flag carrier for the country.

However, the launch of the national carrier was marred by controversy and allegations of deception involving Sirika in 2023. Reports surfaced that Sirika misled former President Muhammadu

Buhari and the public by unveiling Nigeria Air just 48 hours before leaving office, despite the airline not having obtained complete certification.

According to a source from Aviation World, Sirika deceived Buhari into believing that the airline was ready for launch, without disclosing the lack of necessary approvals. Additionally, it was revealed that Sirika had obstructed the Nigerian Eagle airline from obtaining its certification because its name and branding were too similar to Nigeria Air.

Sirika allegedly attempted to use the Airline Operators Certificate of Nigerian Eagle for Nigeria Air but was unsuccessful. Critics argued that his actions

were driven by self-interest rather than national interest, leading to widespread calls for his investigation along with all associated agencies.

The controversy intensified when Sirika, despite knowing about ongoing litigation against Nigeria Air, claimed that no rational court could prevent the airline from flying. He also contracted Ethiopian Airlines to provide an aircraft painted in Nigeria Air colours, which was flown into the country for the unveiling without the required certification from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority.

In a statement released by its spokesman, Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, AON asserted that Ethiopian Airlines had failed to act as a responsible corporate entity, allowing itself to be part of what was described as the "grand deception of Nigerians." The association stressed that the airline knowingly landed an aircraft in Abuja on Friday, May 26, 2023 that neither belonged to Nigeria Air nor

the uproar following these revelations prompted the House of Representatives Committee on Aviation to summon the Permanent Secretary of the

Ministry of Aviation, Dr. Emmanuel Meribole, along with the airline's Managing Director, Capt. Dapo Olumide, and the shareholders for an emergency meeting. After the meeting, the legislative body labelled the project fraudulent, vowing to investigate and expose the full extent of the issues surrounding Nigeria Air.

To qualify for an operating license in Nigeria, an airline must have three of its aircraft registered in the country and go through five essential steps: the pre-application phase, formal application phase, documentation phase, demonstration and inspection phase, and certification phase.

The Nigeria Air project, initially announced over eight years ago, was still in phase one when the Buhari administration concluded its tenure, raising significant concerns about transparency and accountability.

In 2023, the Airline Operators of Nigeria accused East African carrier, Ethiopian Airlines, of blatantly disregarding the country's court system due to its involvement in the static display of Nigeria Air aircraft. AON also called on the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority and the judiciary to penalise Ethiopian Airlines for its blatant violation of a court order and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Regulations.

The controversy was driven by self-interest rather than national interest, leading to widespread calls for his investigation along with all associated agencies. The controversy intensified when Sirika, despite knowing about ongoing litigation against Nigeria Air, claimed that no rational court could prevent the airline from flying. He also contracted Ethiopian Airlines to provide an aircraft painted in Nigeria Air colours, which was flown into the country for the unveiling without the required certification from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. In a statement released by its spokesman, Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, AON asserted that Ethiopian Airlines had failed to act as a responsible corporate entity, allowing itself to be part of what was described as the "grand deception of Nigerians." The association stressed that the airline knowingly landed an aircraft in Abuja on Friday, May 26, 2023 that neither belonged to Nigeria Air nor



Africa: Fewer Car Journeys And More Flights - How Covid-19 Has Changed The Way We Travel

Four years after the outbreak of Covid-19, the pandemic seems like a distant memory for many. Yet its impacts on our lifestyle today are often profound and long-lasting, with many researchers on a mission to quantify it across sectors.

As sustainability researchers, we were keen to find out how Covid-19 had affected our transport habits in Europe. Do we now move in a greener, more self-aware fashion, or did the end of the pandemic prompt a rebound effect, ushering in an era of carefree travel?

The pandemic: a great laboratory in sustainability

Beyond understanding how pandemics transform human behaviour, the answer to that question matters for our ability to live on this planet sustainably. Heavily reliant on fossil fuels, the transport sector currently accounts for about 37% of

CO2 emissions globally, as its share continues to increase despite various climate measures. Urgent action is needed in the sector to hit global climate targets such as the EU's goal of slashing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 from 1990 levels and net-zero by 2050.

Transitioning to a low-carbon transport sector will likely involve widespread adoption of electric vehicles and biofuels. However, the extensive effort necessary to electrify the vehicle fleet and transform the infrastructure presents greater challenges for the transport sector compared to others. This is particularly true for the aviation sector where a viable low-carbon alternative is still to be developed. Additionally, there are wider sustainability concerns associated with biofuels, including land use competition, potential adverse effects on food security, and the need to address GHG

emissions and resource intensity in their production processes. Consequently, behavioural change is key to the transition in the transport sector.

The pandemic period between 2020 and 2022 provided us with a great behavioural laboratory for sustainable travel habits. Drastic, swiftly enacted measures such as lockdowns, border closures, and the shutdown of public transport saw a sharp decline in greenhouse gas emissions from commuting and leisure travel. Research also shows that many people were subsequently open to cutting down their travels in the long term. For example, a 2022 UK survey found that British people following the pandemic were willing to reduce their flights by 20-26% and cartrips by 24-30%.

However, it would be a mistake to conflate these declarations with actual

emission reductions. Also worth remembering is that stringency of Covid-19 measures varied from one country to the next. Hence countries with the highest Covid-19 fatality rates, such as Italy, Spain, and France, implemented strict lockdowns severely curtailing people's movements. In contrast, some governments, like those in the Netherlands and Sweden, chose less strict measures or even no lockdowns at all.

Fuelling the green transition - or not

To map out the exact impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our transport habits, we took a look at fuel consumption across Europe after restrictions were lifted, including gasoline and diesel, mainly used for rail and road, as well as kerosene for air travel.

Overall, Europeans have tended to hit the road less

following the pandemic, but taken the plane much more often. However, the picture differs substantially from country to country. While some countries returned to their pre-pandemic transport routines, others showed a moderate reduction in consumption as restrictions were lifted.

Some countries with less strict Covid-19 policies, such as Austria, Germany, and the UK, experienced significant drop in the use of planes and cars that lasted after restrictions were lifted between March and December 2022. However, these changes remained small in size (typically less than 10%), possibly because people's willingness to adapt to new routines did not always match their ability to do so.

In contrast, other countries with strict Covid-19 policies, such as Greece, Portugal, Italy, and Spain, experienced a notable rebound effect in the use of planes and to a smaller extent railroad transport after lifting restrictions. This rebound might not only be due to an increased desire for travel among citizens in these countries but also the appeal of Mediterranean destinations for international tourists.

Hungary, Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania had less strict COVID-19 measures and showed a full return to normal levels of fuel consumption. These countries' lower incomes may partly explain why they quickly returned to "normality" for the sake of economic stability.

Positive effects in countries with limited lockdown measures

Meanwhile, despite also implementing limited measures, Sweden, Denmark, and Czechia saw people take transport less. Nationals were able to maintain a semi-normal lifestyle (i.e. work from home, exercise, healthy lifestyle) without experiencing a strong sense of deprivation or the need to make up for lost time after



Wanle Akinboboye

IPADA Carnival Will Reposition Nigeria's Cultural Tourism - Minister

The Minister of Tourism, Mrs Lola Ade-John, says the maiden IPADA Carnival scheduled to hold in Lagos will position Nigeria as a prime destination for cultural tourism.

The minister has also urged tourism and culture stakeholders across the country to give their full support in hosting the maiden IPADA carnival.

The News Agency of Nigeria [NAN] reports that the IPADA carnival is scheduled to hold from Nov. 29 to Dec. 12, in Lagos.

Ade-John made the call on Monday at a stakeholders meeting held at La Campagne Tropicana Beach Resort, to unveil plans ahead of the carnival.

The stakeholders meeting had in

attendance, representatives from states including the Federal Capital Territory, the Nigeria Association of Tour Operators and more.

The minister, who was represented by Sunday Bisong, Assistant Director, Domestic Tourism Promotion in the ministry, said the Ipada initiative is an opportunity to showcase the best of Nigerian culture to the world.

"The carnival will also help to boost local economies through increased tourism."

Ade-John said the carnival would foster national unity by celebrating Africa's shared heritage.

"Your expertise and leadership in your respective domains are crucial.

"As bridges connecting federal initiatives to local implementation,

your insights and support will drive the festival's reach and impact.

"I urge you to consider how we can effectively mobilise our local communities, engage with private sector partners, leverage media and technology to amplify our message and ensure seamless logistics and world-class hospitality during the carnival."

Also speaking, Wanle Akinboboye, founder of the initiative, said the move was meant to woo Africans in the diaspora back to their roots while they explored tourism potentials within the continent, contributing to Africa's economic growth.

He said President Bola Tinubu had given his consent to be the chief host, grand patron and chief global

ambassador for the carnival.

He explained that a meeting had been scheduled in Abuja with the diplomatic ambassadors from the 54 African countries, to finetune the plans.

"The Ipada Initiative is designed to encourage a mass movement of Africans in the diaspora back to Africa, using Lagos as a gateway.

"The initiative is also planned to put the tourism potential in Africa together as a unit for easy marketing.

"With Ipada Carnival, I want to be able to facilitate at least 100 million visitors to travel to Africa within a year," he said.

Akinboboye noted that it was high time Africans took opportunity of their huge population and natural resources amongst which were tourism natural potential.

He urged tourism practitioners to also look away from security challenges as a hindrance to grooming the tourism industry.

"Security is the least problem for tourism in Nigeria. Israel is currently experiencing war, where they record landing of aircrafts every two minutes, the same country still records increasing tourists' figures," he said.

Giving support to the initiative, Wale Ojo-Lanre, Director-General, Ekiti State Tourism Bureau, said the state government had been able to trace no fewer than 350,000 families who were from the state but currently resident in Brazil.

"We are ready to play on the platform of IPADA to lure these people back to Ekiti, their root. We are planning to establish a colony where these people will be.

"Ekiti is ready for tourism and Gov. Biodun Oyebanji is planting tourism on a strong footing," he said.

Also, Bolaji Mustapha, National President, Nigeria Association of Tour Operators [NATOP], said: "I am dazed and amazed with this initiative, this is the best way to tell our story as a nation. NATOP will like to be part of this."

Abiodun Bankole-Ojo, Osun Commissioner for Tourism and Culture, expressed the state's readiness to collaborate with local and international brands in boosting the state's tourism potential.

NAN reports that delegates from Ekiti, Osun, Ogun, Kano, Ondo, Lagos and the Federal Capital Territory attended the stakeholders meeting. [NAN]



was registered in Nigeria as mandated by the NCARs, thus blatantly disregarding the country's court order and regulations.

AON said, "This goes to show that Ethiopian Airlines operators have no iota of respect for our country, our laws, and regulatory agencies. It is our hope that Ethiopian Airlines do not get away with this disrespectful action."

Additionally, AON explained that the Ministerial Committee on the Establishment of a National Carrier had recommended the setting up of a national airline that was private sector-driven with minimum government involvement.

AON accused Sirika of disregarding the recommendation by taking personal control of the project, from designing the logo and unveiling it at the Farnborough Air Show in the United Kingdom, to establishing the company and providing office spaces for it, among other actions.

It also purported that Sirika had made an attempt to kill the entire indigenous operators and hand over the monopoly to Ethiopian Airlines in a "dubious and fraudulent way against the economic interest of Nigeria," which it said compelled it to approach the court to stop the airline from berthing.

The current Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, disclosed in May that the Nigeria Air project remained suspended, even as he described the project as fraudulent.

He noted that the national carrier, which was supposed to be an indigenous project and was expected to spark hope for Nigerians, had been trailed by secrecy and fraudulent activities. He explained that there was never a legitimate project to that effect but rather "an Ethiopian Airline disguising as Nigerian Air with an Ethiopian National Flag."

He maintained that the project remained suspended, adding that it was anti-Nigeria.

"It was never Air Nigeria; it was Ethiopian Airlines trying to fly our flag. It was not Air Nigeria. That is the truth. It was not Nigeria. It only printed Air Nigeria. It was an Ethiopian airline trying to fly our flag. If it is so, why not allow our local people to fly our flag? Why bring a foreigner to fly our flag? So, nobody should deceive you that Air Nigeria must be indigenous, must be wholly Nigerian or must be for the full benefit of Nigerians. Note that 60 per cent of the profit is given to another country. How does that benefit us? It remains suspended. It remains so," Keyamo said.

In June, Ethiopian Airlines announced that the Nigerian government was no longer interested in establishing the proposed Nigeria Air joint venture. This confirmation came from the Group's Chief Executive Officer, Mesfin Tasew.

"The Nigerian government has lost interest in partnering with a foreign airline," Tasew said. This announcement by Ethiopian Airlines came barely two months after the Federal Government indefinitely suspended the Nigeria Air project.

...AFRIMA 2025/ 2026 Hosting Rights Kicks Off

"The hospitality, retail, and entertainment industries stand to gain immensely from the thousands of visitors who will be attending the event," Lekunutu noted. "Beyond the immediate financial impact, the long-term benefits include increased investment in our creative industries and a strengthened international reputation for South Africa as a destination for major cultural events.

"AFRIMA is more than just an awards show; it's a platform for showcasing African talent on a global stage. The exposure that South African artists and industries will receive is invaluable, and we expect this to translate into new opportunities for our local creatives.

The Acting Director for Social Development, Culture, and Sports Division, African Union Commission, Ms. Angela Martins, confirming the invitation and request to bid for the hosting rights extended to the two countries, reiterated that AFRIMA provides a unique opportunity for the host country to showcase its rich cultural heritage, develop her music sector, promote tourism, and stimulate economic growth.

"This call to action comes as part of the AU's commitment to promoting cultural exchange, unity, and economic development across the African continent. We urge the governments of South Africa and Nigeria to seize this opportunity to strengthen intra-African collaboration [in line with AFCTA] within the music industry and enhance their international visibility positively.

"AFRIMA serves as a premier platform for African artists in Africa and diaspora to showcase their talent, gain international exposure, and connect with audiences worldwide," she said.

She added that as the bidding process is inching towards its deadline, the African Union remains committed to providing support and guidance to ensure a successful hosting of AFRIMA.

She also reiterated the AUC's readiness to work closely with the selected host country to maximize the impact of the event on the African music industry, tourism, general economic growth, and socio-cultural landscape.

According to Martins, AU, and AFRIMA are looking for African countries with appropriate infrastructure to play host to the global musical event.

Meanwhile, the Moroccan government has also indicated an interest in talking to the International Committee of AFRIMA on the possibility of hosting the AFRIMA main events or the build-up events to align with the hosting of the Africa Cup of Nations scheduled to be held from December 2025 to January 18, 2026.



Michael Dada, Managing Director, AFRIMA

...This addition aligns with our strategic vision for Ibom Air and supports the economic growth and development of Akwa Ibom State by enhancing air travel and connectivity, creating job opportunities, and boosting tourism."

Director, Lekunutu Seboko, confirmed that his country's government received the letter from the African Union. He added that there have been very positive reviews about the possibility of hosting the show in South Africa.

He said, "South Africa has a rich musical heritage and a deep cultural renaissance. Our nation has been at the forefront of pushing the boundaries of African music to a global audience. Hosting a monumental music event like AFRIMA is a testament to our ever-growing influence on the continent, musically and culturally."

"AFRIMA is a well-known brand in South Africa, and it would be a fantastic opportunity to host the show for the first time. Our country's diverse culture and excellent facilities make us confident that we can deliver an exceptional AFRIMA experience. We have state-of-the-art venues, excellent transportation networks, and a diverse cultural landscape that will provide an electrifying backdrop for the awards."

"We are aware that South Africa is fully prepared to showcase our world-class infrastructure, vibrant cultural scene, and unparalleled hospitality. We have repeatedly demonstrated our capacity, we have hosted other world-class events, and are not oblivious to the inherent economic benefits of hosting an event like this."

Corroborating Seboko, AFRIMA's Director of Sponsorship and Partnership, Matlou Tsotetsi, said the event is poised to stimulate the economic boost expected from the influx of visitors, increased tourism, and heightened global attention.



International Tourist Arrivals Hit 96 Percent Of Pre-Pandemic Levels Through July 2024

International tourism bounced back to 96 percent of pre-pandemic levels in the seven months through July 2024, driven by strong demand in Europe and the re-opening of markets in Asia and the Pacific.

According to the latest World Tourism Barometer by UN Tourism, around 790 million tourists travelled internationally in the first seven months of 2024, about 11 percent more than in 2023 and only 4 percent less than in 2019. Data show a strong start to the year, followed by a more modest second quarter. Results are in line with UN Tourism's projection of a full recovery in international arrivals in 2024 despite ongoing economic and geopolitical risks.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "International tourism is on track to consolidate its full recovery from the biggest crisis in the sector's history. The ongoing rebound comes despite a range of economic and geopolitical challenges, highlighting the strong demand for international travel as well as the effectiveness of boosting air connections and easing visa restrictions. This recovery also highlights the growing need

for tourism planning and managing to cater for its impacts on communities in a way that the immense socio-economic benefits are paired with inclusive and sustainable policies".

Middle East Continues To Lead The Recovery

With increased air connectivity and visa facilitation supporting the recovery in international travel, the data shows all world regions have recorded a strong year so far.

The Middle East remained the strongest-growing region in relative terms, with international arrivals climbing 26 percent above 2019 levels in the first seven months of 2024.

Africa Welcomed 7 Percent More Tourists Than In The Same Months Of 2019

Europe and the Americas recovered 99 percent and 97 percent of their pre-pandemic arrivals respectively during these seven months.

Asia and the Pacific recorded 82 percent of its pre-pandemic tourist numbers [-18 percent versus 2019] reaching 85 percent in June and 86 percent in July.

A total of 67 out of 120 destinations around the world

The ongoing rebound comes despite a range of economic and geopolitical challenges, highlighting the strong demand for international travel as well as the effectiveness of boosting air connections and easing visa restrictions

had recovered 2019 arrival numbers in the first half of 2024, based on countries reporting monthly or quarterly data. Some of the strongest performers in January-July 2024 were Qatar [+147 percent versus 2019] where arrivals more than doubled, Albania [+93 percent], El Salvador [+81 percent], Saudi Arabia [+73 percent], the Republic of

Moldova (+50% through June) and Tanzania [+49 percent through June].

Receipts And Expenditure Data Shows Even Stronger Results

Regarding international tourism receipts, 47 out of 63 countries with available data had recovered pre-pandemic values in the first six months of 2024, many reporting strong double-digit growth compared to 2019 [in local currencies and current prices].

Among the best performers through June or July 2024 were Albania [+128 percent] and Serbia [+126 percent]

where receipts more than doubled [compared to the same period of 2019], followed by Tajikistan [+85 percent], Pakistan [+76 percent], Montenegro [+70 percent], North Macedonia [+60 percent] and Portugal [+57 percent]. Strong results were also reported by Türkiye [+55 percent] and Colombia [+54 percent] Worth noting based on first quarter data, are Saudi Arabia [+207 percent] and El Salvador [+168 percent] which enjoyed extraordinary growth compared to Q1 2019.

Data on international tourism expenditure reveals

strong demand for outbound travel in January-July 2024, especially from large source markets such as the United States [+32 percent], Germany [+38 percent], and the United Kingdom [+40 percent through March], compared to the same period of 2019. Strong outbound spending was also reported by Australia [+34 percent], Canada [+28 percent] and Italy [+26 percent], all through June 2024. Limited data for India shows an impressive surge in outbound spending, with 86 percent growth in Q1 2024 [versus Q1 2019].

Revised data for 2023 shows export revenues from international tourism reaching USD 1.8 trillion [including receipts and passenger transport], virtually the same as before the pandemic [-1 percent in real terms compared to 2019]. Tourism direct GDP also recovered pre-pandemic levels in 2023, reaching an estimated USD 3.4 trillion, equivalent to 3 percent of global GDP. In 2019 tourism directly contributed to 4 percent of global GDP.

Positive finish to 2024 expected though challenges remain

The UN Tourism Confidence Index shows positive expectations for the last part of the year, at 120 points for September-December 2024, though below the prospects for May-August, which stood at 130 [on a scale of 0 to 200, where 100 reflects equal expected performance].

Some 47 percent of the tourism experts participating in the Confidence survey expect better performance for the sector in the last four months of 2024, while 41 percent project similar performance and 11 percent worse. This reflects a gradual normalization of tourism performance after a strong 2023.

Experts pointed to inflation in travel and tourism, namely high transport and accommodation prices, as the main challenge the tourism sector is currently facing, as well as the global economic situation, staff shortages and extreme weather events.

AU Writes S' Africa, Nigeria As Race For AFRIMA 2025/ 2026 Hosting Rights Kicks Off

South Africa is tipped to become the host of the next two editions of the All-Africa Music Awards [AFRIMA] after receiving a letter of invitation from the African Union, AU, to take advantage of the hosting rights for the 2025/ 2026 editions of the prestigious award show.

The invitation was extended through a letter with reference number HHS/CUL/16/170.23 signed by Her Excellency, Ambassador Minata Samate Cessouma, the African Union Commission's Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development.

Nigeria has also received a letter similar to the one about South Africa hosting the music event. This has

caused excitement and discussion within the African music community.

The AU stated that the invitation aligns with its policies for the strategic transformation of Africa through social integration as per the AU Agenda 2063, the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, and the AU Plan for Action on Cultural and Creative Industry.

The AU said AFRIMA is a global platform that celebrates and develops Africa's diverse musical talents and cultural heritage, highlighting the significant opportunities hosting such a prestigious event presents for the selected host country.

"Since 2014, the African Union has been partnering and working successfully with AFRIMA to develop,

celebrate and promote African music globally for integration/inclusivity, economic prosperity and world peace via its seven core pillars: Music Awards, Music Festivals; AFRIMA creative Academy; Talent Discovery and Promotions; Music Business Hub; Advocacy; Advisory and Policy Debates," the letter reads.

"AFRIMA is the biggest and longest-running music award and platform in Africa, with a huge global appeal, diaspora audience, and youthful fans. The main events of AFRIMA are usually broadcast live to over 84 countries around the world after a continental and global roadshow, with thousands of music artists, actors, celebrities, members of the diplomatic corps,

professionals in the creative space, tourists, media and fans from all over the world converging on the host country."

The last edition of AFRIMA was successfully hosted and partnered with the government of the Republic of Senegal in the city of Dakar. The privilege of hosting AFRIMA is typically granted to a country that demonstrates the ability and determination to fulfill the requirements and conditions.

Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal have been reliable hosts that have helped the event grow and succeed in the past. However, South Africa's potential bid presents the possibility of new perspectives and opportunities.

AFRIMA's Country

THE BUSINESS HAVEN



Located only 8km from the airport, Accra city hotel provides the exclusive Ghanaian experience from the shuttle ride down to the hotel.

From well spaced modern conference rooms conducive for business meetings & conferences to comfortable, relaxing rooms that open to breathtaking city views, the hotel guarantees nothing short of Ghanaian excellence.

Climax your stay with a taste of their diverse local & continental dishes!

A TRUE GHANAIAN EXPERIENCE



Remi Jibodu, Acting Chief Operating Officer, Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Ltd.

Nigeria: MMA2 Commissioned Cold Storage Facilities For Cargo Operations

To offer a seamless belly-cargo services, Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited [BASL], operator of Murtala Muhammed Airport 2 [MMA2], has invested massively in 25 tonnes cold storage facilities at its terminal.

Unveiling the cold storage facilities at the weekend amid fanfare, the terminal operator came up with an innovation that is arguably the first of its kind by any airport terminal operator in Nigeria, repositioning its desire to continue to offer unparalleled

services to its customers.

The cold storage facilities are designed to store perishable goods such as frozen meat, dairy products, plants and flowers, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products among others.

It offers convenience for customers as BASL said it is not only affordable but value composition to their clients, stressing that the more volume they get the more cut in price reduction for prospective users of the cold store.

The firm equally projected that it plans to raise the cold storage facilities to 100 tonnes capacity in the

next 24 months as it grows capacity. Speaking to New Telegraph at the weekend, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of BASL, Remi Jibodu said:

“For us, one of the things we will continue to do at all times is to ensure that we add to the existing infrastructure so that customers will continue to patronize us and to offer those service and this is the opportunity we have been waiting for.

“So, what you are seeing is just a 25-tonne of cold storage. This is just the beginning. What we are trying to do is to ensure that we extend it to 100

tonnes in two years.

In the next six months, we may even have to move to another place to ensure that we have about 100 tonnes in a few years.”

He disclosed that BASL daily undertook 50 to 60 tonnes of cargo but is constrained to do more because of undercapacity in the sector which saw to the suspension of Dana Air; an airline noted for huge belly-cargo operation and the recent grounding of Arik Air that further shrunk cargo movement.

He further stated that Air Peace hardly engaged in cargo operations, a situation he said compounded the situation. “We are still pushing the 50 tonnes we are doing daily despite.

That for us is fantastic. I am sure people will be surprised by the volume we are doing daily. “In any domestic airport in Nigeria, this is the first in Nigeria.

Even the one we have at international here is for the Nigerian Aviation Handling Company Plc [NAHCo] and not an airport operator that owns that. For us, we think it is very strategic looking at our location.

“We say we are consuming nation importing everything but the truth about it is that when you import, you have to have a place to store cold cargo. This is the hub of aviation.

Apart from the fact that we are using this hub to distribute cargo, the cold aspect of it; I realised some time ago, that you have a B747 bringing almost all cold cargo and we will use B737 to distribute to Accra, Libreville and before daybreak.

Where do they store it? “A lot of people have complained of losing money on 80 per cent perishable of what they brought in because there is nowhere to store it because the other airports they are coming from, there is already a delay; they already lose their ice and getting to this place, there is another delay and customers are complaining seriously about it and the number one priority and we think it is very important for us and international products and secondly.

continued from page 5

restrictions were lifted. These countries offer potential policy lessons for promoting sustainable transport practices.

Sweden already had a relatively high and growing percentage of remote workers before the pandemic. This trend has continued to grow post-pandemic. Moreover, since 2010 Sweden has been looking to get its people outdoors, including by making its natural spots more

accessible and promoting outdoor exercise. This is hardly a surprise coming from the birthplace of the notion of “flight shame” (flygskam), which describes the sense of guilt from flying’s carbon footprint, pushing people toward other, less polluting alternatives.

Similarly, Denmark continues to promote and invest in cycling by investing in cycling and e-bike infrastructure in the post-pandemic era through the National

Reform Programme. Moreover, a recent survey showed that residents of Copenhagen now tend to cycle to work more compared to before the pandemic.

In Czechia, affordable public transport tickets help to encourage less carbon-intensive transport options. People also appear to enjoy walking more, with a 10% increase in walking journeys between 2016 and 2021 in Prague.

If they want to fulfil their

climate pledges, European countries need to green their transport sector. In the post-pandemic era, this could mean expanding cycling infrastructure, as Denmark has done, making public transport more affordable, like in the Czechia, and supporting remote work and local outdoor activities, as is in the case in Sweden. Governments need to throw their weight behind eco-friendly transport options like cycling and electric cars and

lead behavioural change campaigns to make sustainable transport not just an option but the preferred choice for everyone.

Ivan Savin, Associate Professor of Quantitative Analytics, ESCP Business School and Helena Patiño de Artaza, PhD candidate in transport sustainability, UOC - Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.



Boulevard Hotels and Resorts in East Africa?

Our long-term goal is to establish a strong and sustainable presence in East Africa, with 10-15 operational properties within the next decade. We aim to be recognized as the premier choice for business and leisure travelers in the region, known for our commitment to quality, local culture, and sustainability. We also plan to play a key role in promoting East Africa as a global tourism and business destination.

How does this expansion fit into the company's broader global strategy?

This expansion is part of our broader vision to become a leading hotel management group across Africa and globally. By establishing a strong presence in East Africa, we are positioning ourselves to tap into other African markets and beyond, creating a network of Boulevard Hotels that caters to both local and international guests, delivering consistent quality across borders.

Final Thoughts

Is there anything else you would like to share about Boulevard Hotels and Resorts' future plans or the expansion into East Africa?

We are excited about the opportunities that East Africa presents and are confident that this expansion will contribute to our long-term growth and success. Our focus will be on building lasting relationships with local communities, government bodies, and businesses while delivering exceptional hospitality experiences.

What message would you like to convey to stakeholders, employees, and guests about this exciting new chapter for the company?

To our stakeholders, employees, and guests, we want to express our deep gratitude for your trust and support. This new chapter represents growth, innovation, and a commitment to excellence. We are excited to bring the Boulevard Hotels and Resorts experience to new regions and look forward to sharing this journey with you. Together, we will make Boulevard Hotels synonymous with world-class hospitality in Africa and beyond.

targeting an occupancy rate of 70-75% for all properties within the first year of operations, with revenue growth driven by a mix of corporate clients, business travelers, and high-end tourists. Financial performance will be tracked through key metrics such as RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room), GOPPAR (Gross Operating Profit per Available Room), and overall guest satisfaction scores.

How will success be measured for this expansion and partnership?

Success will be measured through the seamless integration of our brand into the East African market, guest satisfaction, and meeting or exceeding financial targets. We will also assess the strength of our relationships with local stakeholders, our ability to maintain consistent service standards, and the growth of our market share in key East African cities.

Long-Term Goals

What are the long-term goals for

Consistency in quality and service is paramount. To maintain this, we will implement rigorous training programs for all staff in new locations, emphasizing our brand's standards and service excellence. We will also have frequent audits and assessments to ensure each property aligns with our operational protocols.

hotel operations, and building local relationships will be instrumental in our success in the region.

Can you provide insights into how the partnership will leverage local expertise and resources in East Africa?

Through this partnership, we will be leveraging Profitable Hospitality's strong connections with local suppliers, government bodies, and tourism boards. This local expertise will help us ensure compliance with regulations, access quality resources, and create a culturally resonant experience for our guests. By utilizing local talent and resources, we aim to foster a sense of ownership and pride within the communities where we operate.

Financial and Performance Metrics

What are the financial projections or targets for the East African expansion?

Our goal is to achieve 20% growth in our East African operations within the first five years. We are

We Positioning To Be A Pan African Hospitality Management Company



Ekene Nnabuihe, Chief Executive Officer of Boulevard Hotels and Resorts says his brand is to become a pan African hotel management and franchise group positioning to deliver quality services. In this interview with Lucky Onoriode George, Publisher, African Travel Times, the former sales czar spoke of his strategies and motivations.

Excerpts:

Vision and Strategy

Can you share your overarching vision for Boulevard Hotels and Resorts in the next 5 to 10 years?

Our vision for Boulevard Hotels and Resorts is to establish the brand as the leading Pan-African hotel management and franchising group, known for delivering consistent, world-class hospitality services. In the next 5 to 10 years, we aim to expand our footprint across key African markets, reaching 30 operational hotels in both the midscale and upscale segments. We will focus on sustainable growth by blending African hospitality with international luxury standards, all while fostering local economic development and nurturing a culture of excellence.

What are the core values and principles that guide your strategic decisions for the company?

At the heart of our strategic decisions are the values of integrity, innovation, excel-

lence, and sustainability. We believe in ethical business practices, delivering superior guest experiences, and continuously innovating to meet changing market demands. Additionally, we are committed to environmental sustainability and community development, ensuring our growth positively impacts the local economies in which we operate.

How do you see the evolving landscape of the hospitality industry impacting Boulevard Hotels and Resorts?

The hospitality industry is rapidly evolving, driven by changes in technology, guest preferences, and the need for sustainability. We see this as an opportunity to leverage technology, such as AI and mobile solutions, to enhance guest experience and operational efficiency. The shift towards eco-friendly travel also aligns with our sustainability goals. Furthermore, the increased demand for personalized and local experiences

means we will focus on integrating cultural authenticity in our offerings, particularly as we expand across Africa.

Expansion into East Africa

What motivated Boulevard Hotels and Resorts to pursue expansion into East Africa at this particular time?

East Africa presents a dynamic opportunity for growth due to its burgeoning tourism sector, increasing foreign investments, and improving infrastructure. Countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda are emerging as strong economic hubs with untapped hospitality potential. Our expansion is motivated by the region's growing demand for quality accommodations, especially in the business and leisure travel segments.

How does the recent partnership with Profitable Hospitality align with your expansion goals?

Our partnership with Profitable Hospitality is pivotal to our East African expansion as they bring deep regional knowledge and operational expertise. This collaboration ensures we can seamlessly enter the market with a strong understanding of local regulations, consumer behavior, and market dynamics. The key objectives are to:

- Establish Boulevard's brand presence across major East African cities.
- Deliver superior guest experiences while adhering to local cultural norms.
- Optimize hotel operations by integrating Profitable Hospitality's regional expertise with our global standards. Together, we aim to enhance the overall hotel ecosystem in East Africa by introducing luxury and midscale accommodations tailored to the regional market.

Market Opportunities and Challenges

What specific opportunities do you see in the East African market that are driving this expansion?

East Africa is experiencing a rise in middle-class consumers, increasing business travel, and a tourism boom, especially around natural attractions and cultural heritage sites. Additionally, there is a growing demand for



quality business hotels in major cities like Nairobi and Kigali. These factors, combined with government support for tourism and foreign investments, create a fertile ground for us to introduce our unique hospitality offerings.

What are the potential challenges or risks associated with entering this new market, and how do you

plan to address them?

Potential challenges include navigating local regulatory frameworks, managing cultural differences, and ensuring that our brand resonates with both local and international guests. We are mitigating these risks by partnering with local experts like Profitable Hospitality, conducting thorough market research, and tailoring our

offerings to meet the diverse needs of the East African market. Our localized approach will ensure smooth market entry while maintaining our brand's core values.

How will Boulevard Hotels and Resorts adapt its business model to fit the cultural and economic nuances of East Africa?



We will adapt our business model by incorporating local cultural elements into our hotel designs, dining experiences, and guest services. Our pricing strategies will also reflect the economic realities of each country, ensuring affordability without compromising on luxury or service quality. Additionally, we will focus on local talent development, hiring and training staff from the communities where we operate to ensure we are fostering long-term economic benefits.

Strategic Initiatives

Can you describe any new initiatives or projects that will be introduced as part of this expansion?

One of our key initiatives is the launch of **Boulevard East Africa**, a sub-brand tailored to the unique needs of the East African market. This brand will focus on both business and leisure travelers, with a

Success will be measured through the seamless integration of our brand into the East African market, guest satisfaction, and meeting or exceeding financial targets. We will also assess the strength of our relationships with local stakeholders, our ability to maintain consistent service standards, and the growth of our market share in key East African cities.

special emphasis on eco-friendly practices and supporting local tourism. We are also exploring partnerships with local artisans and food suppliers to promote cultural authenticity within our hotels. Additionally, we are developing new technology solutions to enhance the guest experience, such as mobile check-ins and personalized services.

How will the company ensure the consistent quality and service standards of Boulevard Hotels and Resorts are maintained in new locations?

Consistency in quality and service is paramount. To maintain this, we will implement rigorous training programs for all staff in new locations, emphasizing our brand's standards and service excellence. We will also have frequent audits and assessments to ensure each property aligns with our operational protocols. Finally, we will

assign regional managers to oversee performance, provide support, and ensure alignment with Boulevard's global standards.

Impact on Current Operations

How will this expansion affect Boulevard Hotels and Resorts' current operations and existing properties?

The expansion into East Africa is part of our growth strategy and will not negatively impact our current operations. In fact, it will enhance our overall capabilities by providing us with a broader market perspective and new opportunities for innovation. We will continue to support and invest in our existing properties to ensure they remain competitive and uphold our brand's reputation.

Will there be any changes to the company's organizational structure or management teams to support this expansion?

Yes, we will be expanding our organizational structure to include dedicated regional teams for East Africa. This includes new roles such as Regional Director of East Africa and local management teams for each property. We will also appoint key figures from Profitable Hospitality to oversee operational integration, ensuring that we have the necessary leadership to support this expansion.

Partnership Dynamics

How did Boulevard Hotels and Resorts identify and select Profitable Hospitality as a strategic partner?

We selected Profitable Hospitality due to their deep expertise in the East African market, proven track record in hotel management, and strong network within the regional hospitality sector. Their values align with ours, particularly their commitment to excellence and local economic development, making them an ideal partner for this strategic expansion.

What are the key strengths that Profitable Hospitality brings to this partnership?

Profitable Hospitality brings a wealth of local market knowledge, operational excellence, and a deep understanding of East African business and cultural landscapes. Their expertise in navigating regulatory frameworks, optimizing