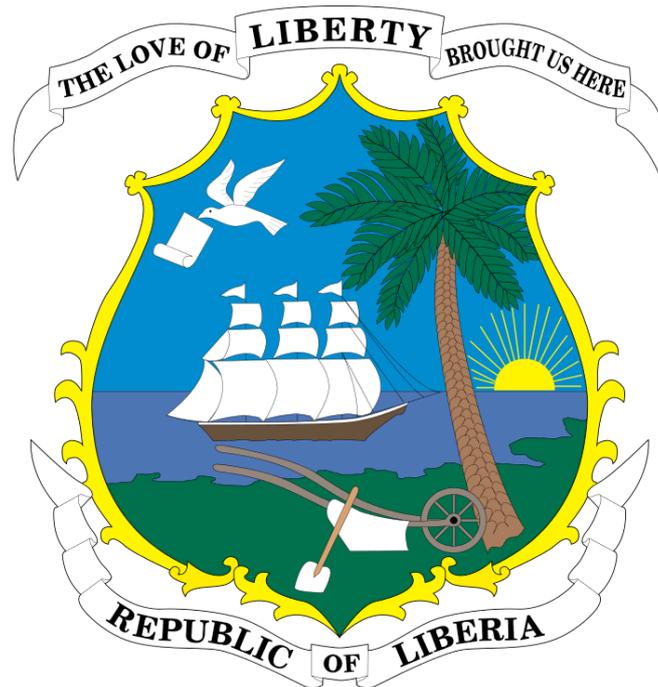

SECOND CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON TOURISM IN LIBERIA



*EIF/ITC/MOCI/MICAT
Second Consultative Workshop: Developing Tourism Sector in Liberia
Sector Strategy Development*

Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Liberia

Remarks by

**H.E Axel M. Addy
Minister**

Monday, 18 April 2016

**Bella Casa Hotel
Monrovia, Liberia**



Minister Eugene Nagbe of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism and Chair of the Tourism Committee,

Distinguished Members of Government Present,

Our International Guests representing our partners

Our Dynamic Entrepreneurs of the sector

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol Observed

Introduction

1. Goodmorning and for those of you in Liberia for the first time, welcome.
2. Let me first once again thank the Tourism Committee chaired by my friend and brother the Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Hon. Eugene Nagbe, our partners WTO/EIF/ITC for this support to our post WTO Accession Strategy. It is good to see a conversation and pitch that started two and a half years ago finally come to realization.
3. Ladies and gentlemen, I strongly believe tourism can be a transformative sector for Liberia, it has huge potential. In 2014 according to the UN World Tourism Organization, tourism in Africa grew from a small base of 14.7 million visitors in 1990 to 26 million international tourists in 2000 and 56 million in 2014. International tourism receipts amounted to US\$36 billion or 7% of all exports in the continent. This is a critical sector as it creates jobs and stimulates SMEs growth. In 2014, it represented 9% of world GDP and is growing much faster in economies such as ours.
4. Tourism provides a major opportunity to harness the potential of our endowments to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all of our citizens as prescribed in Sustainable Development Goal 8.
5. My dear friends and colleagues, my fellow Liberians, today, we are back to begin the second phase consultation exercise on developing a Liberia Tourism Trade Strategy. Phase one, held in mid-February of this year, focused on listening, collecting and



recording stakeholders' views and comments on what should be included in the Strategy. Your views and comments have now been drafted in a plan of Action. This plan will be presented to you at some point during this workshop by the team. The team will be working with you to refine the plan and to identify tangible, realistic and implementable solutions to the challenges identified in the 1st consultation and to match possibilities to opportunities. Thank you so much for your active participation in the first consultation.

6. I am happy that this time, we have a bigger team in this consultation, involving the presence of institutions such as the WTO, Africa Wildlife Foundation, San Diego State University Centre for Surf Research, and Institute of Travel & Tourism Gambia. The accompanying representatives will lend their expertise and external experience to the consultation but will also conduct their own due diligence to assess opportunities for collaboration. Thank you for being here.
7. In terms of the strategic thrusts of the strategy, the 1st consultation resulted in the identification of the following thematic areas: Policy development, product development, Human Capital development, Institutional Development, Youth employment and entrepreneurship, and Investment promotion and business environment improvement. These will be presented and discuss in more detail.
8. Policy development: The strategy will provide tangible recommendations for bringing Tourism further in the spotlight in terms of policy focus.
9. Product development – Liberia has a wealth of Tourism raw material, which needs to be converted to strong products. These include Ecotourism, City-based Tourism, Cultural and Historic Tourism, Surfing/Coastal Tourism. This vast and untapped wealth needs to be harvested and the strategy will focus on this. No one actor will be able to do it alone, this will require the efforts of every actor across the value chain – hotels, taxi operators, restaurants, hospitality schools.
10. Institutional capacities of key supporting institutions will be strengthened, whether this relates to the establishment of the National Tourism Authority (LNTA), empowerment/capacity building for LNTA and other sector associations.
11. Focus on skills development will be prominent. For long-term sustainability, the human capital in the sector will need to be best in class – Liberia is a land of friendly faces and hospitable nature and this will be reinforced by developing a robust skills development infrastructure. In this regard, experiences from our neighbours including Gambia among other international destinations will be of significant help.
12. Youth is the underlying denominator for the Tourism strategy. Getting the youth involved in productive activities in the sector –whether in terms of helping them find employment,



or helping them to start their own businesses, which will in turn, hire others- will be essential to the success of the strategy.

13. Investment promotion will be a key pillar as well. While active investor action may occur in the medium to long term, streamlining policies, and attraction promotion can start now. Investments will be an essential driver for Liberia to move up the Tourism value chain ladder.
14. It is important to note that the strategy is being developed in Liberia, for-Liberia, by-Liberians, and therefore I request you to roll up your sleeves and expend your best effort during this Workshop.
15. Ladies and gentlemen, we all no matter where we are make up Liberia the brand. Today that brand has been stigmatized by civil war, Ebola, poor economic and human development indicators, poor business climate indicators – it makes it almost seem like there is nothing positive coming out of this country. But who are the biggest perpetrators of the stigmatization of Liberia the brand – We are. A nation where the populace tongue is quite expensive. We know how to inform the world about the worst of our country.
16. I hope this process will inspire us to showcase the other side of Liberia – the natural endowments we have been blessed with and use such resource to empower and inspire a new thinking that ends with a hash tag - #LiberiaEssentiallyAfrican.
17. We are an eccentric people, unique in our history, in our culture, in our natural endowments. We can harness this eccentricity for the transformation of our brand, Liberia. But this must start with all of us by simply being #positivelyLiberian.
18. Thank you for being here today.
19. I wish you all a fruitful workshop.
20. Thank you.