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The theme of this historic event is “Shaping the Future of Tourism in COMESA,” and it is being organized with the support of the COMESA Business Council in partnership with the Kenya Investment Authority and the Kenya Tourism Board.

The forum has in attendance business leaders and policy makers with over 70 regional participants from tourist boards, investment promotion agencies, tourism businesses, and development partners having an opportunity to actively engage each other over a competitive approach to regional tourism.

The aim of the forum is to promote a more competitive, investor friendly, sustainable tourism sector in the region, by putting in place a framework that puts in place a regional policy and strategy that defines tourism in the region; promotes the relaxation of visa requirements for tourists, packages, brands tourism, and investment in infrastructure for tourism development; upgrades the sector to meet regional and global standards; promotes investment in key areas of tourism, such as hospitality and catering; addresses the supply side of constraints in the hotel industry; and exploits the benefits of e-tourism among others.

The forum will be held at The Windsor, one of the luxury resorts in Kenya from 22-24, 2012. It is expected that dignitaries from the tourism sectors of Morocco, Egypt, and the Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa (RETOSA) will also attend the meeting. Executives from corporate hotels, like the Serena Group, Spekes Hotel Group, and renowned tour operators from all countries in the COMESA region will also attend.

Seychelles has had a role in encouraging the establishment of a COMESA tourism platform, and Mr. Jimmy Butt, the Seychelles Tourism Ambassador to Zambia, invited COMESA’s Acting Director for Trade and Investment, Mr. Thierry Kalonji, and USAID-COMESA Project Coordinator, Mr. Walter Talma, to its Investment Forum in Johannesburg in July 2011 to meet Mr. Peter Sinon, the Seychelles Minister of Natural Resources and Industry, and Mr. Alain St.Ange, the Seychelles Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture. Among other issues, COMESA was urged to place tourism on their active program of events.

Tourism is the fastest-developing enterprise in Africa and one of the continent's major investment opportunities, standing at a 6 percent growth rate in the last decennium. Africa receives 4.8 percent of all tourist arrivals in the world and 3.3 percent of the receipts. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that, from direct and indirect activities combined, the tour and travel sector now accounts for 9.2 of global GDP. Tourism contribution to employment is estimated at 6-7 percent of the overall number of jobs worldwide, and it makes up 4.8 percent of world's exports and 9.2 percent of world investments.

Seychelles will be represented by a delegation from the Seychelles Tourism Board, Seychelles Investment Bureau, the private sector - Le Meridien Fisherman's Cove Hotel, and by Mr. Jimmy Butt, the Tourism Ambassador to Seychelles in Zambia.

Source: Seychelles Ministry of Tourism & Culture