

TOURISM

Unlocking the true value of our natural heritage

Since the transition of South Africa to a genuine democracy, tourism in southern Africa has expanded dramatically, and in 2006 the total number of tourists arriving in the region grew by over twelve per cent, with South Africa leading the way. The industry shows significant growth in all our neighbouring countries.

However, the industry in Zimbabwe has contracted, and tourist arrivals at present are estimated to be about twenty per cent of what was achieved in 1997. This huge decline is very much in line with the rest of the economy and, as a result, earnings and employment have fallen to very low levels.

The tourist industry is regarded as an economic sector that promises not only long-term growth but also the capacity for rapid recovery from the present crisis, with immediate and substantial job-creation and foreign-currency earning potential. It has therefore been accepted that tourism must occupy a priority position in efforts first to ensure a turnaround and then reconstruction and recovery.

The Potential of the Zimbabwe Tourism Industry

By 2010 it is expected that regional tourism will attract some 15 million visitors annually. Zimbabwe, with its natural resources and attractions such as Great Zimbabwe, the Victoria Falls, Kariba and the Zambezi River, its national parks and wildlife resources, offers an attractive and accessible location for tourists. Our friendly people and the provision of good infrastructure, as well as reasonable health facilities and a wide range of accommodation and tourist activities, can be expected to attract a reasonable proportion of regional and overseas tourists.

It is expected that Zimbabwe will capture at least twenty per cent of regional tourism trade within five years of the resumption of growth and the restoration of the rule of law and stability; at present Zimbabwe receives only about two per cent of all regional visitors. This massive influx of visitors will require considerable investment in roads, airports, transport services and hotels and lodge accommodation. It will also require the training of thousands of new workers and skilled personnel to service this growth.

Guiding Principles



The MDC government will consider tourism to be a national priority with the capacity to assist in the recovery of the wider economy.

- ✎ Tourism will be largely private-sector and market driven, the overall goal of government being to create an enabling environment for the growth of the sector.
- ✎ The environment will be a cornerstone of the Zimbabwean tourist sector. All tourist activities and development initiatives will take environmental concerns into consideration. Regardless of its label, all tourism will be ecologically sustainable, contributing to the long-term maintenance of ecosystems and species. Tourism will also aim to foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.
- ✎ The MDC government will encourage the participation of small-scale tourism operators.
- ✎ The MDC government will encourage the involvement of the Zimbabwean people, particularly those communities in the vicinity of resort areas, as entrepreneurs and suppliers of goods and services to the tourist industry, and as customers of tourism.
- ✎ The MDC government will strengthen and develop existing tourist infrastructure by promoting a clean, healthy and safe environment along with friendly and efficient services.

Policy Objectives

The MDC believes that, in order to achieve sustained economic growth and job creation, it is necessary to focus on those sectors that have the capacity to generate sustainable investment and earnings. The MDC believes that the future of the tourist industry is inextricably linked to the country's ability to harness and develop its natural environment as well as its rich and diverse culture. It is the MDC's policy to develop these resources and to package and promote them in a manner that maximizes their inherent economic potential while maintaining their integrity. Emphasis will be placed on the people and their heritage, the attributes that make Zimbabwe unique. In this regard the MDC's tourism policy will:

- ✎ Aim at enhancing the competitive capability of the Zimbabwe tourist industry, correcting biases, distortions and impediments within the industry.
- ✎ Establish tourism as a national priority sector for the future development of the country, achieving co-operation within the public sector, private sector, communities and civil society to facilitate appropriate investment and to promote tourism.
- ✎ Create a suitable environment for the development and maintenance of basic infrastructure for tourism, including communication and transportation services.
- ✎ Develop an integrated tourism development strategy that will link the tourist industry with other sectors such as cultural activity, arts and crafts, sports, health, and formal and informal sector employment creation.

- ✎ Overhaul Zimbabwe's tourism marketing strategies in order to make a greater impact on the country's major markets in Africa, Europe, Asia and the United States.
- ✎ Identify and strengthen existing best practices in tourism development with a view to formulating guidelines and standards for appropriate tourism development as well as criteria for investment incentives. Country experience in tourism will be analysed and lessons learned will be incorporated into future policy.
- ✎ Support regional tourism developments and initiatives to stimulate economic growth through tourism. This goal will be attained through taking part effectively in regional tourist activities and programmes such as the transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs).
- ✎ Eliminate the requirement for visas for as many countries as possible.

STRATEGIES

Institutional Reforms

In order to meet the above objectives, the MDC government will embark on an extensive institutional reform programme. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority was established to represent the interests of the industry and to foster its growth and development. Up to now this function has been frustrated by the State's inability to address the main national problems that have hindered tourism in Zimbabwe. It will be the intention of the MDC to ensure that the ZTA is adequately funded to carry out its mandate and is able to co-operate with similar organizations in the SADC region as a whole. It will have the mandate to:

- ✎ Develop an effective marketing strategy, coupled with regional initiatives, so as to project a positive identity for Zimbabwe to the international and regional tourist markets as a unique and desirable destination.
- ✎ Create awareness of the tourist industry in Zimbabwe.
- ✎ Work with all stakeholders in the maintenance of a vibrant tourist industry.
- ✎ Conduct research on tourism in Zimbabwe and disseminate information on possible markets, assisting in the implementation of an agreed marketing strategy.
- ✎ Assist with the planning, development and maintenance of tourist infrastructure, facilities and services.
- ✎ Develop minimum standards, guidelines and service standards for players in the tourist industry.
- ✎ Promote regional tourist activities such as the TFCAs and other regional tourism programmes, policies and projects.

Existing Initiatives and Other Opportunities

The MDC government will make every effort to promote Zimbabwe as a preferred destination for tourists. The MDC recognizes the importance of a number of existing tourism initiatives, programmes, policies and services.

The MDC government will immediately tender for a professional organization to conduct an audit of the country's wildlife population and the state of tourist infrastructure. With this information, the ZTA, which will be strengthened through partnerships, will work with the world's major tour operators to ensure that the Zimbabwean tourist industry appeals to discerning international tourists. This will include familiarization tours to this country. The ZTA will play a mentorship role to encourage local operators to comply with market requirements.

Once the tourist industry has signed off on a blueprint for the redevelopment of tourism, the MDC government will facilitate familiarization trips for top international tour operators, particularly those who supported this country in the past.

The ZTA will be charged with marketing Zimbabwe as a quality destination in line with local and international needs. In order to ensure an acceptable product for wealthy tourists, the MDC government will tender for a partner to guide this process, which will be financed through the existing tourist levy.

The timing of Travel Expo will change to fall straight after the Travel Indaba in Durban. The ZTA will take stands at the main travel fairs – ITB, WTO, Indaba, etc. – and invite private-sector companies to participate under its umbrella.

Human Resources

The industry will maintain a single National Employment Council to represent the interests of both employers and employees. All working conditions will be negotiated through this system and the social security needs of the staff addressed by the NEC. This system is more fully outlined in the MDC policy on Social Security.

The industry will be encouraged to train staff in-house and the cost of such arrangements will be permitted as a charge against tax payments. In addition, the Hotel Catering School in Bulawayo will be converted into a training college for the tourist industry and placed under a Board of Directors drawn from the tourist industry. The College will be partially funded through student grants paid by government in the same way as colleges and universities will be funded.

The MDC will seek international partners so that the College will be able to issue a qualification of international standard. This process will be guided and driven by the industry itself. There is also need to train staff in tourist-related industries such as health, sport and culture. Recognizing the potential of the tourist industry to assist in the turnaround of the Zimbabwe economy, there will be a deliberate attempt to introduce tourism curricula in universities, colleges and other vocational training centres.

It is recognized that a change of culture is required if the industry is to re-establish itself as being friendly and attractive to foreign visitors. This is especially true at all ports of entry. An effort will be made therefore to train all staff working in this critical area in good public relations.

Cluster Initiatives

Tourism requires the provision of a wide range of services designed to make visitors feel safe and welcome, and to ensure that the quality of all services are competitive with regional tourist facilities. To this end the MDC government will foster the development of cluster initiatives in tourist centres such as the Victoria Falls, Kariba, Great Zimbabwe, Nyanga, Chimanimani and Chipinge, and the Matobo Hills. Other clusters will be formed on a demand-led basis.

Within each cluster, all tour operators and service providers will be encouraged to work together to ensure that facilities and services are up to standard. They will interact with local authorities, the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism and the ZTA, as well as with commercial and industrial companies that have an input to the industry.

The clusters will elect leadership and set up offices to co-ordinate their initiatives and activities, and all State-controlled enterprises will be required to participate and contribute to the efforts of the cluster groups. The MDC government will require the railways and airlines to participate fully and to ensure that they are able to support local initiatives. The Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe will be required to participate on the same basis. The Police Service will assist with security and safety.

One of the key roles of each cluster will be to consult the local community on a regular basis and to assist and advise in the planning of the expansion of tourist facilities and activities in their region. This will include providing an overall environmental watchdog role to ensure that tourism does not destroy the very resources that make it possible.

Eco-tourism and Hunting and Fishing

The sustainability of the tourist industry requires the development of environmentally friendly tourism policies. In this regard the MDC government will make deliberate efforts to ensure that tourism activity does not damage the environment. The global climate today is under threat from global warming and a plethora of other factors. Climate change poses direct risks to many of the natural features on which the local industry is based. Domestic and international tourism will be affected by changing weather patterns. In the tourism development plan the MDC government will endorse key environmental strategies that protect natural resources and tourist destinations.

It is recognized that for many reasons Zimbabwe has become the centre of the hunting industry in Africa, with the main activities taking place out of Bulawayo, where many of the key players reside. The MDC government will encourage this activity within the parameters of sound wildlife and environmental policies that will protect the country's wildlife stocks and permit licensed activity that is sustainable in the long term. The MDC will revisit the CAMPFIRE programme to ensure that local communities also benefit from this activity.

A similar situation exists in respect to the game-fishing industry and it is accepted that this has considerable potential if it is managed properly. To this end the research and management functions of the Department of Fisheries will be revived and extended. It is accepted that fishing activity must be properly controlled and managed to ensure that the off-take is sustainable, and water resources that form common boundaries with neighbours will receive special attention and regional management.

In addition to tourist fishing and game fishing on the Zambezi River and Lake Kariba, attention will be given to stocking and managing the fishing resources of other main river systems. In this respect the Department of Fisheries will establish research breeding and management systems for the main river systems. Special attention will be given to the latent potential of streams and rivers in the Eastern Highlands, where the trout breeding and stocking systems will be revived and expanded.

Parks and Wildlife Management

The Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (PAWMA) will control and manage all the national parks in Zimbabwe, operating them professionally in the interests of wildlife conservation. In addition PAWMA will control fisheries and fishing and will be responsible for licensing hunting activities. PAWMA plays a crucial role in the tourist industry and as such will be fully integrated into all tourist structures and organizations.

The MDC accepts that Parks' accommodation needs a complete overhaul and it will tender for proposals to maximize the potential of this resource. Consideration will be given to outsourcing all accommodation and catering services in National Parks.

Regional Tourism

It is accepted that wildlife management and tourist infrastructure and activities would be better managed on a regional basis where appropriate and to this end an MDC government will co-operate fully with the establishment and management of transfrontier conservation areas. This would include the present arrangements for the Great Limpopo TFCA (incorporating the Gonarezhou and adjacent parks in South Africa and Mozambique) and the Limpopo/Shashe TFCA (involving Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe), as well as proposed areas incorporating the Chobe, Hwange and Victoria Falls parks, and the upper Zambezi area and possibly the Caprivi Strip.

The MDC government will support a regional tourism visa that would allow visitors to transit the region on a single visa within the SADC region. This would include full access to the transfrontier parks and free movement within the conservation areas.

