Tourism creates 21 million jobs in Africa, exceeds manufacturing, banking

The African Union (AU) says the tourism sector supports about 21 million jobs in Africa with a value of over $160m, exceeding manufacturing and banking sectors combined.

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Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, the AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Tourism, disclosed this at the just-concluded 61st UN World Tourism Organisation, UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa Conference in Abuja. Abou-Zeid said tourism was an engine for inclusive growth and economic development on the continent.

"In the African continent, tourism supports about 21 million jobs translating to one in 14 jobs; this is how important tourism is. That is why we are making sure it takes its due place. The value of the industry now stands at over $160b accounting for almost eight per cent of Gross Domestic Product. So, it exceeds the contributions from manufacturing and banking sectors.

"Tourism industry accounts for more than six per cent of the total investments valued at $29b and employs over 20 million people, hence accounting for 6.5% of the total workforce," she said.

Tourism promotion strategies

The AU commissioner said it was projected that 5% of the tourism industry would grow much faster than the 4.8% economic growth forecast for the continent over the next 10 years. She, therefore, called for tourism promotion strategies through improvement of Africa's image in the global media.

"Our priority on the continent now should be to optimise the role of tourism based on the agenda of NEPAD/AU action plan. On that, we have the responsibility to coordinate and facilitate the implementation and of course collaborations with UNWTO and other key partners.

"We have finalised the first agenda for 2063, the focus now is on strategy for implementation. We are particularly keen to see that tourism is very much high in the priority of the action plan," she said.

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