

ZEPARU STATEMENT

POSITIONING THE ZIMBABWE TOURISM SECTOR FOR GROWTH: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Harare, April 2013, The Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU) has completed a research study entitled, “**Positioning the Zimbabwe Tourism Sector for Growth: Issues and Challenges**”. The research project on the tourism sector, is in line with ZEPARU’s mandate of undertaking research that feeds into the policy making process in all sectors of the economy, as outlined in the Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2011 – 2015, wherein, tourism was identified as one of the key pillars for growth. Already, ZEPARU has completed research studies in other sectors of the economy including: Financial Services, Manufacturing, Mining and Agriculture.

The main objective of the research study was to determine the factors that can improve tourism growth and provide policy recommendations on strategies to position the sector on a sustainable growth path, in support of the country’s economic growth objectives. The study benefited from country-wide face to face interviews with key stakeholders in the tourism sector, that were selected through a stratified sample of stakeholders-hotel managers, tour operation managers and public sector executives. The sample population was drawn from the key tourist’s destinations of Harare, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Hwange, Kariba, Masvingo, Mutare and Nyanga.

The study acknowledges that the sector is facing a number of growth-constraining challenges that includes lack of inter-governmental policy coordination as different government institutions promulgate policies and regulations without considerations of their impacts on other sectors hence impacting negatively on the tourism sector. Associated with this, is the issue of poor policy implementation and costly policy reversals. Other bottlenecks to tourism growth includes: lack of internal airline connectivity & poor road network, poor marketing, lack of institutional coordination, limited skills and experience, lack of domestic tourism promotion, unfriendly visa policy and limited ICT usage.

To position the tourism sector on a sustainable growth, the study noted the need for a proper policy and institutional framework that is growth oriented. Other recommendations included the need to; establish a tourism revolving fund drawing on lessons from Mauritius, improve internal airline connections and access to all the tourist resorts, reform the visa system, invest in human resources development, and improvement in the marketing coverage to both domestic and international tourists. The Findings and recommendations of this study were disseminated in a half-day workshop held on the 26th March 2013 at Rainbow Towers, in Harare. The Workshop also provided an opportunity for the key stakeholders to interact and exchange views on ways to position the tourism industry on a sustainable growth.

ZEPARU is an autonomous economic policy analysis and research institution, established by the Government of Zimbabwe with financial assistance from the Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). ZEPARU undertakes research and capacity building activities that support evidence based policy making and implementation processes in Zimbabwe. This study was supported with funding and technical assistance from the USAID Strategic Economic Research and Analysis (SERA) Program.

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