

# **Opening Ceremony**

## **IORA Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Destination Management,**

**3 May 2017 @ 09 30hrs at Le Meridien Hotel**

**Mr Tenguh, Chair of IORA**

**Mr Manetsi, Vice Chair of IORA**

**H.E Mr Gede Ardhika, Member of the UNWTO World Committee  
on Tourism Ethics and Resource Person**

**Mrs Seewoorutun, Permanent Secretary of my ministry**

**Mr Dahlan, Director of the Indian Ocean Rim Association**

**Your Excellence's High Commissioner and Ambassadors and**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps**

**Distinguished Delegates from Member States**

**Chairperson of MTPA**

**Dr Bissessur, General Manager of Beach Authority**

**Mr Kwok from AHRIM**

**Senior Officials**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning,

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to Mauritius which likes to boast that it is the friendliest tourist destination in the Indian Ocean. I will say no more on this as I will expect you to explore and experience for yourselves whether that is really the case. I do hope that all arrangements we have made to make your stay enjoyable are to your satisfaction. If there are any shortcomings, please do let us know, as we want you to have a great time in Mauritius.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

You are aware that the IORA was formally launched at the first Ministerial Meeting in Mauritius on 6 March 1997. The organisation was formerly known as "Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation" (IOR-ARC).

IORA is also supported by seven dialogue partners, namely the United States of America, United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Egypt, France and China. There are also two observers in IORA, namely the Indian Ocean Tourism Organisation (IOTO) and Indian Ocean Research Group (IORG).

IORA's main objective is to improve the conditions for sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and all its members and to create a strong foundation for regional economic cooperation through trade facilitation and promoting linkages in their economies and services sectors.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Tourism is people to people diplomacy at its best. The theme of this meeting is Sustainable Tourism Destination Management. This is highly topical as this industry, if properly managed, has the capacity to eliminate poverty, create wealth and generate an infinite variety of employment. Tourism can make poverty history and this is why we must share experiences and best practices in

order to maximize the benefits. Tourism is an important tool in the realization of the SDGs. Modern means of transport, whether by air or by sea, have opened up incredible opportunities for the development of tourism and leisure.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) states that sustainable tourism development should 'meet the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future'. It should lead to 'the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems'. Mauritius supports the UNWTO policy as it sets the parameters for tourism to thrive in a sustainable way. I have perused the programme of this workshop and I am delighted that the speakers at this workshop will address among others, the following subjects:

- (i) Tourism ethics
- (ii) Key concepts, principles and best practices of sustainability

- (iii) Involvement of the Host Community in Tourism-A model from BALI.

I am sure that we shall learn from your deliberations and we can adopt the salient features in our planning and strategy for tourism.

This workshop comes at a time when there are lots of challenges, threats and opportunities facing the industry. This is why the objectives i.e :

- Promote the importance of sustainable tourism development in the destinations of the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) region;
- Enhance Member States' capacities for sustainable tourism through the sharing of best practices;
- Encourage sharing of knowledge and experience on sustainable tourism management in a destination;
- Encourage the development of capacity building programmes between Member States. These objectives are

within the realm of realism. Policy and decision makers will follow closely what will come out of this workshop.

## **Origins of Sustainable Tourism concept**

The World Summit on Sustainable Tourism held on 27 April 1995 in Lanzarote, Spain gave birth to the term and the concept of Sustainable Tourism. This brought a significant shift in the tourism industry to make it more responsible and responsive to the demand and expectations of society at large. Since then, major changes have occurred in today's world and in the travel and tourism industry. Tourism is always and will continue to be a work in progress. The quest by tourists for unique, authentic and unparalleled experiences is unstoppable.

The Charter for Sustainable Tourism, which was adopted at the 1<sup>st</sup> World Summit, stipulates that the resources on which tourism is based are fragile and that there is a growing demand for preserving and protecting the environment. It further recognises the need to develop a tourism that meets economic expectations and ecological requirements, and respects not only the social and

physical structure of destinations, but also local communities. The success of a tourism product depends on the active involvement of local communities which are its major stakeholders. Without their support, there will be tension, hostility towards foreigners and violence. They must be invited to participate in all tourism projects, from their inception to their implementation.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Allow me to give some figures. The forecast for tourism for the Indian Ocean is promising and the expected growth rate is just over 6 percent. Thailand will get the lion's share of this.

In 2015, the total tourist arrivals for IORA member states stood at almost 135 million, representing 1.12 % of world tourism arrivals. We are still far behind and our work is all the more difficult because our countries do not have the resilience of established destinations like Paris. Despite the repeated terrorist attacks in Paris, France still topped the list in tourist arrivals.

Travel & Tourism generated US \$7.2 trillion of global GDP. 1 in every 11 jobs worldwide is linked to tourism.

## **Mauritian Context**

Mauritius is recognized as an upmarket destination. Hotels are in the 4 and 5 star categories with focus on green tourism and specialized and innovative products.

However, the challenge to create further economic growth and employment has never been greater. Mauritius has experienced a direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP representing 7.5 % of total GDP in 2015, and is forecast to rise to 7.6% in 2016. Tourism remains an important source of employment. Presently, direct jobs in the tourism industry is estimated at 30,000 whilst indirect jobs generated are around 100,000. We have set up a Tourism Employees Welfare Fund.



Mauritius has the ambition to be:

- Sustainable in terms of quality environment;
- Sustainable in terms of creating a conducive environment for tourism enterprises to be profitable;
- Sustainable in terms of job creation; and
- Sustainable in terms of social acceptance by ensuring that the benefits of tourism trickle down to every single individual. Tourism must be owned by everyone as this sense of ownership will make tourism sustainable over the long term.

The sustainability of our destination remains one of the key priorities of the Government.

We endeavor to promote Green and eco-tourism as this is the wish of the millennials. For example, the glamping trend driven by the millennials' desire to seek out natural, more unique experiences without sacrificing comfort is being promoted.

Mauritius, with its high quality resorts, unique landscapes and nature-based offerings, world-class shopping malls and a friendly, tolerant and culturally diverse population, has so far been successful and has the potential to differentiate itself from other destinations in the region. We are conscious of the absolute necessity of consolidation and constant upscaling of our product. We are aware of the rise of competing destinations but we welcome it as it helps to keep us on the path of improvement.

We have an industry that keeps growing and we are targeting 1.5 million tourists in the next couple of years.

Since the tourism industry is global, we have a need to attract foreign talent and expertise when such talent or expertise is not available locally. While we welcome foreign expertise we are also committed to the policy of transfer of knowledge and skills to our local people. Training is inbuilt in our tourism industry. We also

believe that exchanges in capacity building are beneficial to the industry at large.

Tourism knows no boundaries and Mauritius is open for tourism business all year round. We are lucky to have a temperate climate in our coastal resorts which is constant throughout the year.

We have our tourists from traditional markets and we are fortunate to have many repeaters. We are keen in developing new markets and Asia and the Indian Ocean Rim countries. We must get to know each other better. There is so much that we can do together to develop that industry.

We keep Air access policy under review in order to transform Mauritius into a regional aviation and tourism hub. We have initiated an Air Corridor to link Asia to Africa via Mauritius. Our tourism industry will focus on Attractiveness, Accessibility, Visibility and Sustainability of the destination.

Unlike some Asian destinations, we are isolated in the Indian Ocean and we are far from countries with large populations. This makes the promotion of our country even more challenging. But what we have seen is that those who do come are fascinated by a country which is world in miniature with all major cultures, religions and ethnic groups living in peace, harmony and understanding.

Mauritius is a safe destination and we do everything we can to keep it safe.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Since tourism depends on security and stability let me reiterate that tourism and terrorism can never co-exist. At a time when there are tensions of an infinite variety in the world, and when people are talking about building walls to keep others away, tourism is the industry that brings down walls, and creates an environment where people with all their differences are made to feel wanted and welcome. Over and above its role as an industry tourism is a catalyst

for understanding and tolerance in the world. For this reason which transcends all manmade boundaries and human prejudices based on religion, culture and skin color, it is our sacred responsibility to keep nurturing and promoting tourism.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful deliberation.