

# PARLIAMENT OF KENYA

## THE SENATE

### THE HANSARD

**Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2018**

*The House met at the Senate Chamber,  
Parliament Buildings, at 2.30 p.m.*

*[The Speaker (Hon. Lusaka) in the Chair]*

#### IMPROVEMENT OF KENYA'S RANKING IN WORLD TRAVEL AND TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

**Sen. Olekina:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I beg to move the following Motion:-

THAT, AWARE that the Ministry of Tourism have developed and published the Kenya National Tourism Blueprint 2030 in May 2017;

FURTHER AWARE that Kenya Tourism Agenda 2018–2022, launched in April 2018, establishes the foundation for the National Tourism Blueprint 2030 and is the tool for initiating the components of the Blue Print;

ALSO AWARE that the contribution of travel and tourism to Kenyan GDP stood at 9.7 per cent in 2017, up from the 9.3 per cent previous year;

COGNIZANT that in the next 10 years every industry will be changed by technology;

ALSO AWARE that Kenya Tourism Board has partnered with *Google*, *Safaricom*, Kenya Wildlife Service and Tourism Finance Corporation to create new digital content for local tourism;

CONCERNED that Kenya tourism industry's potential is underutilized;

AWARE that Kenya's position in World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index Ranking is 80 out of 136 in 2017, having improved by 2 points from 2015, while having currently the lowest score in cultural resources and business travel with 1.6 points out of 7;

FURTHER CONCERNED that majority of the solutions proposed by the tourism agenda are brick and mortar type and not addressing the trends; noting that in less than two years, the share of

online booking globally has grown from 9 per cent to almost 33 per cent and the lucrative and fast-growing segment of business tourism;

ALSO CONCERNED that Kenya will continue to attract only beach and park type tourists ignoring the large number of conference and business travellers, who largely never leave Nairobi and are offered minimal exposure to Kenya;

NOW THEREFORE, the Senate calls upon the Ministry of Tourism to approach tourism sector with modern innovation and implement tangible, measurable and impactful solutions, resulting in improvement of Kenya's ranking in the World Economic Forum Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2019 by 6 positions and improve the lowest score of cultural resources and business travel by 1 point.

*[The Deputy Speaker (Sen. (Prof.) Kindiki) left the Chair]*

*[The Temporary Speaker (Sen. Nyamunga) in the Chair]*

Madam Temporary Speaker, if I pose the question to this House; how many tourists who love football visit Kenya? Someone might think this is a big question without an answer. However, this information is available.

All our tribes are endowed with a lot of heritage. As a Maasai, I pity other communities that do not take advantage of tourists who visit this country. There is location based data analytics which has been used worldwide to improve more resources in terms of the tourism sector. This is something which is underutilised in this country.

On Saturday, I travelled to South Africa. The moment I arrived, I received a text message welcoming me to South Africa and telling me how much I would spend making calls. That text gave me an opportunity to know what was there for me in South Africa. This morning I arrived at JKIA. Likewise, I received a text message from Safaricom welcoming me back to Kenya. This means that every tourist who comes into this country, whether they are going to participate in the Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), receives the same text.

Noting that, last year alone we had 1.6 million tourists who visited this country. Majority of them attended conferences and exhibitions here in Nairobi. Later on, some of them went to Mombasa, others to Maasai Mara and others to Isiolo. Those of us who have land and beaches are benefiting a lot. A good example is the one I have given you of South Africa. Even in their airport, you will see pictures of Kenyans. You will see a picture of a Maasai man, woman, or a Luo man playing drums.

However, we do not take advantage of this. This is because we are currently relying on old data. This data was collected last year. We cannot even tell whether the tourists who come here and they want to experience our culture are given an opportunity by the Ministry of Tourism to do so.

I brought this Motion because last year alone we had 1.6 million tourists who visited this country. I am sure the majority of them came in through these big companies that organise all the foreign travel in this country. Therefore, about 90 per cent of all the money they pay remains in London, UK, Germany, China and so on. Very little of it remains here.

We can improve the competitive index of the tourism sector in this country by tapping in the tourists who come to attend meetings, exhibitions and conferences. If they visit Nakuru, Taita Taveta, Narok, Isiolo and other towns and end up spending \$USA100 in a day; that will amount to \$USA16 million that will go directly to the communities. That will create more jobs. It will also ensure that we are sold worldwide as a place to go to.

Earlier on this year we travelled to Australia. When you go to Australia the only thing they can brag that they have a lot are the Kangaroos. However, the tourism department there took the next step to ensure that when you land there you are told of many things that you can experience.

Madam Temporary Speaker, it is important that we now think about these statistics that we take. We have tall towers in Nyando, Busia, Narok and many other places which can be used to sell what we have to tourists in their cell phones. We can take this analytic data and put it into good use. This is the only way we can address the issues of unemployment and poverty in these counties.

Madam Temporary Speaker, one of the things I feel sorry about is that every Tuesday or Thursday, we have the Maasai Market at the Junction Mall, the Village Market and in these affluent neighbourhoods. When you go there, you will find people selling beadwork, yet they are not really benefitting. These tourists could do more; they can go to a village, Kibera or to Kajiado, down the road and participate in sports or in community development work where they can leave more money for our people.

It is imperative that the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife comes up with a way of engaging these companies that deal with location-based data analytics to ensure that we find out the number of tourists – particularly French women between the ages of 17 and 30 years – who visited Kenya last year and where they went to. This data is available and it can help us to sell more and also reach out to our customers. For us in this economy – which some consider a developing or a middle income economy – we need to use technology to reach out to everyone who comes here.

Madam Temporary Speaker, there is a company called “Reach-U” which I have done some Google search on. This company can even take county government spatial plans, for instance for Isiolo, and ask about the number of national parks we have there. We have tourists and people in places such as America, who may never afford to get into a plane and come to Nairobi. However, after being given that virtual reality tour of Isiolo County and its game parks, they pay. Going online is everything. I know of young men who make millions and millions of shillings using the internet. Our children are on the internet.

Let us now engage the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife in an exercise where they can now start tapping into our rich culture. For example, the Kikuyu, Somali, Luo and Luhya cultures are rich. The Maasai culture is very rich because it is the one that we have benefited from immensely. However, I am not saying that these other cultures cannot also be very rich. There is probably something that I do not know about the Luo culture. However, if we engage to know the activities that can be carried out in those respective areas, we will then move from having tourists just come and spend billions here in Nairobi. This is because all they do is to go to these big hotels, most of which are owned by chains and, therefore, the money generated from tourists just keeps going abroad. We, therefore, need to bring back the money.

Madam Temporary Speaker, when one travels and reads a lot about Kenya, even the tourists who talk about Kenya tell you that it is one of the best places to go to; and it is very wrong if we do not take advantage of that. Let us tap into their cell phones – I am not saying that we listen in on their conversations – but let us see, using this data, what activities bring them into this country. We should not only be known because of athletics and the Maasai Mara Game Reserve, although I want more tourists to come. However, this country will develop more when we are able to diversify most of our tourism incentives and activities.

Madam Temporary Speaker, the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife can also venture into promotions by partnering with companies such as Google and Safaricom, such that when a tourist lands, they can be told that there is Loiyangalani. In fact, very few of us, Kenyans, travel around the country. Therefore, utilising these statistics and ensuring that it is current will also help locals to travel, not only to Mombasa.

I am sure that during Christmas, everyone heads to Mombasa. However, we can also tour somewhere in Lake Turkana or in Taita, where we have the Mzima Springs. These can bring in certain attractions and help people build their richness in visiting and opening up their minds. Therefore, the pillar of place and how location intelligence reveals opportunity is really big when we rely on data.

Madam Temporary Speaker, I beg to Move and request Sen. Dullo to Second.

because we have not done search engine optimization of what our country has to offer the world.

Madam Temporary Speaker, I support this Motion. Since we are a world that is now driven by data information, we want the Ministry of Tourism, not to try and do the same thing the same old way as it has always been done, but actually redesign our approach to tourism. I hope that this will be the last time I will talk about it, because the Government is now treating our rugby team better. They once removed the Brand Kenya logo from their kits and said that they could not sponsor them anymore. They need to realize that the most beautiful thing about our country is the people, and that is what people love when they come here. Anyone out there who has come to Kenya will tell you that Kenya is the warmest country with most hospitable people that you will ever find. Let us get creative about our tourism and our people.

Madam Temporary Speaker, let us talk about urban tourism. I am not talking about taking tourists to Kibera and telling them about the projects that we are doing that need funding. They need to understand the culture and the lifestyle of a country with more than 43 communities. This is a country where you can move, on the same day, from the most beautiful sandy beaches to the most exotic forest in Kakamega. You can then move to Maasai Mara; see the big four animals and come to Nairobi and see the *matatu* culture, the arts and music at the Kenya National Theatre. They can see all of these in one country. They can also go to Turkana and see where their ancestors came from. It is a beautiful country.

I am glad that we have people like Mr. Mucheru, who worked with Google, and other young people who are innovative. The Ministry can tell these young people to give them their ideas on how we can integrate technology and tourism in our country. They can create hacker spaces. If we put them together, give them facilities and the equipment that they require, they will come up with amazing tools and innovations.

Madam Temporary Speaker, I was in a place called Palo Alto, in San Francisco; what they call the Silicon Valley. I told them that I am from the Silicon Savanna – Kenya. They asked me: “Why is it that the kind of innovation that comes from Kenya is much better than what comes out of their country? I told them that the world has changed, but the tools are the same. The computer used in New York or San Francisco, is the same as the one being used in Narok by a young boy. We have internet but our needs are different. Necessity being the mother of invention, the kind of innovation that we are coming up with in this part of the world is world changing. Let us now channel it to be innovation that will raise the flag of our country and take our tourism numbers high.

I hope that the Committee on Tourism, Trade and Industrialization will interact with this Motion. They should stop accepting the mediocrity of being told that we want to get 2 million visitors, while Turkey got 42 million visitors in 2014. In fact, when they had issues to do with security and there was a slump, at their very worst, they had 25 million visitors. Surely, there is something that we are not doing.

Madam Temporary Speaker, with that, I second.

*(Question proposed)*

**Sen. Olekina:** Yes, Madam Temporary Speaker.

**The Temporary Speaker** (Sen. Nyamunga): Please, go ahead.

**Sen. Olekina:** Thank you, Madam Temporary Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank all the Senators who have contributed immensely to this Motion, which is important. I am quite impressed with the issues raised by Sen. Sakaja. It reminds us that in this country we have got a lot of talent that is mostly untapped. We have got hubs which can help us understand and increase our tourism revenue.

I can put one on one together from what Sen. Omogeni has said. The biggest question that the tourism sector should also be asking is: What happens to a tourist when he or she lands in Kenya? Should we come up with strategies in tourism based on only arrivals and departures? We need to ask about where that tourist goes when they leave the airport.

We would not be having a lot of problems when it comes to issues of immigration in this country if we relied heavily on location based data, which is very important. As Sen. Sakaja said, when the tourists come into the country, it is imperative that we go an extra step and take advantage. With this data, it behoves us and more so, the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, which I now hope will be able to do that--- When a tourist gets into this country and he or she wants to go to a particular place, they can search for the place on their phone and locate it. If there is a new tourism route, they should also be able to be directed to it.

I would like to thank Sen. (Dr.) Zani for contributing heavily on these issues. One of the most important things she spoke about is the need to show people our country. When you travel to London, the first thing you will see all over is the bus tour which Sen. (Dr.) Zani spoke about. That bus tour shows people what is available to be seen in London. There is the London Bridge and other places that you can travel to. As Sen. Sakaja said, we have more in this country than just relying on buildings and so on. It is

important for even the county governments to do a skills audit of what they have. This will ensure that they sell their counties properly and attract tourists.

As I mentioned earlier on, I came back from South Africa this morning. While there, I got a chance to be hosted by a very good company called Best Friends. We are sourcing the fence for Mau Forest. One of the places that I visited in South Africa is an eco lodge and spa called Lambana. It is built in a mountain that is rocky. They do not have the animals that we have in that place. As my dear sister, Sen. Halake has said, when you go to some parts of this world, particularly where they are making a lot of money from tourism, like the Kruger National Park that she spoke about, it is a big zoo. Here, we have animals. At the Tembo Eco Hotel and Spa, they have a lot of activities and facilities for tourists. They even hold weddings and people come from Italy and other countries.

**The Temporary Speaker** (Sen. Nyamunga): Order! Sen. Olekina, you will have a balance of 10 minutes to conclude the reply.

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Temporary Speaker** (Sen. Nyamunga): Hon. Senators, it is now 6.30 p.m., time to interrupt the business of the House. The Senate, therefore, stands adjourned until Thursday, 11th October, 2018, at 2.30 pm.

The Senate rose at 6.30 pm