

Press release

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Tourism underestimated tool for development

Barbados- Tourism is an underestimated tool for development. Development cooperation programs only rarely make the most of the opportunities offered by tourism. The EU itself has not developed a common policy on tourism which makes it difficult to integrate tourism in the implementation of the Cotonou partnership agreement. This concludes Boyce Sebetela MP from Botswana and Hans-Peter Mayer (MEP) in their report on tourism and development which was debated today in the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) today.

Hans-Peter Mayer MEP said: "It is clear that tourism is a huge factor in economic growth and the alleviation of poverty. It is actually considered by many observers as the most effective economic contributor to developing countries. And we have a world to win. According to the UN World Tourism Organization Sub-Saharan Africa collects only 2% of the 660 billion worth global tourism industry."

According to the rapporteurs tourism is labour-intensive, has high female employment ratios and isn't necessarily import intensive, whereas it has low barriers to entry, encompassing all types and dimensions of enterprises and provides opportunities for downstream economic linkages in the local economy, so allowing the poor to gain opportunities for un-skilled and semi-skilled employment. Furthermore tourism can boost infrastructure projects and the areas of transport, energy, communications technologies, housing, sanitation or health and hygiene.

Mr. Boyce Sebetela MP said: "Tourism must not be seen as something hostile to the environment but as the environment's ally, since its profitability is conditional on the preservation of the environment and the heritage."

In order to counter bad side effects the report calls on governments to incorporate the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism in their national law. The European Commission must also restore the budget line "combating child sex tourism in third countries". Tour operators are urged to cooperate with the authorities in identifying potential criminal activity and raise their client's awareness and inform them of the legal risks of sex tourism."-ends-

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The JPA brings together 103 states (25 EU-Member-States and the 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific States which are signatories of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, all together more than half of the states of the world. The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly is the only international assembly where the representatives of different countries meet with the sole aim of promoting North-South co-operation. The plenary sessions are held twice a year, alternating between an EU Member State and an ACP country.