



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Fifth Africa-Asia Business Forum calls for opening up Asian markets to Africa**

**Kampala, 17 June 2009:** The fifth Africa-Asia Business Forum (AABF V) ended here today with a call to public and private sector representatives and civil society organizations to seize the opportunity of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa to open up Asian markets to Africa, brand Africa's unique and rich heritage and cooperate in the implementation of a continent-wide tourism development strategy.

In policy recommendations made after two days of deliberations of AABF V, which was held under the theme of "*Forging Business Linkages for Sustainable Tourism Development in Africa*", participants said there was a need for Asia, particularly Japan, to revise advisories issued against travel to Africa, facilitate direct contact between Japan and Africa.

Closing the policy dialogue, Serapio Rukundo, State Minister for Tourism said Uganda and Africa in general has a huge potential for tourism that should be tapped to reduce poverty in the continent. "Tourism is an untapped resource that we should exploit to achieve the Millennium Development Goals."

Seiko Hashimoto, Japan's State Secretary for Foreign Affairs said in Kampala, "Africa still remains a distant land to many people in Asia. In some cases the negative image caused by lack of information prejudices Asians against Africa. There is a need, therefore to publicize the real situation of Africa including its diverse and wonderful tourism attractions and vibrant growth in recent years."

The Forum attracted over 330 participants from 33 countries in Africa and Asia, representing business, government, international organizations, civil society and the media. The Forum examined strategic directions and prospects to foster partnership building and technology transfer in tourism-related industries, attract more Asian and Japanese tourists to Africa and generate a boost in investments for the promotion of tourism on the continent.

Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Africa, and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States said it was remarkable that the Forum brought together people from governments, business, and development partners. "The fruition of the

recommendations by the forum will now be dependent on how the actions are followed up by the governments and business actors.”

The three-day event, held at the Speke Resort and Conference Centre in Munyonyo, was designed to foster an interactive policy dialogue between private and public institutions and face-to-face negotiations in partnership building between representatives of African and Asian Small and medium-sized enterprises. The State Minister for Tourism presided over the signing ceremony of the Memoranda of Understanding. AABF V included four thematic pillars: an overview of the tourism industry in Africa; public-private partnerships; product development and marketing of flourishing African destinations to Asian tourists and investors; and pro-poor sustainable tourism development.

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