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Greetings!

Tourism Sector Adapting to Climate Change Impacts

This week Kenya is hosting the first ever African Climate Week 2018, the meeting which is at the United Nation complex brings together climate change experts from around the continent to discuss ways in which Africa can adapt to climate change. This meeting will help in supporting the implementation of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and climate action to deliver on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the side events during the African Climate Week is the 10th African Carbon Forum. The forum will focus on bringing government and non-government actors to discuss on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to be adopted which will strengthen key sectors such as energy, agriculture and human settlements.

Correlation between climate change and tourism

The effects of climate change are causing changes in the ecosystems and natural resources needed to sustain the tourism industry. Climate change impacts that affect tourism include: beach erosion, saline intrusion, droughts, flash floods and landslides, coral-reef bleaching, and agricultural systems, rising sea levels, flooding, desertification, erosion and health-related problems.

According to a UNESCO report "World Heritage And Tourism In A Changing Climate" Kenya's 6 heritage sites risk being permanently changed or degraded due to the impact of climate change, most of these affected heritage sites serve as some of the major tourist attractions in Kenya and the world at large.

Some of the adaptation and mitigation strategies that can be implemented in the tourism sector include:

1) **Reducing greenhouse gas emissions**: Your tourism business has numerous opportunities to reduce greenhouse gases in the following ways;

- If you are operating a tourism facility you should monitor energy consumption through daily meter recordings and analyze the energy records based on bed capacity. These will enable you to come up with conservation targets.
- Install energy-efficient lighting.
- If you are operating tourism hotel enterprise you should ensure that electric devices used in guest rooms, kitchen, laundry, etc. are energy efficient.
- Use renewable energy sources (solar energy, biogas, wind energy, etc.)
- Consider investing in water-conservation innovations such as rainwater harvesting techniques
- Enforcing solid-waste recycling policies that embody the three Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle)
- Use of fuel-efficient cars by tour operators, hotels and resorts

2) Ensure that buildings are constructed on higher grounds to prevent damage from storm upsurge/floods and sea level rise. Setting up evacuation plans and ensuring workers are trained. Employing measures, such as effective ventilation and appropriate roofing, to reduce temperature in buildings.

3) It is important to inform and engage staff on the environmental initiatives in your business. The information should include issues of environmental management (water, energy, waste, etc.). The staff will not only be informed about the environmental initiatives, but also have the possibility to contribute with ideas and suggestions.

4) The information on impacts of climate change should be available in the guest room information folders. It is important guests are informed on the environmental undertakings in your facility Besides informing about the environmental undertakings, it is also important that the establishment adds information about how the guests can be involved and actively participate in the environmental initiatives of the establishment.

5) Consider engaging in tree planting initiatives since they play a vital role in reducing the amount of CO_2 in the atmosphere. This initiative can also include collaborating with the surrounding communities and also encouraging the guests to plant trees.

It is very important that the tourism industry adapts to impending climate change impacts to promote and sustain growth. To undertake this task, the government must formulate policies, which would ensure that the tourism sector remains sustainable. With the formulation of mitigation and adaptation strategies and the appropriate policies in place, the tourism industry can play a key role in dealing with climate change and encouraging sustainable growth in the sector.