



THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

TOURISM POLICY

Contents

PART ONE:.....	3
I. NATIONAL PROFILE	3
1. Geography:.....	3
2. The Economy:.....	3
3. Demography Consequently:.....	3
4. Political Framework:	4
5. Bi-Lateral & Multi-Lateral Co-operation:	4
II. PRESENT SITUATION	6
III. THE NEW VISION FOR TOURSM DEVELOPMENT:	7
IV. MISSION STATEMENT:	9
PART TWO:.....	11
SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE TOURISM SITUA TION	11
1. Constraints:	11
2. Attractions:.....	16
PART THREE:.....	19
I. RATIONALE FOR A TOURISM POLICY	19
II. NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY: OBJECTIVES & T ARGETS	20
1. Policy Objectives:	20
2. Policy Targets:	23
PART FOUR.....	25
STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOURISM POLICY.....	25
1. Legislation Review:.....	25
2. Classification of Hotels and Quality Control:	27
3. Tourist Security and Travel Formalities:	28
4. Human Resources Development:	29
5. Strengthening of Tourism Administrative and Institutional Framework.....	30
6. Management and Utilization of the Tourism Development Area	31
8. Maximization of the Economic Returns of Tourism.....	33
9. Minimizing the Negative Effects of Tourism	35
10. Diversification with Alternative Forms of Tourism	36

PART ONE:

I. NATIONAL PROFILE

1. Geography: The Gambia is a small country located on the western coast of Africa with an estimated total land area of 11,295 square kilometers. On its northern, southern as well as eastern fronts it's completely bounded by the sister Republic of Senegal while on its western front it is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean. The country conforms to a narrow strip of land stretching from the coastal end to about 400 kilometers in land varying its width from about 50km on the coastal front to less than 35km inland. The river Gambia, which runs entirely right through the country there by splitting in to two halves, has over the years typified as one of the most navigable waterways in Africa.

Lying within the Sahelian zone, its climate is characterized by a long dry season running from November to June and a short raining season extending from June to October. The Gambia's population has been estimated at just over one million inhabitants (1993 census) with approximately 80% residing in the rural areas. The average population growth rate stands at approximately 3.5% per annum.

2. The Economy: Agriculture, which, since the onset of independence in 1965 has been the main source of local trade and national foreign exchange earnings, tends to be mono-culturally focused on groundnut production, whose economic benefit is determined by vagaries of exogenous market forces over which the nation has little or no control. Efforts in the late 1980's to diversify the fragile economic base with cotton, vegetables, livestock and lately tourism have also been vitiated by local organizational and political sensitivity to external influences. At present The Gambia range among the poorest in the world with a capita income of US \$302.

3. Demography Consequently: The Gambia's ability to adequately address the social needs of its rapidly growing population is constrained. The gravity of this can be adduced to the fact that The Gambia's inhabitants have increased steadily from 493,499 in 1973 to 687,817 in 1983, to 1,025,867 in 1993, indicating an annual growth rate of 3.4 percent between 1973 and 1983, raising to 4.1% from 1983 to 1993 with a spurt in fertility rate of 6.4 percent, which is among the highest in West Africa. {Source: Population and Housing Censuses, 1993 provisional report}

These escalating demographic trends have been and are aggravated by an unabated influx of migrants (1.2% in 1993) fleeing political instability or economic austerity in the sub-region. (Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, etc), thus unleashing enormous pressures on scarce essential social services and development resources such as school places, medicines, transportation, accommodation, employment, food and water supply.

4. Political Framework: The Gambia attained independence from British colonial rule in February 1965 and acceded to Republican status in April 1970. As a result of its political origins, The Gambia inherited a system of parliamentary democracy and provincial administration which were institutionalized for nearly three decades, until they were replaced by military rule in July 1994.

Regional Commissioners are responsible for administering the five Divisions (Western, Lower River, North Bank, MacCarthy Island and Upper River) and two Municipalities (Banjul and Kanifing). Each Division is sub-divided into 38 Divisions headed by Chiefs (Seyfolu) under whom are subordinated village Headmen (Alkalolu).

5. Bi-Lateral & Multi-Lateral Co-operation: The Gambia has maintained, over the years, friendly relations with several countries, international organizations and donor institutions: principal among these the E.U countries. The United States of America, the Commonwealth countries, the OAU states, Japan, the Republic of China and the Islamic Countries, between government and the private sector for development of the tourism industry in The Gambia. The need was also felt to better understand and quantify the characteristics and requirements of the budding industry in order to formulate guidelines and mobilize counterpart funding, from which emerged the conceptualization of a Tourism Development Area and its infrastructure.

It was within this quasi-formal, evolutionary environment that the idea to set up a Ministry of Tourism was floated in 1972 and subsequently launched in 1974. Government's intention for this new institution was to provide a top-level national policy formulation, Planning and administrative framework to give a well-ordered direction to tourism development. Its main goal was to minimize the benefits that accrue there from to the nation while at the same time, assuring its clients of a quality product, safe relaxation and cultural exchanges.

Although this infant Ministry was progressively attaining these objectives in the 1980s and early 1990s in the area of guidelines design and co-ordination, the policy-making dimension was not fully addressed with concrete, tangible results, up to the mid-1990s. Nevertheless, the government was enabled through the Ministry's planning, advice and mediation to assume a greater share in the ownership (51%) of certain hotels (e.g. the Atlantic); invest more in commercial facilities for ancillary tourism-oriented trades (like the Craft Market, Tourism Development Area access roads and water supply etc.) and in image/destination marketing or promotion overseas.

Tourism has been and still is the fastest growing sector of The Gambian economy both in terms of tourist arrivals, infrastructural development and its overall contribution to our national development efforts. What began in a modest way in 1965 with 300 Scandinavian tourists in 200 hotel beds became so successful that by 1970; existing facilities became overstretched creating a need for better basic infrastructure.

Scandinavia was The Gambia's traditional tourist supply market with tourist coming mainly during the cold winter months of November to April. The Scandinavians formed the majority of visitors up to 59.04% in 1975 (17,254 tourists). They were however outnumbered in 1985 by the British who did not only come during winter but also during the summer. Their figures rose sharply from a mere 362 tourist in 1975 to 6,645 in 1980 and to a record 23,742 in 1985, a giant leap within a 10-year period. Due to the restricted hotel bed capacity in the country, the Scandinavian figures dropped proportionately from 17,254 in 1975 to 10,645 in 1980 and 9,248 in 1985. What was lost from the Scandinavian market was somewhat regained with the arrival of 534 Germans in 1975 which figure rose sharply in 1980 to an all time record of 8,506 tourist. This unexpected but welcome increase led to a serious shortage of hotel beds in The Gambia.

The over-bookings of that and the following year resulted in the pullout of the then main German Tour Operators HETZEL and TUI leaving only Neckermann, Jet Reisen, Kreutzer and ITS Reisen, which together brought 2,106, German in 1985.

Other nationalities were also competing for the friendliness of The Gambian people and the clean beaches. Prominent among them were the French who started coming in significant numbers

with the commencement of the charter flights by Uniclam in 1985 (4,330 tourists). Thereafter up to the termination of their flights in 1992. Unicalm brought in approximately 4,000 French tourists annually.

Others such as the Italians (who came with Franco Rosso Incentive Tours) during the mid 80s the Swiss, the Austrians, the Belgians, the Dutch and Americans also came, though in small numbers, and only during the traditional winter months, November- April.

II. PRESENT SITUATION

Currently and for the past six years (1990-1996) except for the interruption by the British Travel Advice in 1994, the tourism business in The Gambia has experienced tremendous expansion and development in all its sectors. With the opening of the first Five Star Hotel, The Kairaba Beach in 1990 and the refurbishment of Kombo Beach Novotel, The Atlantic and Senegambia Beach Hotels. The Gambia's overall tourism product was given a face-lift and a new lease of life. In addition, the privately Gambian owned Cape Point Hotel has improved its facilities and expanded its capacity from 20 to 84 beds. Tendaba Camp, Jangjanbureh Camp, Kemoto and Dream Bird Lodge helped in opening up-country tourism.

From 1990 to 1993, the British market totally dominated that tourism scene in the accounting for visitor arrivals up to 60,000 or 60% (1993/94), 18,000 in 1994/95 despite the TRAVEL advice and 25,000 in the 1995/96-tourism year. The impressive figures of the preceding years (57.02% in 1990, 60% in 1991 and 655 in 1992), were the result of intensive marketing and promotional efforts of the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with our partners in the Travel Industry. This was no easy task especially in the absence of adequate material and financial resources.

As the infra-and superstructural facilities in the Gambia continued to develop and the tourist arrivals from the United Kingdom increased, the Ministry embarked on a new promotional drive in some of the main supply markets in Europe. Scandinavia and Germany, who had begun to go down in the later 1980's, were revived in 1990 with 9,619 tourists from Scandinavia and 4,322 from Germany. Tour operators such as vinegressor, Spies, Hetzel, TUI and Neckermann increased their hotel allocations and a second charter flight was introduced from Germany.

The diversification programme of the Ministry began to bear fruits in the 1993/94 season when a new charter operator from Holland, Aquasum, commenced its flights to the Gambia, initially bringing 216 tourists on a weekly flight which was later increased to two flights a week. With Aquasum Holland which was later joined by Aquasun Belgium and Globas Vakanties and quite recently by Olympia and Sunair, the Benelux market was opened for the first time for charter traffic to The Gambia.

The success of this market was beyond all expectations for, within the first 18 months of activity, it produced over 14,500 tourists, an all time record for any market in the past 30 years of Gambia's tourism. High portions of the tourist to the Gambia are repeaters. The average is between 25% and 30% of British and 40% for Scandinavians.

Total out of pocket expenditure for air charter tourists alone for the 1994/95 Tourism Year (October 1994- October 1995) was estimated at D164 million compared with D342 million for 1993/94 just before the change of Government. The industry's contribution to GDP is 12% and provides direct and indirect employment for over 10,000 Gambians.

The Government institutional framework for management of activities in the Gambia's tourism industry is currently embodied in the Ministry of Tourism. The Ministry guides policies, whilst its tourism comprising the Directorate, Development and Marketing sections, the Hotel Division, Training School and Tourist Bureau facilities, Promote, Monitor and regulate activities in the industry.

III. THE NEW VISION FOR TOURSM DEVELOPMENT:

The main thrust of tourism development during the 1995-2000 periods and beyond will be governed by strategic planning to attain revival, enhance promotion and ensure sustainable people-centered and environment-friendly development of the industry. It seeks to correct organizational imbalances by according priority to national interests in partnership with international tour operators. The policy style will be development oriented which will ensure that quantitative growth is underpinned by qualitative development.

The approach will be pro-active and constructive, building a bridgehead between the lessons learnt from experimentation of the past and strategies to consolidate present gain and refine the tourism product in the future. Its objectives will be strategic-planning-based and results-oriented. An integrated, multi-sectoral approach that is reposed on dialogue and frequent consultations with different tourism-associated actors and development partners will be fostered. This envisages will facilitate more effective co-ordination and mobilization of local and donor resources for the sector's advancement. The policy will contain an inherent crisis-management and disaster-control component, with adequate contingency mechanisms and strategies for redress to ensure revival. The scope of the policy and concomitant Action Plan will be holistic, embracing broad parameters for planning, monitoring and evaluating, accruing benefits and socio-economic impact of the outcomes of the policy objectives. The five-year cycle of the Policy will be subjected to mid-term and terminal reviews in order to ascertain its efficacy, identify unforeseen bottlenecks, map out corrective interventions and prepare for the ensuing planning circle.

The policy will utilize its multi-disciplinary ramifications to establish joint ventures with other sectors, touching on the health, educational, youth, recreational, security, employment, entrepreneurial and financial aspects that are associated with tourism. This domestic collaboration will maximize and accord practical manifestation to local political will and commitment for making tourism truly development-supportive and beneficial to all the national players who interact with the industry.

Thought and energy will be devoted to safeguarding the individual security of tourists on the one hand and exploring effective ways of establishing cultural interaction between them and the local population on the other, while exerting vigilance and counseling to minimize any negative effects.

An enabling environment will be provided to attract more and higher spending local and foreign investors to the tourism sector. Appropriate legislation and reinvestment inputs will be among the envisioned modalities in this regard.

Improved Human Resources Development Plans will be designed, backed by information flow-enhancing databases. This will facilitate a more efficient and adequate supply of expertise for maintenance of quality standards within the tourism industry, especially in top and middle-management echelons. As part of the process to increase Gambianization in the top and middle level echelons of our hotel industry, and to prevent unfair trading practices by some of the ground tour operators and equipment hirers, the licensing procedures should be tightened to keep out ill-equipped and unqualified foreign operators. Gambians will be encouraged as much as possible to set up ground tour Companies but this will be based strictly on their fulfillment of the stipulated conditions.

Efforts will be focused on further improving infrastructural quality, through the mandatory introduction of nationally determined classification standards and expansion of tourism activities in the country.

IV. MISSION STATEMENT:

The Mission of the Tourism Sector is to provide a diversified, quality product (sports & recreational facilities, eco-tourism, river cruises etc.) and to shift emphasis from the mass charter tourism to the sale and attraction of high- spending individual travelers, and special interest groups.

It seeks to diversify the national economic base and industrial development. Consequently, the aim is to maximize the financial and other allied economic contributions of tourism, to encourage the increase of the industry's contribution to national Gross Domestic Product, create employment and strengthen entrepreneurial out-put in the informal sector.

The principal goal of the Ministry of Tourism is to maximize the economic and social benefits that are derived from the totality of the tourism industry by the different categories of Gambian service and skill providers. Its complementary aim is to foster an organizational and economic environment in which foreign investors, managers and tourists can operate within a conducive framework of equitable partnership with their Gambian counterparts.

In fulfillment of the Ministry of Tourism's mandates, policy directions, strategic planning, programme monitoring and evaluation, leadership is provided in order to steer and co-ordinate both the national and foreign concerns of the tourism industry. Human, financial and other material resources will be mobilized in adequate proportions to enhance the tourism service delivery and infrastructural development capacities of its affiliated institutions and the Ministry.

Innovative measures will be designed to diversify the scope and content of the tourism product in order to enhance its attractiveness to clients as well as its potentiality to create employment and generate revenue for accelerating national sustainable development. Concerted efforts are being exerted to strengthen the institutional framework for tourism development. In this regard, appropriate linkages are being established between product development, external marketing, Management, quality control and ancillary service provision. Promotional drives to identify new and more lucrative tourist source markets will be intensified overseas. The comparative advantages of The Gambia as a tourist destination will be fully exploited and harnessed, through refurbishment and expansion of the Tourism Development Area and its services.

Of vital importance to the development of the tourism sector are the existing Traditions of multi-disciplinary co-operation with other public sector and private enterprise agencies. This mission to open up dialogue and technical collaboration with other tourism-associated institutions will be maintained.

PART TWO:

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE TOURISM SITUATION

The historical and situational forces governing the tourism sector during the past thirty' years, which have been outlined in the preceding sections, have identified inherent weaknesses and problems. They relate, inter alia, to the following: -

1. Constraints:

1.1 Fast Quantitative Growth with Slow Qualitative Development: The fact that euro-centric demands and tastes drove the emergence of tourism in The Gambia meant that both the Gambian Government and people were unprepared for it. Consequently, the national authorities and business agencies welcomed the nascent industry with reactive, ad hoc arrangements rather than pro-active strategic planning and policy formulation.

As tourist numbers rose, provision of more accommodation space in the form of hotels was therefore the main development objective, with the "Sun and Beach" components being deemed natural phenomena that required no special qualitative improvements. Furthermore, tourism supports service providers were not corporately organized to derive maximum economic benefits. Individual employment tenure and business returns remained haphazard. State revenue generated by the industry was scattered diffused into the coffers of non-tourism sectors like the Ministries of Finance and Local Government, without ploughing back a commensurate proportion into the tourism industry.

Also, the seasonal orientation and uni-focal character of the source market of tourists, during the first two decades, rendered tourism evolution in The Gambia, unsystematized. This made it difficult for it to be treated as an "industry", as opposed to a growing "micro enterprise", with its own type -specific developmental needs and quality control standards.

From efforts to diversify the origin and category of tourists and create greater client-tour operator- government dialogue in the late 1980's and early 1990's has accrued greater sensitivity to the need for enhancing quality standards of tourism services, infrastructure and human resources. This is being achieved through projects to improve the road-network, water and

electricity supplies within the Tourism Area, horticultural production and training of hotel workers.

In spite of these remedial interventions there are still areas, which are suffering from decline, owing to the persistent strain caused by the demand for more space by the growing tourist influx. One such example is the International Airport at Yundum, which has responded by runway extensions and providing make-shift departure lounge space by encroaching into and imposing an entry ban on the area that was originally designated as a waiting and baggage processing zone for the general public. Thus Gambian escorts are crowded out and marginalized because of passengers. Signs of structural dilapidation or inadequacy, passenger congestion and inappropriate check-in/check-out facilities are very evident and constitute a qualitative constraint which, it is hoped, will be rectified with the completion of the new airport building.

Another aspect of the quest for quality in the face of the threat of quantity is the failure to establish nationally designed and determined criteria for hotel classification that are mandatory and universally applicable. There is a need for this to be done in anticipation of plans to capture higher spending tourists, in future.

While it would be economically undesirable to slow down the pace of Growth in the tourism sector, with its propensity for volume boom, profit spurts and increased contributions to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it would be imprudent to foster accelerated growth without development, or development that is not "people friendly" to the socio-economic interest of the Gambian nation. The proposed policy should therefore seek to create the required balance.

1.2 Maximizing Economic Returns to the Tourism sector: The "package tour" mode of tourism financing, since the beginning continues to impose economic disequilibrium in the share ratio of benefits that are enjoyed by foreign investors and hotel operators on the one hand and local service and suppliers, entrepreneurs and Government, on the other.

The old joke is now proverbial about tourists who travel to The Gambia with no extra pocket money (to supplement the deposits paid before their departure to tour operators in Europe) with which to make local purchases of drinks, curios, entertainment, taxi fares and sometimes even the non-inclusive lunch or dinner at their hotels. Package rates for hotel beds (£ 10 - £11

Sterling or D150 -D165) were also said to be among the lowest in the African region, until very recent bed tariff increases. As a result although a sizeable income was being created within the tourism sector, only a modest proportion was trickling down to Gambians.

Undoubtedly, tourism has chalked up the fastest annual growth rate of 5% and its 12% contribution to GDP is no mean achievement and a source of much needed development capital by government. As a prime earner of foreign exchange, the industry) has helped the state to weather its balance payments crises during the period of economic austerity under Structural Adjustment and contributed to the relative euphoric recovery which has inspired the Programme for Sustained Development (PSD) between 1985 and 1991.

Additionally, by opening up avenues for unskilled, artisanal and middle- level employment) involving 10% of the labor force the tourism sector has facilitated the amelioration of the earning capacities and by extension, the style of life of an appreciable number of households in the peri-urban centers, adjacent to the Tourism Development Area. This could ramify further when the industry is diversified with all-year-round cultural, inland, domestic and eco-tourism, in the future- Work in this sector is fraught a major weakness- insecurity of tenure! Its seasonal duration (cool dry season, November to April) would have been ideal as an "off-farming" supplementary employment source, had the TDA been extended to the rural areas.

Nevertheless, the fragility of the industry because of its susceptibility to negative publicity, political changes and the shocks of unpredictable external market forces, make over-dependence on tourism as the principal source of foreign exchange earnings employment) and domestic revenue somewhat precarious. Diversification of the national economic base \\lith "home-spun", sustainable alternatives to supplement income from cash crop cultivation, is rendered an economic development alternative.

Other prevailing economic implications relate to foreign exchange Leakages, such as: the repatriation of investment earnings and emoluments of expatriate staff, who predominate in the high-income management cadres; purchase of domestic commodities and other supplies by hotel operators, while neglecting local producers and enterprises. Ways of arresting this persistent trend will be defined in the policy.

Many of the existing revenue collection laws were passed before the tourism sector found its operational depth. As a result the funds that are paid by operators in the industry in the form of rates, taxes and service fees are paid directly into the coffers of local authorities or the Central Treasury.

These scattered monies need to be quantified, collected and administered under the unified control of the Ministry of Tourism. This is a vital pre-requisite to facilitate the sector's advocacy for the 'ploughing back' or reinvestment of a percentage of the sector's funds into the development of the industry. This would serve to speed up the "growth with development process", which is a moral, equitable entitlement of a sector that generates so much income and a high contribution to GDP.

1.3 Legal Framework: Many of the pieces of legislation which govern the operations of the tourism sector preceded the emergence of the industry as a discreet nation activity. They are mainly concerned with Local Government rates, Ministry of Finance taxes, Ministry of Justice Licensing procedures, which are administered by these Agencies. As a result these laws are not tourism-centered enough. Some of them are archaic or rendered obsolete exigencies and changes of modern times. There is need therefore to repeal, amend or replace existing legislation and promulgate new laws that transfer authority or mandates, empowering the Ministry of Tourism and its relevant Agencies to effectively administer and co-ordinate the tourist industry.

1.4 Institutional and Human Resource Weaknesses: Institutional weakness in the tourism sector exists at three levels: - Ministerial, Technical and Inter-sectoral. The Ministry of Tourism needs to pro-actively embark on preparatory consultation with its peers in Government (Finance, Legal Affairs, Local Government, Trade & Employment, Youth & Sports, etc) as well as its collaborators in the Industry to formulate new legislation, regulations, collaborative joint ventures and promotional drives for enhancing its capacities to more efficiently and effectively direct and manage the affairs of the sector. The rapid attrition of tourism-induced ministerial staff to other sectors is a constraint, which can be mitigated by the designing of sound policies and strategic plans that will outlive the periodic vicissitudes of its staff complement.

With regard to the Tourism Office, there is a need for it to be strengthened in terms of numbers, role diversification and capacity-building to improve expertise. Increased supplies of appropriate technology for data-collection and logistics as well as facilities overseas for promotional operations are also required.

Infrastructural and environmental deficiencies in the Tourism Development Area need to be redressed. They involve sand depletion and uncleanliness of the beaches, insufficient safe access-ways, security lighting, sewerage connections and time-consuming land acquisition red tape. Better management and greater capital investment are key priorities of the remedial measures required by this situation.

1.5 Tourist Security and Entry Formalities: The main threats to tourist security include petty' theft, soliciting for pecuniary or negative social affiliations and harassment by craft vendors or service purveyors. These unwholesome behavioral traits which are perpetrated on European tourists by some Gambians are caused by a combination of the effects of local poverty .unemployment and poor social education at the national level. They were aggravated in the 1970's and 1980's by the propagation of erroneous cultural myths about the easy availability of a range of physical pleasures on The Gambia's sunny Beaches, by European tourist advertisements. Compounding these cross- Cultural factors are the wrong messages being sent to the local populace by inappropriate tourist dress modes and codes of beach comportment.

The impact of the resultant acculturation shocks should be mitigated, therefore, by multi-pronged redress interventions that are based on poverty alleviation strategies, embracing youth employment creation, increasing and training of formal tourist guards and guide cadres. Changing the propaganda messages in tour brochures and exposing both the tourists themselves and local would-be friends and suppliers of tourists to more enlightened and culturally compatible information and education, would create a kind of tourism that is as safe as it is mutually rewarding.

Another aspect of the security paradigm is the sensitivity of the tourist market to media manipulations, through negative information about the general state of internal stability or personal tourist safety. An illustration of its crucial effect is the sequel to the recent unfavorable

travel advice by Britain and the ranking of the Gambian destination among the top-ten for unleashed incalculable economic disaster, and which virtually strangled the industry during the 1994/95 season.

The importance, therefore, of both domestic tranquility and personal security to the sustainable growth and development of the tourism industry is axiomatic and warrants protection and preservation, in view of its injection of appreciable financial resources into the economy of the nation.

1.6 Underdeveloped linkages with other Economic Sectors: There is need to review and reinforce the existing weak links with other relevant sectors, including agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and livestock; retail trade involving duty-free shopping and competitive handicraft sales; transportation, to provide adequate taxi, ferry and river cruise services; infrastructure providers, for construction of sufficient well-maintained road networks linking the airport to hotels, excursion sites, cultural centers and other places of interest to tourists.

1.7 Marketing & Promotional Constraints: A major constraint in the development of tourism is the limited budgetary allocation for the intensive promotion and publicity campaigns. In order to appreciate the complexity of tourism, which entails designing Comprehensive marketing strategies in order to attract foreign visitors, there is an urgent need for availability of adequate resources which should be a joint responsibility between the public and private sectors.

2. Attractions: A number of interesting new developments in tourism are anticipated, aiming at the need to substantially upgrade the image of The Gambia and extend the services and facilities currently offered. Thus despite the constraints highlighted above, numerous opportunities exist for development of more up- market and special interest tourism in various areas.

2.1 In the first instance, The Gambia has important natural assets which need to be fully exploited in the drive to enhance tourism development in the country including:-

an internationally renowned and cherished reputation of being friendly, hospitable and Peace-Loving; this friendliness and hospitality is extended to all visitors, tourists and investors alike;

an excellent telecommunications network which is rated the eighth most modern and efficient system in the world and ranked second only to South Africa on the African Continent- The network which utilizes fiber optic cables, provides instant telecommunications contact with any part of the globe;

overall political stability and a liberalized Currency exchange rate system, free market economy and generous investment incentives for private sector development;

abundant sunshine all the year round and clean, unspoiled sandy beaches;

close proximity to Europe, only five hours flight away and just across the Atlantic from America;

a rich natural heritage consisting of numerous wetlands, natural reserves and parks have rare flora and numerous bird species which are second to none on the Continent. The Gambia is an ornithologist's paradise endowed with more than 500 bird species, and a safe haven for all types of migratory and resident species. The majestic and unpolluted "River Gambia" provides limitless opportunities for up-count1)' tourism in terms of river cruises and excursions;

an authentic and diverse African cultural heritage, a major attraction for foreigners, comprising archaeological sites such as the Stone Circles, unique in Africa; historical monuments like the Old French Trading Post at Albreda, Fort James Island, the Slave Houses at Jangjangbureh (Georgetown), the old English Fort (Fort Bullen) at Barra and the Mungo Park monument at Karantaba, URD.

2.2 Whereas previously, tourists visited the country mainly during the Winter months, indications from the recent emergence of different types of tourism are that the activity has ceased to be a seasonal one. Thus there is great potential for year-round tourism in The Gambia, considering, inter alia, that the rainy season is much shorter and less intense here than it is further south along the coast.

In this context therefore, major dividends can be realized through the full exploitation of the plethora of opportunities presented by the meaningful development of the following areas:-

Eco- Tourism and Ethno-Tourism; -
Bird- Watching; - River. Village and Bush Safaris; -
Water Sports, deep-sea and Ornamental Fishing,
Including the construction of a Marina complex; -
Sporting Clubs and Multi-Purpose Recreation centers; -
Incentives and Business Tourism; -
Crocodile Fanning; -
Transit Tourism; -
Cultural and "Roots" related tourism
Conferences and Conventions

PART THREE:

I. RATIONALE FOR A TOURISM POLICY

The foregoing situational and causative analyses have provided insights into the prevailing needs and problems, which have rendered the formulation of a broad- spectrum tourism policy and strategic rolling plan of action an indispensable catalyst for the future strengthening of the industry. It has been shown also, that the manner in which tourism emerged on the Gambian scene was more client- driven than nationally-determined This fact thus gave rise to a reactive rather than a pro-active tourism administration milieu.

In this climate, at the onset, tourist demands called the operational tune to which Gambian counterparts responded, essentially, as an Unknown business venture, without first fully assessing its social and economic repercussion from a holistic development perspective. Tourism was treated as an exotic activity, which was expected to adjust to the existing national system of legislation, taxation and business enterprise. Consequently, although there were initial feasibility, socio-economic impact surveys, such as the Bafuloto study and guidelines emanating from the Tourism Office and Ministry as well as a series of local and international consultative meetings and recommendations, no concrete endeavor to codify the results achieved. Furthermore, the changing demands of the different type of tourists now being attracted, coupled with the endemic economic austerities of the 1980's and 1990's created an additional justification for a tourism sector policy. Finally. The current realities emanating from the programme of rectification of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council's give added reinforcement to the inevitability of a new needs sensitive and problem containment policy and plan for tourism development in The Gambia.

The present decline registered by the industry makes it necessary to urgently design disaster preparedness and crisis management policies and plans to rehabilitate by re-defining the role of the industry and infusing revitalizing incentives, investments and remedial therapy into it.

II. NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY: OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

1. Policy Objectives: The Policy's goals will be reinforced and attained through detailed activities, which will emphasize issues with greater depth and clarity. The pertinent activities, which will be monitored and periodically up-dated to ensure sustained relevance, are the following:

1.1 Situational & Socio-Cultural

- a) To re-define the role that the tourism industry should play in national development.
- b) To make tourist demands and comportment more amenable to Gambian cultural, social and economic needs and realities.
- c) To encourage greater feasibility and pre-launch consultations and economic negotiations to place Gambian partners more equitably in the tourism decision-making process.
- d) To improve the situational features by developing and expanding the infrastructure and services in the Tourism Development Area (IDA).
- e) To reduce the tourism business start-up and operational bottlenecks.
- f) To diversify the traditional tourism forms with cultural, inland, river-cruise, domestic and eco-tourism, in order to maximize the returns by broadening its out-reach.
- g) To devise rehabilitation programmes and early warning detection to contain the adverse repercussions of crises in the tourism industry

1.2 Economic

- a) To revive and increase the earnings accruing to the tourism industry to at least the 1993/94 levels.
- b) To increase the contribution of tourism to Gross Domestic Product.
- c) To put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the financial performance of the hotels and other tourist service centers is maximized thereby raising government's share of their assets.
- d) To streamline and rationalize the various taxes on the tourism sector by simplifying and harmonizing central and Local government taxation.
- e) To establish modalities for ploughing back equitable quotas of the revenue generated by tourism into the industry.
- f) To provide investment incentives and facilitate access to soft loans including joint venture arrangements for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

g) To explore possibilities of employment creation through Inter-sectoral consultations and advocacy for macro-policies to develop the informal sector and absorb more out of school youths in gainful work.

h) To reduce foreign exchange leakages associated with expatriate salaries and importation of commodities, by accelerating the Gambianisation process of tourism personnel and import substitution initiatives.

1.3 Legislation:

a) To streamline the multiplicity of existing legislation so as to repeal antiquated ones and promulgate new laws with greater sensitivity for modern tourism development.

b) To enhance the overall co-ordination and effective management of the tourism sector by transferring administrative authority over tourism-related matters to the Ministry of Tourism.

c) To prepare new draft laws touching on classification or performance quality standards for legislative processing to give the tourism sector the legal leverage that it needs to improve standards.

1.4 Quality Control :

a) To develop the infrastructure of buildings, arterial roads, access ways, water and electricity supplies, airport passenger facilities and other services to enhance the Tourism Development Area.

b) To ensure the production of high quality local commodities to facilitate the advancement of import substitution in order to help arrest the outward drain of local foreign exchange earnings.

c) To elaborate mandatory hotel classification standards that reflect not just the wishes of foreign operators, but also the priorities of the Gambian nation.

d) To promote the acquisition of the requisite managerial, Technical, artisanal and entrepreneurial skills for efficient organization and delivery of the national tourism product.

e) To up-grade the food hygiene, preservation and culinary sanitation standards in all tourist hotels and restaurants so as to eliminate the incidence of dietary health risks which could be caused by poor food quality and environmental sanitation.

f) To enhance training, logistical and other equipment for the Ministry's staff to improve their performance and outreach.

1.5 Tourist Security and Travel Formalities :

- a) To tighten up security arrangements on the beaches, craft markets and hotels by providing adequate and better-trained tourist guards, night patrols and officially recognized guides in order to minimize hazards that are associated with the Perpetration of petty crimes in the TDA.
- b) To liaise with youth peer group and opinion leaders, the Ministries of Youth, Education and Employment as well as the National Hotel Association to formulate joint strategies for organizing and harnessing the creative energies of Unemployed youths in constructive community service and tourism supportive activities, to reduce the incidence of delinquency in the TDA.
- c) To provide prompt corrective rebuttal to and investigative feed-back consequent on negative media coverage Concerning tourism safety standards in The Gambia.
- d) To simplify, thus rendering them less protracted, tourist Check-in, customs and immigration procedures to mitigate the inconvenience caused, preventing it from demotivating tourists, in the future.

1.6 Human Resources Development:

- a) To conduct holistic human resources needs assessment as a pre-requisite to preparation of a policy and development plan for the tourism sector.
- b) To up-grade the infrastructure and curriculum of the Hotel Training School, transforming it into a polyvalent skills training institution that encompasses the training needs of the diverse human resource categories which serve the tourism industry.
- c) To improve the quality of labor in the tourism sector b)' Organizing on-the-job, short in-service and overseas training Courses that are tailored to satisfy the prevailing expertise deficiencies in the industry.

1.7 Institution Building:

- a) To endow the Ministry of Tourism and its technical branches with more responsive and greater funding, planning, implementation and monitoring capacities and technology to more effectively perform its advocacy, marketing, co- ordination and quality control roles.
- b) To revive existing or institute new mechanisms for monitoring, co-coordinating and mobilizing resources for accelerating the development of the tourism industry.
- c) To develop mutually back-stopping and promotional inter- sectoral linkages and net-working

with potential tourism investors at home and abroad.

d) To establish a strong tourism data base and analysis as well as research capability to rationalize the flow of tourism information and market intelligence as an instrument for more effective planning, monitoring and regulating development within the industry.

1.8 Promotion Marketing:

a) To strengthen existing tourism bureau and open up new ones in all Gambian Diplomatic missions and honorary' consulates, world-wide, with adequate management Autonomy.

b) To liaise with the Tourism Trade in developing appropriate Promotional strategies in support of the diversification effort to capture new source markets.

c) To embark on publicity redress campaigns to counteract Unfavorable foreign press coverage of the Gambian destination d) To increase the frequency and improve the standards of inland river-cruise and rural, cultural and eco-tourism drives to sensitize investors, foreign and local potential clientele and ground operators.

2. Policy Targets:

2.1 Implementation of the Tourism policy's vision and objectives would be infused with realism and a greater potential for practical application, if time, operational and attainment targets are set. These targets would constitute indicators for assessing not only performance, but also the kind of impact and degree of tourism programme efficiency and effectiveness during the Policy's life span and beyond. The significance of up-to-date statistical data to this exercise is fundamental.

2.2 Viable targets of the National Tourism Policy during the period and beyond will focus on the need to:

a) resuscitate the volume of tourist traffic from its zero growth-rate during the current slump to at least its 1992/93 level of 63,940 air charter entries, by November 1996 and rising progressively to the 89,997 figure for 1993/94, then ultimately reaching the 150.000 margin by 1998/2000:

b) increase the hotel, guesthouse accommodation space from the 6000 figure of 1993/94 to 10,000 by the year 2000, by encouraging the construction of more high-class hotels in the beach resort area but with priority accorded to four and five star hotels;

c) promote the expansion rate for hotel/motel construction inland, in anticipation of starting up alternative tourism diversification objectives, by encouraging investors to construct more new

- tourist camps at Basse, Farafenni, centers of antiquities, (Kerr Batch, Wassu. Barra, Berending etc) nature parks and bird sanctuaries by the year 2000 and beyond;
- d) formulate new tourism legislation relating to the transfer of direct Administration and control of licensing fees generated by the tourism industry to the Ministry of Tourism by October 1996;
- e) introduce with effect from October 1997 a Tourism Service Charge of D5.00 per tourist per night to be collected from all hotels, motels and camps by the Ministry of Tourism for use in its promotional and development activities;
- f) to provide investment incentives and to facilitate access to soft loans including joint venture arrangements for indigenous entrepreneurs by October 1996;
- g) restore the contribution of the tourism sector to 12% of GDP by the end of 1997 and promote an increase to 15% by the year 2000:
- h) initiate measures to reduce the importation of primary commodities by 50 per cent and the complement of expatriate managerial personnel by 15% by December 1997, to minimize leakages of foreign exchange by at least 30 per cent;
- i) liaises with relevant agencies in tourism development on practical modalities for drastically reducing or eliminating completely tourist security risks and removing the bottlenecks that are encountered in the Tourism Development Area, at the beginning of each season, thereby enhancing the comparative advantages, attraction and profitability of The Gambia as a tourism destination;
- j) commission the first multi-sectoral mechanism for counseling, training and organizing a trial sample of fifty jobless youths from residential areas adjacent to the IDA (Bakau, Kotu, Kololi, Serrekunda, Bakoteh, etc.) into beach cleaning and other tourism protective projects, by October 1996;
- k) organize information, communication and education workshops targeting a cross-section of representatives from souvenir vendors, craftspeople, hawkers, tour guides and escorts, security guards/patrols and small scale food commodity and service entrepreneurs, for attitudinal and comportment changes, to improve reception and handling of foreign tourists by November 1996;
- l) to urgently increase the radio slots of tourism programmes in the main official and local languages to sensitize, inform and shape the approaches of local communities to tourism development.
- m) set up a tourism information data-base with appropriate hard and software and modem link-

up facility for net-working to facilitate authentic image-building and publicity activities that are reposed on sound factual foundations, by April 1997.

PART FOUR

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOURISM POLICY

Comprehensive, pragmatic but realistic strategies are necessary for the implementation of the Tourism Policy objectives. The diversity of all the concerns, which comprise the totality of the national tourism structure, need to be prioritized in this policy. Ten discreet issues are indicative of this need and they embrace the following: -

- Legislation review;
- Classification of hotels and quality control;
- Tourist security and travel formalities;
- Human resources development;
- Strengthening of tourism administration and institutional framework;
- Maximization of economic returns of tourism;
- Simplification and harmonization of tourism taxation;
- Management and utilization of the Tourism Development Area;
- Minimizing the negative effects of tourism. - Diversification with alternative forms of tourism;

1. Legislation Review: As has been indicated in preceding sections of this policy the provisions of tourism-related legislation are either rendered obsolete by current exigencies or are too numerous and unwieldy, under the administrative authority of non-tourism Ministries and agencies. The main laws deal with taxation, service fees, expatriate employees, business registration, auditing and land rates.

1.2 It is necessary, therefore, to repeal the tourism-influencing laws that have outlive their usefulness, enact new responsive ones, streamline those that are cumbersome and generally consolidate the legislative framework, putting it under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of

Tourism. This would serve to remove client operational bottlenecks and strengthen the mandates and programme management capacities of the parent ministry and its departments: -

1.3 Several action-centered procedures are envisaged for the resolution of these legal procedures.

The main measures are defined below:

- a) The 1965 Licensing Act (Cap. 92.01) which empowers local Government authorities to license hotels and restaurants will be repealed and replaced by a law which transfers this mandate to the Ministry of Tourism, which will be rightfully vested with the sole responsibility for licensing the industry, As the details of the present law relate to the collection of local rates, this function should be included in legislation that deals with revenue collection.
- b) The 1950 Liquor Licensing Act will similarly be repealed and superseded by a more appropriate version which transfers licensing powers to the Ministry of Tourism and brings its provisions in line with modern realities in bars and public houses.
- c) The Hotels and Restaurants Act of 1974 (Cap 94.01), although relevant in its governing of the operations of hotels, restaurants and night-clubs, needs to be amended to reflect the exigencies of the present national economic situation. It will consequently be subjected to detailed review and amendment. This up-dating exercise will make provision in the new Act for the classification of hotels and the majority of technical requirements for regulating and licensing the industry in light of modern demands.
- d) Consequent on this need for rationalization of the laws to guarantee greater efficiency, the licensing applications and taxes with which the tourism industry has to comply, annually, will be realigned. The new envisaged licensing authority of the Ministry of Tourism will relate to issue of certificates for hotels and managers, building-control, fire and health and fees paid by hotels and managers, and Area Councils' licensing applications,
- e) Negotiations will be initiated with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs for the harmonization and simplification of taxes within the tourism sector. In particular the removal of sales tax from customs duty charged on tourism imports to ease the triple taxation burden.
- f) In this connection, vigilance will be exercised so as not to compromise the security of the individual tourist business operators or the wider economic interests of the nation. New amendments to existing legislation to stiffen penalties for tourist harassment will be proposed for incorporation into existing criminal laws.

g) Sustained consultations with the local municipal authorities, Ministries of Finance, Local Government and Justice and Representatives of the tourism industry will be held periodically to map-out details assigning ministerial authority on tourism matters in the legislation review processes, for harmonious collaboration and avoidance of conflict of sectoral interests which could inhibit progress in tourism development.

h) Legislative reform will be implemented to reinforce the collection of a tourism training levy to promote rapid human resource development at the Tourism Development Institute.

2. Classification of Hotels and Quality Control:

2.1 The mushrooming of hotel construction in the Gambian coastal area was in direct response to the rapid escalations in tourist numbers, without much government say in their architectural design or the structural and environmental amenities that they provided. As result, whatever modicum of standards assessment that was made, was done by expatriate tour operators in tour brochures, based their own perceptions and arbitrary quality standards.

2.2 There is therefore need to put in place corporate physical planning guidelines and obligatory classification rubrics to direct and control hotel development in the tourism industry. The following are some indicative steps for safeguarding the successful grading and maintenance of quality in service delivery for tourism:

a) Appropriate legislation will be enacted to provide an enabling framework for hotel classification by the Ministry of Tourism in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice, after consultations with other key actors in the tourism industry. This will provide a regulatory instrument to govern the activities of tour operators, hotel managers and investors. The Hotels and Restaurants Act of 1974 and Regulations of 1982 will be revised to facilitate this exercise.

b) Communication mechanisms will be set up to provide Information on the type of service fees being charged, so as to determine whether costs are commensurate with quality and benefits derived.

c) To this end the main charter flight and accommodation configuration of the traditional tourism package will be reviewed to ensure that competitive quality standards, not just 'take it or leave it' conditions, are meted out to tourists when they come. It will also facilitate the attracting of Lighter-spending tourists to break the low purchasing package style.

d) Hotel classification will be conducted systematically. The Ministry of Tourism will institute a Standing Committee Empowered to perform this task, with possibilities of co-opting technical advisors (in physical planning, health, tire services, architecture, engineering, etc.) Under the auspices of the revised Hotels and Restaurants Act.

e) Classification indicators will be stipulated, comparable to International standards, comprising of considerations based on size, location, equipment, recreational and entertainment facilities, interior decoration, as well as local cultural and Eco-tourism facilities which are peculiar to the Gambia.

f) Evaluative pre-classification conditions will be established outlining crucial criteria which must be adhered to. These criteria will set the pace in the new drive to improve quality in the tourism industry.

g) Quality control of artisanal products will be promoted through collaborative links with the Ministry of Agriculture for vegetables and livestock and the Ministry of Trade for traditional craft and small scale industries.

3. Tourist Security and Travel Formalities:

3.1 Adequate tourist safety and simplified travel formalities are vital for destination marketing and are indispensable for furthering the growth of the industry. The main tourist security problems which could have a negative impact on tourists opting to visit The Gambia are: harassment by would-be "friends" and vendors, personal hazards that are inherent in unsafe taxi driving, tour pirating, illness caused by food hygiene and accidents due to infrastructural inadequacies in the Tourism Development Area or imprudent tourist behavior. Lengthy and heavy-handed entry and exit formalities could also aggravate the inconvenience that is always part and parcel of foreign travel. Safeguards will be put in place to eliminate these constraints.

3.2 The following interventions will be implemented to fulfill the safety-related goals of the Policy:

a) The Ministry of Justice and the Police Force will be approached for stiffer penalties and enforcement to be imposed on petty crime and harassment committed within the TDA.

b) In concert with the Ministries of Youth & Employment, the Ministry of Tourism will set up a task force to liaise with, better organize and re-educate unemployed youths in the perimeter areas

of the TDA to lure them away from delinquent soliciting and other behavior that detracts from the good image of the nation and tourist safety.

c) Steps will be taken by the Tourism Office to replicate sensitization or re-education meetings with tourist primary commodity producers, craftspersons and tour operators to eradicate negative practices, which threaten the peace of mind and sensibilities of tourists.

d) Better equipped tourism designated markets and transports will be controlled by the Department of Tourism, Tourist will be subjected to more stringent scrutiny, tests and spot-checks for competence and road-worthiness, Tourist drivers, guards and guides will be required to wear presentable apparel that can be easily distinguished by tourists from unscrupulous persons who threaten tourist safety, The Ministry of Tourism will liaise with the Police Department for stricter application of the power to stop and arrest any such persons who constitute a nuisance to tourists.

e) Security arrangements will be heightened by encouraging all tourist hotels to adhere to the pre-checking group baggage control system to save time at the airport. A "green light, nothing-to-declare" system will be introduced also, to speed up processing of tourist arrivals. Consultations with the Customs and Immigration Departments should facilitate their implementation.

f) Similarly, institution of a "one-stop" visa allocation at the airport will be explored with the Ministries of the Interior and External Affairs, in order to truncate the hassles which tourists experience in countries where there is no Gambian diplomatic representation, opening up the Gambian destination to all potential markets, world-wide.

4. Human Resources Development:

4.1 Human resources development for the tourism sector is plagued by problems such as:- the absence of corporate plan and job specification schedules; institutional limitations of the Hotel Training School; insufficient unilateral pre-and in-service training programmes by hoteliers; inadequate funding. In order to increase employment creation by the industry and raise performance standards, the following remedial steps will have to be taken:-

a) As a matter of urgency, a preliminary need assessment exercise will be conducted with donor assistance;

b) The Tourism Ministry will also commission the designing of a holistic human resources

development plan. This will give leverage to facilitating much needed reforms in the tourism industry.

c) Steps will be taken to re-designate the Hotel Training School as the Tourism Development Institute. This will not be a mere cosmetic change, but it will facilitate the intended upgrading and diversification of that institution's curriculum as well as its teaching staff strength, technical disciplines, infrastructural and material resources. Efforts will be made to ensure that the content and method of the training provided will be demand-led, ascertained through linkages with operators in the industry. Refresher courses for trainers will be secured with sister training institutions in the African region and elsewhere.

d) A training levy will be enforced, based on existing appropriate legislation, from tourism associated institutions, which will be supplemented by an increased quota from the government development budget for infrastructural and material resources improvement at the up-graded Tourism Development Institute.

e) A Multi-sectoral Tourism Human Resources Development Committee will be instituted by the Ministry to manage the new change which will be enshrined in the Human Resources Development Plan.

f) The Ministry will use its good offices with other government, NGO and bi-lateral donor agencies to secure overseas training fellowships for middle and senior level management personnel in the tourist industry. Liaison with local tertiary training centers, such as the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) and Management Development Institute (MDI), will also be pursued to augment skills up-grading for those category of tourism staff.

g) The Ministry's technical staff will undergo training in informatics, office management, marketing, report-writing and quality control techniques. Workshops and Seminars will be organized by the Department of Tourism for the unskilled labor force, such as beach cleaners, tour guides, guards and commodity producers to improve their skills and develop more responsible attitudes.

5. Strengthening of Tourism Administrative and Institutional Framework

5.1 The advisory, enforcement, co-ordination, facilitation, regulation and Promotional functions of the Ministry of Tourism, its technical department and monitoring mechanisms are operating in a milieu that is bedeviled by staffing, infrastructural, financial, equipment and marketing

weaknesses. These institutional constraints require multi-dimensional measures for their redress. In this regard, the following are proposed:

- a) The Ministry of Tourism will initiate implementation of an internal Human resources development plan, under whose auspices both the numbers and programme management capacities of the National Tourism Office will be reviewed and enhanced to give it operational clout, with a view to transforming it into a national Tourism Authority.
- b) Computerization, with appropriate software and modem link-ups will be introduced with donor technical assistance by 1996, to Implement an effective database for efficient and accurate information flow and marketing.
- c) The Ministry of Tourism will strengthen its capacities to initiate the draft pieces of legislation and to assume the new administrative functions dealing with licensing and resource mobilization that are envisaged in this Policy.
- d) The Ministry will further commission a series of multi- Sectoral/disciplinary bodies and mechanisms for a more efficient management, monitoring, co-ordination and quality control of the affairs of the tourism industry, including a management board for the new Tourism Development Institute.

6. Management and Utilization of the Tourism Development Area

6.1 Successful management and optimal utilization of the Tourism Development Area are contingent on the availability of adequate infrastructural facilities, such as - access networks, sewerage, water and electricity supplies, accommodation, shopping malls, entertainment, excursion and recreation. Unfortunately, the provision of these inputs entails high capital outlays, which are obtainable mainly through donor- funded projects and government investments.

6.2 There is a need for more comprehensive planning to enhance the development of the Tourism Area, in order to avoid a piecemeal, unsystematic approach and attract a new class of tourists who are financially better-endowed, and eliminate the haphazard planning of the coastal area, landscape erosion, indiscriminate sand mining on the beaches, and environmental pollution by refuse dumping and control stray live-stock. In this regard the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the municipal authorities and other agencies will implement the following:

- a) Improve the access roads, foot-paths and landscaping to enhance the scenic aesthetic quality, in the Tourism Development Area; erect street lights for security, demarcate taxi parks and

relaxation parks: ensure the cleaning of the beaches, a safe refuse disposal system and banning of livestock access to the beach front with stringent penalties Collaborate with the National Environment Agency and Ministry for Local Government and Lands to curb the wanton removal of sand for civil works from the TDA beaches; Encourage the Physical Planning Department to provide technical support to arrest landscape erosion.

b) Critical evaluation will be made by the Tourism Area Development Board to assess the environmental impact on the IDA of new hotel building investments, so as to better control the spread and quality of structures that are being implanted in the TDA to safeguard environmental aesthetics.

c) To reinforce the above activities, a strategic plan for land utilization in the TDA will be designed and put into effect by the Ministry of Tourism in conjunction with the Ministry for Local Government and Lands and advocacy will also be embarked upon by the Ministry of Tourism with the Ministry for Local Government and Lands to ease up the strictures which are inhibiting the land leasing procedures by would-be investors for development of the Tourism Development Area.

d) Modalities for developing new rural Tourism Areas in the interior of the country will be drawn up, expeditiously, after the launching of this policy.

7. Harmonization of Tourism Taxation

7.1 In view of the appreciable monetary and employment assets which the tourism industry generates it is incumbent on government to rationalize the taxation obligations that are imposed on the industry in order not to demotivate investors. The tourism sector is encumbered by a weighty array of direct and indirect taxes such as, income, corporate, sales and expatriate taxes as well as a series of operational licenses levied for rates, liquor, entertainment, etc by the local government authorities.

Compounding these, investors are required to fulfill several applications before setting up a hotel. These are further exacerbated by additional applications, approvals and taxes when once a tourism enterprise becomes established. Land rates on hotels and restaurants have lacked uniformity and also risen, over the past five years, by up to 1200 per cent.

7.2 It is evident; therefore, that this cumbersome gamut of taxation is in dire need of rationalization and streamlining by reduction and refinement measures. The following are

envisaged:

a) Consequent on the outcome of discussions with the key tourism practitioners, the Ministry of Tourism will endeavor to initiate legislation amendment proposals to ensure that the Hotels and Restaurants Acts of 1974 (Cap. 94.04), the Licensing Act (Cap. 92.01) of 1965 and the Liquor Licensing Act of 1950 are truncated. Up-dated or repealed, as appropriate. The precise details of the strategies envisioned by this policy are outlined in Part Four, Para. 1.

b) Sustained consultations will be maintained by the Ministry of Tourism and its associates -the Ministries of Finance, Local Government and municipal authorities to facilitate the requisite taxation harmonization process.

8. Maximization of the Economic Returns of Tourism

8.1 The fact has been expressed at the beginning of this Policy that the Tourism sector contributes a sizeable and steadily growing quota of economic returns to the Gambian nation. It is pertinent to reiterate the most significant, here:

- gross foreign exchange earnings derived from tourism-related activities in 1993 totaled about D917 million with D609 million for out-of pocket spending, D288 million paid for accommodation and D20 million for airport tax;

- the total direct employment potential of the industry is nearly 5,000 annually, matched by another 5,000 of indirect tourism- associated jobs, which will increase further when tourism is expanded fully into the rural areas. This represents over 5% of the global labor force. This does not include the multiplier effect, which could be higher, as a result of the dependency ratio within the extended family.

- the impact of fiscal policies involving stability of the external value of the dalasi currency, flexible exchange rate regimes and liberalization of the foreign exchange market.

8.2 Despite these palpable and concrete benefits the Tourism sector is plagued by certain weaknesses, which include:

- underdeveloped linkages with other economic sectors, such as: Agriculture (vegetable, livestock and dairy produce); retail trade involving duty-free shopping and competitive handicraft sales; transportation provided by inadequate taxi, ferry and river cruise services; infrastructure of sufficient well-maintained road networks linking the airport to hotels to

excursion sites and cultural centers-:

- inadequate human resources and capacities;

8.3 Under the aegis of the enhancement drives that are enshrined in the policy, efforts will be made to maximize the benefits by promotional, reinvestment and corrective strategies.

a) The authentic identity of Gambian culture such as the best of its music, dance, artifacts and food will be preserved and integrated more effectively into the tourism programme, to enable The Gambian product to maintain its charm and be more alluring in capturing more tourists.

b) The Ministry of Tourism will interface with other economic sectors to establish more productive linkages and complementary interactions to improve services and supplies for the industry.

c) Towards this end, the produce, quality and marketing organization for essential commodities such as fish, meat, poultry, vegetables, fruit, beverages and fuel will be improved to heighten local provision of imports-substitution and arrest the drain of foreign earnings.

d) Incentives in the form of soft loan facilities through peri-urban financial institutions and take-off tax relief will be negotiated by the Ministry of Tourism with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, to assist producers or suppliers of primary commodities in the informal sector to set up and run viable businesses to feed into the tourist industry.

e) Informal technical training and sensitization will be provided for that class of informal sector producers. Also funding for this kind of activity will be explored through the medium of projects.

f) The concentration of expatriates in the industry will be reduced by augmenting the number of competent Gambians in the senior management category, through better recruitment, training and conditions of service, to ensure higher standards, and sustainable development of the industry.

g) Expansion of tourism to the rural areas through diversification with cultural, inland-river cruise and eco-tourism will extract maximum benefits from the industry to a wider cross-section of the Gambian populace.

h) Efforts will be increased to market the Gambian product through wider publicity drives aimed at attracting higher-spending multi-national tourists and expeditious corrective interventions to prevent negative trends jeopardizing the success of the industry.

i) Infrastructural and service enhancement of the existing Tourism Development Area will be safeguarded as an all-pervasive entity, with financial and other material resources mobilization, through the support of donor agencies, non-governmental organizations, Municipal Councils and the private sector.

9. Minimizing the Negative Effects of Tourism

9.1 The multiple benefits which accrue from the presence of foreign tourism in The Gambia are countervailed by a few negative effects, which are financially and socio-culturally oriented. The first type involves foreign exchange leakages, owing to the importation of beverages, food ingredients, foreign debt repayment and salaries of expatriate staff.

The second is linked to the adverse acculturation of both male & female youths, which pleasure-seeking tourists could inflict on the host community, the lure of foreign money in the face of endemic poverty or unemployment, confinement of tourism and its positive outcomes to the coastal periphery, with perfunctory filtering out into the rural areas.

9.2 As a result of these factors which are impacting negatively on the Gambian economy and way of life, certain redress mechanisms will be put in place.

a) The measures which are destined to plug the loop holes through which foreign exchange flees the national coffers into foreign banks have been amply evaluated in the previous sections. In the effort to maximize benefits a corresponding attempt will be made to minimize hazards that are engendered by tourism.

b) While it may not be desirable to stem the inevitable tide of Cross-cultural exchanges between European and African traditions, in the march towards modernity, the Department of Tourism, in conjunction with its colleagues in the youth, education and cultural spheres, will collaborate to ensure the preservation of the distinct Gambian cultural identity, values and heritage from being eroded under the onslaught of a foreign, visiting culture.

c) By laying emphasis on civic, moral and cultural education in schools and the Gambia College as well as radio Programmes, strong foundations will be inculcated in all Gambians to equip them to better withstand the influence of foreign culture.

d) Counseling and training of youths to acquire usable skills to positively serve the tourism industry will be embarked upon in concert with other sectors and agencies, for their cultural re-

education and engagement in non-delinquent exploits.

e) Tourists will be exposed by the Department of Tourism, in locally designed brochures, posters, talks, etc, to reciprocal advice concerning desirable Gambian cultural attitudes and normative codes of conduct that would be conducive to stress-free and mutual culture-respecting tourism.

f) Funding and expertise for the development of more culturally authentic and explicit literature, films, posters and messages will be procured by the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with its private sector tourism partners.

10. Diversification with Alternative Forms of Tourism

10.1 As has been depicted, the current type of Gambian tourism is in need of diversification in order to maximize returns and ensure their accessibility to a broader cross-section of beneficiaries. This diversification will dominate the philosophy and energies of the tourism policy approaches, in the future. The main thrust will feature efforts to increase the tourist centers in the provinces, improve transportation by land and river, open-up and preserve as yet untapped localities where there are cultural antiquities, nature parks, sacred pools, and bird sanctuaries. It would also entail enhancing The Gambia's capacity to provide "conference tourism" facilities in the TDA and develop "educational tourism" sites.

10.2 In order to rapidly plan for and install the necessary infrastructure to cater for this expansionist vision, the following will be implemented concurrently with the tourism rehabilitation programme.

a) The Ministry of Tourism will work with the National Council for Arts and Culture and the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management to map out historical monuments, cultural antiquities and nature parks and pools as well as develop flora and fauna albums for use by the tourist industry. The protection and utilization of cultural monuments, natural parks, etc, will be co-ordinated by the Tourism Ministry.

b) The Department of Tourism will approach the National Environment Agency to design joint "environment friendly" ecological materials for the tourism industry, ensuring also that impact assessments are made before eco-tourism is embarked upon. Also, efforts will be made to arrest coastal erosion which threatens the beauty and survival of the sandy beaches in the Tourism

Development Area.

c) The Ministry of Tourism in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Trade will negotiate for incentives to be put at the disposal of local and foreign investors, as inducement to promote inland, river, cultural and eco-tourism.