



Kenya Tourism Federation

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TOURISM RE-ASSURANCE STATEMENT ON RECENT REMARKS REGARDING TOURISM AND INVESTMENT IN KENYA - KENYA TOURISM FEDERATION

The Kenya tourism sector has noted with concern recent public remarks attributed to former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua urging tourists and investors to stay away from Kenya because of the country's current political environment. While every Kenyan is entitled to express political opinions, statements that undermine confidence in Kenya as a tourism and investment destination cannot go unchallenged as they have consequences that extend far beyond politics.

Tourists who visit Kenya are not participants in Kenya's domestic political contests. They come to experience Magical Kenya's wildlife, beaches, culture, hospitality, conferences and sporting events. They are neither involved in nor targeted by the political rivalries that occasionally play out within our country. Indeed, the so-called "goons" frequently referenced in political discourse are themselves products of political competition and mobilization, **not** the tourism industry.

The remarks attributed to the former Deputy President reflect a worrying misunderstanding of how tourism, travel and hospitality sector works. Tourism is not a tap that can be switched off today and turned back on at will. Destination confidence is built painstakingly over many years through sustained marketing, positive visitor experiences and strong international partnerships. Once confidence is damaged, rebuilding it can take years, sometimes even longer, regardless of how quickly political circumstances change.

In addition, the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Kenyans depend directly and indirectly on tourism. Hotel employees, tour guides, drivers, artisans, farmers, entertainers, beach operators, airlines, travel agents and countless small businesses rely on a steady flow of visitors to earn a living. These ordinary Kenyans whose families depend on tourism also happen to be the very same voters the political class will seek to persuade in the next election.

Political competition is an essential feature of democracy. However, Kenya's tourism brand should never become collateral damage in political disagreements. Our country's reputation belongs to all Kenyans and has been built through decades of investment, sacrifice and hard work by both the public and private sectors.

As the saying goes, *"one does not cut off their nose to spite their face"*; in the same spirit, we must never undermine one of our country's most important economic pillars in pursuit of short-term political advantage. We therefore urge all political leaders,



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regardless of affiliation, to find better ways of advancing their political agendas without inviting economic harm to millions of their fellow citizens.

Kenya remains one of Africa's premier tourism destinations. We welcome visitors from around the world with the warmth, hospitality and unforgettable experiences for which our country is renowned. The tourism sector remains resilient, committed to excellence and confident in Kenya's enduring appeal.

For timely information and assistance, the KTF- Safety Centre remains open 24/7. **KTF**
– **Safety and Communication Centre** Tel: 020 8001000; Cell: 0722745645 / 0738617499
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ODEK FRED
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Kenya Tourism Federation (KTF) is the National apex body representing Kenya's private sector tourism, travel and hospitality industry through its Member Associations namely: - Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO); Kenya Association of Air Operators (KAAO); Pubs Entertainment and Restaurants Association of Kenya (PERAK); Kenya Association of Travel Agents (KATA); Kenya Coast Tourism Association (KCTA); Ecotourism Kenya (EK); Kenya Association of Hotel Keepers and Caterers (KAHC) and the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association (KPSGA).

KTF is mandated to advocate for policies and initiatives that promote safe, sustainable and competitive tourism sector, while working closely with Government and industry stakeholders to safeguard Kenya's reputation as a premier tourism destination.