Advocacy and Lobbying Portfolio Committee (PFC) Report on activities

Period covered: May 2012 – May 2013

Chair: Bekithemba Langalibalele, South African National Department of Tourism (Responsible Tourism Directorate)

Supporting members: Richard Malesu (Botswana Tourism Organisation)
Damian Bell (Responsible Tourism Tanzania)

1. Engagement with the Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa (RETOSA)

1.1 Meeting with RETOSA, July 2012

Bekithemba Langalibalele and the Alliance Secretariat met with Simba Mandinyenya (RETOSA Research Planning and Development Director) to get more information/clarification on RETOSA's new "Southern Africa harmonised rating standard". The meeting confirmed that at that point no standard had been established and RETOSA would keep the Alliance updated on activities in this regard. Building on this matter, RETOSA will present on its responsible strategy for the region in the Alliance Annual Conference 2013.

Another outcome of this meeting was RETOSA's agreement to enter into a two year MoU with the Alliance. This MoU will be the foundation for formal engagement with the Alliance as and when opportunity arises.

The MoU is attached as Annexure 1.

1.2 RETOSA brand strategy workshop, Lesotho, September 2012

The Secretariat (represented by Netsai Sibanda) attended the RETOSA Brand Strategy Workshop in Maseru, Lesotho on 10 and 11 September 2012. The event was an excellent networking opportunity for the Alliance, made possible through the aforementioned MoU. While in Lesotho, meetings were taken to raise awareness of the Alliance with the following organisations:

(i) Tourism Office of the Democratic Republic of Congo
(ii) Tanzania Tourist Board
(iii) Zimbabwe Tourist Board
(iv) Yellow Railroad (the consulting company contracted by RETOSA to support the organisation in developing a regional brand for southern Africa).

Yellow Railroad was registered as an Alliance member in March 2013.

The Lesotho workshop report is attached as Annexure 2. The Brand Communications Strategy is attached as Annexure 3.

1.3 RETOSA workshop, January 2013

The Secretariat (represented by Netsai Sibanda) attended Day 2 of RETOSA's workshop entitled "The Southern Africa Tourism Quality Standards and Skills Development Workshop".

The workshop covered the following topics:

(i) The quality standards developed by RETOSA for Tourism for its 15 member states
(ii) Sustainable (Green) Tourism Including Climate change
(iii) Skills development (in order to deal primarily with point 1 above)
(iv) Certification (as it relates to sustainable/responsible tourism product certification)

The Secretariat gave a short presentation on developments in certification globally, continentally, regionally and from a destination-specific perspective and finally on the Alliance (as a means through which the various programmes in southern and East Africa communicate and share information in a coordinated manner). A working group has been established by RETOSA to discuss matters pertaining to sustainability certification. Fair Trade in Tourism is a member of this working group. RETOSA's work in this regard will be further clarified in the Alliance's Annual Conference 2013.

Expressions of interest in formally becoming a member of the Alliance came from the following organisations subsequent to the workshop:

(i) Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC)
(ii) Mauritius Tourism Authority
(iii) Tanzania Tourist Board

Tanzania Tourist Board registered as a member in April 2013. Both LTDC and Mauritius Tourism Authority confirmed an interest in further involvement in the Alliance and, as such, have committed to participating in the Alliance's May 2013 events taking place in Durban from 9 – 10 May 2013.

2. Eco Mark Africa (EMA)

2.1 Eco Mark Africa workshop, June 2012

On 6 and 7 June 2012 the Alliance was represented at an Eco Mark Africa (EMA) workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Alliance membership representation was as follows:

(i) Alliance Secretariat/FTTSA (Netsai Sibanda)
(ii) Bekithemba Langalibalele (South African National Department of Tourism – NDT, and Chair of the Alliance's Advocacy and Lobbying PFC)
(iii) Heidi van der Watt (International Centre for Responsible Tourism – ICRT, Chair of the EMA working group for tourism standards, and Chair of the Alliance's Standards and Sharing of Best Practice PFC)

The purpose of the workshop was to finalise draft Africa-wide certification standards for the following sectors:

(i) Forestry
(ii) Fisheries
(iii) Agriculture
(iv) Tourism

Delegates were given a presentation on EMA. Heidi van der Watt gave a presentation on feedback from the Alliance, based on the discussions subsequent to EMA's presentation at the Alliance Annual Conference held in May 2012.

The expectation subsequent to the presentation was that there would be some sort of plenary discussion with the EMA secretariat on the concerns, or, a similar discussion in the subsequent 'Tourism Sector Working Group'. As this did not occur, concerns were noted and submitted in writing (electronically)in May 2012 by the Alliance to the EMA secretariat.

2.2 Meeting with Eco Mark Africa (EMA) Consultant, July 2012

The Alliance Secretariat (represented by Netsai Sibanda), Bekithemba Langalibalele and Heidi van der Watt met with the consultant contracted by EMA to prepare its business model – Dr Lawrence Gadzikwa. Dr Gadzikwa confirmed that the three proposed business models being considered by EMA were as follows:

(i) Full Service Model:
  ➢ Accreditation services (accreditation of accreditation bodies & accreditation of certification bodies)
  ➢ Benchmarking services (how to deal with various schemes i.e. approval / recognition)
  ➢ Branding (EMA will manage brand & logo)
(ii) Benchmarking services & branding
(iii) Branding only

2.3 EMA standards Sector Working Group Chairs' meeting, Nairobi, February 2013

Towards the end of 2012, the AEM Executive Board opted for EMA to develop a strategy to roll out a programme of work through which EMA would adapt a 'full service model' which encompasses the following:

(i) Accreditation services (accreditation of accreditation bodies & accreditation of certification bodies)
(ii) Benchmarking services (how to deal with various schemes i.e. approval / recognition)
(iii) Branding (EMA will manage brand & logo)

Following the end of the public review process on the EMA draft standards and reaction to comments, the final output of the draft standard was discussed by the Alliance EXCO and relevant PFC members. This draft was circulated to Alliance members for comment on 5 February 2013 by the Secretariat on behalf of Heidi van der Watt (Chair of the EMA Tourism Sector Working group).

The draft standards subsequently circulated by the EMA Secretariat differed in the 'face' and structure from the original committee draft that was circulated for public review. The original draft was based on extensive discussion in the Tourism Sector Working Group where the group tried to ensure alignment with the GTSC criteria and SANS1162:2010. The new EMA document substantially deviated not only in structure but also in intent and content from the document originally distributed. According to the AEM secretariat, the changes were necessitated by a technical decision of the AEM to structure the content of the draft standards into principles and for each principle the criteria and indicators that affiliated to it.

The AEM secretariat tried to push through adoption of the standard as it stood at its SWG meeting on 19 and 20 February2013 in Nairobi, Kenya. Heidi van der Watt submitted a coordinated response to the revised standard to on behalf of the Alliance on 9 February 2013. The coordinated response is attached as Annexure 4.

A report on the February 2013 SWG meeting is attached as Annexure 5. The draft standard EMA standard for tourism is attached as Annexure 6.

3. Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

3.1 GSTC board appointments, July 2012

The Alliance Secretariat successfully lobbied for the appointment of Jennifer Seif (ex officio) and Heidi van der Watt (Alliance member) to the GSTC board through a 'Vote for Africa' campaign in July 2012. The Secretariat lobbied for votes from the GSTC membership.

A copy of the widely circulated and successful campaign message is attached as Annexure 7.

3.2 Skype meeting with GSTC Technical Director, August 2012

The Alliance Secretariat had a Skype meeting with Amos Bien, GTSC Technical Director on 23 August 2012. The objectives of the meeting included familiarising the GSTC with the Alliance as well as to discuss potential for collaboration. The meeting was very positive, with Amos Bien conveying nothing but positive sentiments about the Alliance. In this meeting Amos Bien confirmed his interest in facilitating a workshop on GSTC recognition and accreditation for Alliance members. As a result of the meeting and subsequent communications, the GSTC considered becoming a member of the Alliance and was formally registered in March 2013.

3.3 GSTC Annual Meeting, September 2012

The Alliance Secretariat, represented by Jennifer Seif, as well as Heidi van der Watt (Chair of Standards and Sharing of Best Practice PFC) attended the GSTC's third Annual Membership Council Meetings on 26 and 27 September in Washington DC. The Alliance was well represented in discussions on a number of topics at these events such as measuring sustainability, economic impact and marketing and promotion. Both Alliance representatives took part in intensive board discussions about the sustainability of the GSTC and its core services.

As a result of their positions on the GSTC board of directors, Jennifer Seif and Heidi van der Watt also participated in GSTC board meetings on 28 February 2013 and 6 March 2013.

Annexures

Annexure 1   RETOSA MoU

Annexure 2   RETOSA Lesotho workshop report

Annexure 3   RETOSA Brand Communications Strategy

Annexure 4   Coordinated Alliance response re EMA finalisation of tourism standards

Annexure 5   Report on EMA SWG meeting, Kenya, February 2013

Annexure 6   EMA draft standard for tourism

Annexure 7   Alliance 'Vote for Africa' campaign