



**THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**REMARKS BY H.E. DR. PHILIP ISDOR MPANGO, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, DURING THE OPENING OF THE 2ND UN TOURISM
REGIONAL FORUM ON GASTRONOMY TOURISM FOR AFRICA**

**GRAN MELIA HOTEL, ARUSHA
23RD APRIL, 2025**

- ***Hon. Amb. Dr. Pindi Chana (MP), Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism;***
- ***Hon. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism;***
- ***Hon. Ministers In-Charge of Tourism – DRC, Zimbabwe, South Africa;***
- ***Hon. Paul Makaonda, Arusha Regional Commissioner -***
- ***Dr. Hassan Abbas, Permanent Secretary - Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism;***
- ***H.E. Dr. Auxilia C. Mnangagwa, First Lady, Republic of Zimbabwe;***
- ***Excellencies Ambassadors and Representatives of the UN Family, African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and East African Community (EAC);***
- ***Forum Speakers and Moderators;***
- ***Esteemed Delegates,***
- ***Members of the Media Fraternity;***
- ***Ladies and Gentlemen.***

Good morning!

On behalf of H.E. Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, I wish to extend a cordial welcome to all participants of the Second UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy for Africa. I have been told that the focus of this forum is to leverage our continent's diverse and rich practices surrounding food preparation, cooking techniques and eating habits to increase tourism competitiveness. I commend the organisers for coming up with such a juicy theme and for choosing Tanzania to host this forum here in Arusha, which is the epicentre of traditional tourism activities in East Africa, alongside a wide range of must-try local dishes and culinary traditions, intertwined with lifestyles and cultures of the Maasai, Meru, Chagga and Swahili people.

Distinguished Participants;

Gastronomy is emerging as a promising niche in the tourism sector. Gastronomy tourism has immense potential to catalyse inclusive economic growth through diversification of tourism products and empowering local communities. Food tourism is also an important instrument for safeguarding our continent's rich cultural heritage. However, in order for gastronomy tourism to deliver the potential benefits, there are a number of issues and challenges that Africa needs to address.

First, is zealous marketing of Africa's rich food culture. As it is at present, most tourists are not familiar with Africa's rich food culture. Even within our own countries, gastronomy is only thinly incorporated in national tourism development strategies. As such, it is imperative that aggressive marketing of Africa's food culture is done in order for

gastronomy tourism to grow and thrive. In this regard, Africa needs to address potential tourists' phobia and hesitancy towards unfamiliar African dishes. For instance, there are a number of delicacies in different parts of the continent which require courage to taste. These include, worms which are in the caterpillar stage of formation – which are a delicacy in southern Africa region and in some parts of Tanzania; a special type of grasshoppers (*Senene*) – prevalent and consumed in northwestern part of Tanzania & Uganda; certain type of termites (*kumbikumbi*) and ants; bush rats; snakes and certain types of sea foods such as octopus and eel. On this issue, I call upon gastronomic tourism stakeholders to invest more on writing African cuisine cook books and recipe collections. These resources will add up knowledge and gradually reduce tourists phobia on unfamiliar dishes.

Second, promotion of gastronomic tourism in Africa also needs to take into account environmental sustainability, in view of concerns that it exerts pressure on local ecosystems. For example, while game meat is a tasty gastronomic tourism resource, it may encourage unregulated wildlife hunting and poaching. Similarly, while *nyamachoma* (grilled meat) is famous in Tanzania and the rest of East Africa, there are concerns that large livestock herds contribute to land degradation, water pollution and an estimated 15% of total global GHG emission (methane and CO₂) which drive up global warming.

Third, promotion of gastronomic tourism in Africa also require creation of dedicated areas and gastronomic routes where local products and unique foods are prepared for tourists to enjoy. However, in such gastronomic routes and centres, quality of local foods and products will have to be maintained. Doing so, requires close collaboration between traditional chefs, local producers, tour operators and other tourism stakeholders to ensure that services offered to tourists are sustainable.

Fourth, there is need to position gastronomy at the core of Africa's tourism identity, while reinforcing its global appeal by putting up strategies for linking food production, culinary experiences, and tourism services to generate sustainable local economic impact; devising mechanisms to enhance knowledge transfer to support the emergence of a skilled workforce within the gastronomic tourism sector; and, positioning African gastronomy in the global tourism marketplace through coherent destination marketing, and brand development. We need a sustained effort to promote African foods and showcase our rich cuisine, cooking and dining practices to the world.

Fifth, I would like this forum to critically reflect on gastronomy not just as a form of intangible heritage that supports tourism, but as a vital component of tourism that plays a greater role in promoting nutrition and food production in Africa.

On food production, gastronomy presents a viable avenue in addressing disruptions in supply chains and the implications of climate change on our agricultural practices. In this case, gastronomy has a potential to contribute to food security through enhanced food production so as to meet requirements for varieties of food items required. In a bid to ensure sustainable gastronomy, the Tanzania government has decided to enhance collaboration with local agricultural producers to implement climate-smart methodologies and invest in digital platforms that facilitate connections between tourists/markets and authentic food producers.

Similarly, gastronomy is also potentially capable of improving the nutritional status as it provides the framework for preparing food that is both appealing and culturally relevant, while ensuring that the foods also support health and well-being. To achieve this, we need to work on transforming the traditional focus on taste and presentation of food, to health and sustainability – aligning the pleasure of eating with health consciousness. Therefore, through careful development of recipes and menu plans that are both delicious and nutritious, and promotion of healthy eating habits, gastronomy is undoubtedly poised to bolster nutrition.

Distinguished Participants;

It will be a remiss of me if I end my remarks without highlighting very briefly the Tanzanian cuisine. The Tanzanian cuisine is a unique blend of Asian, Arabic and local tribal flavors – infused with aromatic spices and fresh, locally sourced ingredients. At the heart of it, are staples like *ugali*, a cornmeal porridge, and various rice dishes, served with a variety of side dishes including *mchicha* (spinach) or *nyama choma* (grilled meat). Rice is also a significant component, particularly *wali wa nazi* which is rice simmered in creamy coconut milk. *Pilau*, is another delightful variant of rice – a spiced rice dish infused with cardamom, cinnamon and at times saffron, which makes it a choice for festivals/celebrations and social gatherings. *Nyama choma* or grilled meat for meat enthusiasts – whether its goat, beef or chicken, marinated with a simple mix of salt and sometimes a hint of lemon, is enjoyed with a side of *kachumbari* (fresh tomato and onion salad). For vegetarians, there is *mchicha*, a tasty spinach and peanut sauce, often served alongside rice or *ugali*, and, an array of plant-based eating options such as *maharage* (beans), *kunde* (peas) and *mbaazi* (pigeon peas). I encourage all participants to use your evening hours here in Arusha to sample all these and I assure you that this experience will be unforgettable. I also urge forum participants to spare some of your time after this forum, to explore the beauty of Tanzania, including the breathtaking landscapes, the Serengeti, the Ngorongoro Crater, Kilimanjaro – the roof top of Africa, the vibrant Meru, Maasai, Kurya, Luo as well as Zanzibari culture and rich culinary heritage and the pristine beaches of Zanzibar – the spicy islands of Unguja and Pemba.

Distinguished Delegates;

As I wind up, I highly commend the efforts by the UN Tourism, the Basque Culinary Centre, and all other partners who have contributed to the realization of this forum. Your commitment to fostering sustainable development, aligns seamlessly with our shared vision for a prosperous and resilient Africa.

With these remarks, it is now my singular honor and privilege to declare the 2nd UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Africa, officially opened.

I thank you!
ASANTENI SANA