REPORT OF THE DELEGATION

TO

CHINA INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MART HELD FROM 11-13 NOVEMBER 2016

Presented to Parliament in 2017
1.0 Introduction

1.1 A delegation comprising two Members of the Portfolio Committee on Environment, Water, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Hon S. Mpolu and Hon B. Seremwe and Ms Machaca as the Secretary to the Delegation travelled to Shanghai, China to attend the 2016 China International Travel Mart (CITM). The trip was as a result of an invitation by Zimbabwe Tourism Authority. The CITM was held from 11th to the 13th of November 2016 at Shanghai New International Expo Centre. CITM is universally acknowledged as the largest travel market in Asia and has over the years been a major attraction in the tourism industry. It is an annual event generally held in Shanghai and Kunming on an alternate basis. The CITM 2016 was jointly organised by China National Tourism Administration, Civil Aviation Administration of China and Shanghai Municipal People’s Government.

2.0 Attendance at the CITM

2.1 The following African countries/organisations participated at CITM 2016; South Africa Tourism, Kenya Tourism Board, Serena Hotels (Kenya), Ghana, Tanzania, Seychelles Tourism Board, Equatorial Tourism Ministry and Zimbabwe represented by Zimbabwe Tourism Authority.

2.2 Zimbabwe Tourism Authority explained to the delegation that Zimbabwe as a tourist destination is not known in China compared to other SADC countries. Zimbabwe as a country needs to invest seriously on marketing its culture and tourist attraction areas in order to increase the number of tourist arrivals.

2.3 The participation by Members of the Committee enabled them to have an appreciation of the importance of participating at international tourism shows. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority also wanted Members of the Committee to appreciate the high level of funding other countries were allocating to destination marketing. Meetings with strategic partners and other participants such as Mr Bo Wu of Pacific Association of Travel Agents, Dr Adam Wu of China Business Network and Mr Dibu Dave Mbako of Cloudwave were held. The delegation noted that other countries were taking advantage of these international shows to advertise their countries. The delegation further noted
that other countries had their airlines, tour operators and hotels advertising their products and also exhibiting their culture at CITM.

2.4 The Chinese agents and fellow tourism boards in African countries who had meetings with the delegation advised that Zimbabwe's profile needs to be magnified by vigorous advertising. The tourism industry was not aware of the many attractions that are found in Zimbabwe. An example was given that the Chinese respect culture and family values. If Zimbabwe was to advertise its culture and also Great Zimbabwe, it would attract a number of tourists who were interested in seeing something different and unique. For business people seeking business opportunities, rigorous advertising could attract some investors into the country.

3.0 Funding for Marketing Tourism Industry

3.1 Zimbabwe Tourism Authority said that it had a limited budget for advertising. The funds are allocated to the Authority and those it generates are not enough to undertake the kind of advertising other countries were embarking on. For example, ZTA was not sure whether it would participate at the CITM in 2016 because funds were not made available in time and Zimbabwe could, therefore, not confirm its attendance. Business people and marketing agents assumed that Zimbabwe was not participating in the 2016 expo and so no marketing was done for Zimbabwe in advance. It would be an advantage if Zimbabwe could confirm its participation at CITM in advance by paying the required amounts and informing the Chinese marketing agents so that the tourism industry is aware of Zimbabwe's participation at the 2017 expo.

3.2 Some African airlines were very visible and have direct flights from China to their destinations. It is a fact that aviation brings tourism and business to a country and without tourism the economy is disadvantaged and revenue generation is low. The presence of the national airline as such would help Zimbabwe to become a well-known destination. It would be an ideal situation to have the national airline introducing a direct flight from destinations such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai to Victoria Falls in order to capture Chinese tourists. Other tour operators and companies should
also take advantage of such expos to advertise their businesses so that potential visitors get an appreciation of what Zimbabwe can offer.

4.0 Partnerships

4.1 Meetings were held with South African Tourism Board, China Business Network and Ethiopian Airlines who were all interested to partner with Zimbabwe in destination marketing. A meeting with Mr Bradly Bouwer of the South African Tourism revealed that a lot needs to be done to market Zimbabwe’s many tourist attractions. He said that South African Tourism is prepared to work with the ZTA in joint marketing activities. He emphasised that South Africa need Zimbabwe in terms of tourism. Visitors from Asia and Europe prefer to visit more than one country when they decide to come to Africa for holidays. For example a group visiting South Africa, would take advantage of visiting Zimbabwe as well since the two countries are neighbours.

4.2 Chinese travel consultants said Zimbabwe is not known in China compared to other African countries and a lot of marketing is needed. It was recommended that Zimbabwe should engage professional destination marketing companies to undertake marketing activities in China. It was pointed out that the Chinese were looking for new tourist destinations in Africa and Zimbabwe has a great potential to capture the growing market.

4.3 The delegation was impressed that despite the inadequate advertising, Zimbabwe managed to participate at CITM and observed a lot of interest by different key stakeholders. Indeed Zimbabwe’s presence was noticed as evidenced by the number of people who were visiting the stand.

4.4 ZTA’s future vision is to explore other destination marketing strategies such as road shows and workshops in order to build confidence about Zimbabwe and need to be adequately funded in order to achieve its mandate. Countries such as Zambia,
Botswana, and Namibia who were said to be receiving more Chinese visitors than Zimbabwe were now concentrating on road shows.

4.5 The Chinese Marketing Agents appealed to the Government to consider introducing a landing visa for its Chinese visitors. They complained that the two weeks waiting period for a visa application was too long. They gave an example that for a group visiting South Africa and Zimbabwe, it would take them a month to get their visas because the South African government also takes two weeks to process visas.

4.0 Observations and Recommendations

4.1 Destination Brand

The delegation views destination branding as an imperative for the Ministry. The Ministry and ZTA need to embark on a destination Brand Audit Internationally and brand refreshment process.

4.2 Destination Image

In order to manage perceptions in some markets there is need for the Ministry, through ZTA, to be afforded the opportunity to make the necessary visits to source markets to market the country.

4.3 International Market Presence

This is crucial to improve market representation in source markets.

4.4 Digital Marketing

The delegation views improvement in online presence as vital to attract tourists from all over the world. There is dire need for the Ministry to develop a virtual tour for visitors, conduct destination online campaigns and develop market specific mobile applications.
4.5 The delegation recommends that the funding of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority should be set as a percentage of what the sector contributes to the fiscus in this year's budget allocations.

This is in view of the fact that, the Ministry, through the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, has the capacity to effectively deliver on its mandate. Therefore, there is need for more support from Government in the form of financial and other resources. The delegation notes that Tourism can contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the country.