



By Atayi Babs

Experts at the ongoing climate talks in Marrakech have advocated the development and adoption of a policy and strategic framework that support expansion and mainstreaming of sustainable tourism certification in Africa.

Speaking at a side event in the Africa pavilion on the second day of the COP22 climate conference, water and tourism experts were unanimous in their view that African states should encourage and incentivise green certification of tourism, specifically in relation to monitoring and reducing water and waste.

This, according to them, will set the stage for existing African and International certification programs to have adequate criteria, and established processes and systems for working with the hotel sector to assess and monitor their waste and water management systems.

In addition to other environmental, social and socio-economic components of sustainable tourism, the framework will provide a mechanism to recognise that certification standards use a common and comprehensive approach to sustainability as well as summarise existing monitoring data being gathered by national tourism authorities and international/regional certification bodies specifically relating to the accommodation sector in Africa.

According to Dr. Anna Spenceley, a consultant with the African Development Bank (AfDB), African states can integrate sustainability criteria into their hotel quality-rating programs as a way of supporting Sustainable Development Goal 12 which places emphasis on responsible consumption and production, and also contribute to the objectives of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Tourism.

Jean Michel Ossete, the Coordinator of the African Water Facility, jointly sponsored by the AfDB and the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) believes that the AfDB could support member states to raise awareness on the benefits of sustainable tourism certification in Africa particularly those with currently low levels of certification, improve linkages between established certification programs and member states, where there the program is aligned with the country's objectives, and providing guidance on the design and implementation of incentives to promote improved waste and water management.

Recognising that sustainable tourism certification provides an independent mechanism for evaluating and measuring water and waste management in African hotels, Oseloka Zikora of

the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) advocated support for the development of national waste and water management capacity, to ensure that countries are able and willing to establish and enabling policy framework for good practices, and that hotels can implement them.

“This should be done by providing technical advice and mentoring to governments on how they can promote better water and waste management and certification in the hotel sector through congruent policies, including through incentives, commissioning and sharing research findings on the financial and non-financial benefits of certification, and of good waste and water management practices, that provides clear quantification of the benefits that can be understood by decision makers,” Zikora added.

He further recommended the adoption of a train-the-trainers approach to making the outreach cost effective and locally relevant, as well as establish an online resource library containing tools on waste and water management, training guides and case study examples.

The experts also agreed on the need to develop external coordination and cooperation mechanisms to ensure good communication, linkages and compatible approaches.

Strategic partners identified for this include multi-laterals such as the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), bi-lateral organisations such as GiZ, and NGOs like the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, the Travel

Foundation and International Tourism Partnership, and also networks such as the Sustainable Tourism Certification Alliance Africa.

Collectively, the African and international certification programs have certified at least 715 accommodation facilities in 19 African countries, against their environmental, social and economic criteria.

Though the total actual number of hotels in Africa is not known, Booking.com lists 20,844 hotels in 51 of Africa's 52 countries. It therefore implies that the number of hotels that are monitoring their waste and water consumption, and taking efforts to improve their practices, are a tiny proportion of the number of accommodation facilities on the continent.