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IGAD: Appraising the Role of Regional Integration
in Eastern Africa"

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Towards Sustainable Tourism Development in IGAD: Appraising the Role of Regional Integration in Eastern Africa

Introduction

On the one hand, Sub-Sahara Africa in general, and more specifically Eastern Africa has faced and continues to endure several challenges that have hindered and continue hinder efforts towards economic development and poverty alleviation. The region, for instance, hosts some of the poorest countries in the world with the lowest literacy rates, low life expectancy, low per capita incomes and worsening food insecurity due to prolonged droughts, all of which could be attributed to both human and natural factors (UNDP, 2012). The regional armed conflicts, fuelled by the proliferation of small arms and competition for scarce natural resources, by pastoralists communities whose population ranges between 15 to 20 million, for example, in the Karamoja Cluster, the effects of climate change and the increased insecurity and piracy in the Indian Ocean continue to exacerbated the developmental challenges in Eastern Africa (IPCC, 2007; Young, 2007; Chalk, 2010; Giessen, 2011). Accordingly, therefore, the region is generally considered as being high risk (EIU, 2010). It is worth noting there are current measures and mechanisms being put in place to address these challenges, particularly, issues relating to insecurity, notably the Inter-Governmental Authority's (IGAD) Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that culminated in the independence of South Sudan in 2011 and the African Union's recent interventions in Somalia.

The tourism industry, on the other hand, has emerged to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world employing over 6% of the total global workforce, generating over US\$ 1 trillion, and accounting for 30% of the global exports in commercial services and 5% of the global Gross Domestic Product in 2011 (UNWTO, 2012). The global tourism economy, however, is dominated by the developed nations of the West, although, current and future tourism projections suggest a significant increase in tourism activity in Asia and the Pacific. The proportion of Africa's share of the global tourism has been and continues to be insignificant despite the immense potential exists and emerging opportunities in the continent. Europe, for instance, played host to over 500 million international tourist arrivals, more than half of the world total, accounting for over US 463 billion, while with an average

growth rate of 5.9% the Asia and Pacific region hosted 217 million international tourist arrivals generating over US 289 billion, compared to Africa's 50 million international tourist arrivals generating US 32.6 billion in 2011 (UNWTO, 2012).

The preceding discussion lays emphasis on the traditional perspective of tourism development in SSA especially, as being oriented towards the Western market. While, the Western tourist market, particularly, the European market, will continue dominating the global tourism, future forecasts suggest that other regions, such as, Asia-Pacific will also be important sources markets (UNWTO, 2012). Similarly, with 27.5 million international tourist arrivals in 2010 and a growth rate of 6.2%, one of the fastest in the world, Africa is emerging to be an important tourist market (UNWTO, 2011). Current tourism trends suggest that about 80% of international tourist arrivals travel within their regions (UNWTO, 2011). Indeed, prevailing data suggests that there is a growing trend towards this direction in Africa. For example, while the Western European market has been important for Kenya's tourism accounting for 46% of the total international tourist arrivals in 2006, there are indications that this is on the decline with the African market accounting for 28% over the same period (UNWTO, 2007). Furthermore, regional visitors in Africa accounted for 46% of the total international tourist arrivals, while 31% were drawn from Europe, 4% from Middle East and 3% from Asia-Pacific and the Americas (UNWTO, 2009).

Owing to its economic potential, therefore, the tourism industry is now increasingly being viewed by both the developed and developing nations as an avenue through the respective developmental challenges can be addressed. In the West, for example, the tourism industry is now being used as a tool for industrial park regeneration following the shift of the production base to Asia and rural economy diversification, while in Africa the industry is now upheld as a potential avenue for economic development and poverty alleviation, given the failure of traditional economic sectors, such as agriculture, to bring about meaningful development (UNWTO, 2002; Manyara and Eleri, 2007; Seppe, 2010; Domineco and Miller, 2012).

The Tourism Action Plan for Africa of the African Union and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), for instance, recognises the tourism industry as having *the greatest potential to contribute to the economic regeneration of the continent, particularly through the diversification of African economies and generation of foreign exchange earnings* and further that the sector *has a huge potential to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ultimately eradicate poverty* (NEPAD, 2004:3). The

NEPAD Tourism Action Plan appreciates that its successful implementation rests upon member states creating conducive environments at the national levels and regional economic communities (RECs) at the sub-regional levels. In addition, studies carried out by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) further underscored the important role the sector could play in economic development and poverty alleviation and highlighted the challenges and opportunities for tourism development in the Eastern Africa (UNECA, 2011a; UNECA, 2011b). The studies recommended that a regional framework for tourism development could provide a viable avenue through which the various challenges could be addressed and through which benefits accruing from tourism development could be enhanced in Eastern Africa. As a result of these recommendations, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a region comprising eight countries of Eastern Africa, is currently in the process of developing a regional framework for sustainable tourism development. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to explore the challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism development and regional integration in the IGAD region of Eastern Africa and to recommend appropriate national and regional policy interventions.

The IGAD region of Eastern Africa and Potential for Tourism Development

The IGAD region of Africa is an area comprising eight countries of Eastern Africa namely, Kenya and Uganda to the south, Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea to the north. The region is characterised by diverse climatic conditions ranging from hot, dry and arid desert-like especially towards to the north in countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea to the tropical monsoon-like climate of Ethiopia and the tropical climate of Kenya and Uganda. The general terrain is characterised by pockets of plateaus, both low and high, mountains, especially in Ethiopia, coastal strips and desert plains. The Great Rift Valley also runs across the parts of countries like Ethiopia and Kenya to the East and Uganda to the West.

The prevailing climatic conditions and terrain, thus, offer viable resources that can be exploited for tourism development. Indeed, nature-based tourism products have and continue to dominate the tourism industry in the region. Countries like Kenya and Uganda for instance, are renowned for their safari-based tourism products, with South Sudan geared to follow this path of tourism development given the abundance of fauna and flora. The region is also, as already observed, home to land-formations that have been exploited for tourism purposes in

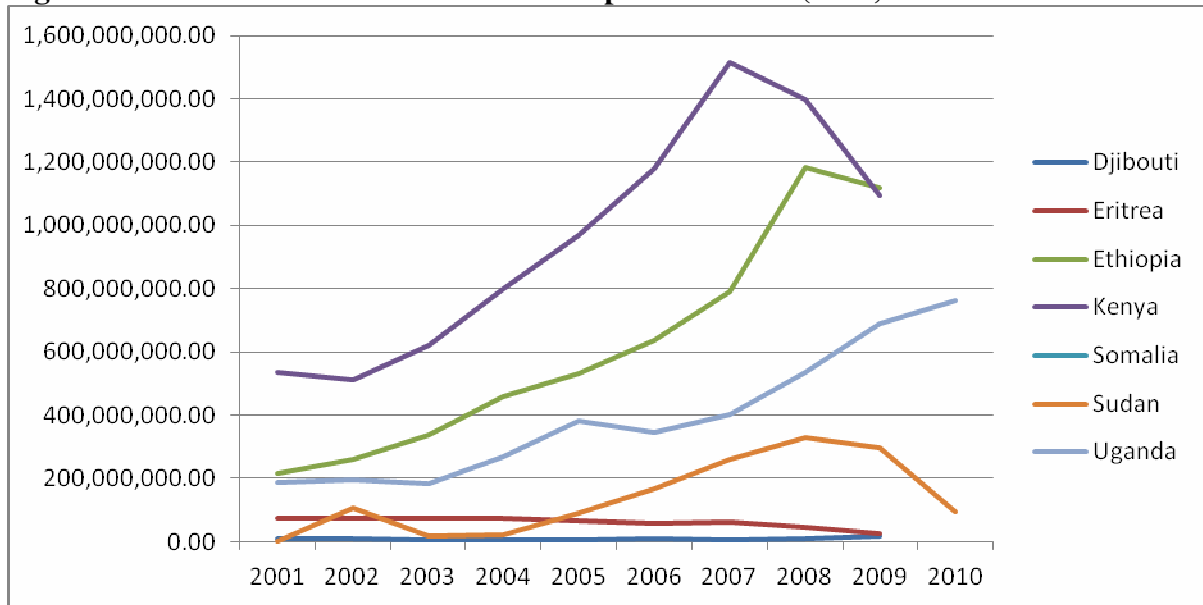
terms of the mountain ranges including the Ruwenzori in Uganda, Mt Kenya in Kenya and the highlands of Ethiopia; water bodies including Lake Victoria and River Nile; the Rift Valley; and the Indian Ocean coastline which runs through Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya.

It is worth also noting that, the IGAD region has harbours alternative resources that have remained underexploited for tourism development purposes. Owing to its history that dates back to the biblical times, Ethiopia for example, is very rich in terms of heritage resources, some of which have been well preserved. Following this abundance, the travel and tourism competitive index ranks the country at position 38 at the level with Egypt (WEF, 2011), yet the latter overshadows the former with about 9.5 million and 468 000 international tourist arrivals respectively in 2010 (UNWTO, 2012). A similar potential exists also in Sudan which is home to historical temples, cities and pyramids just like in Egypt.

Tourism in the IGAD Region of Africa

The tourism industry has consistently played a major role in the economies of countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, and its potential is increasingly being recognised in other countries of region including, Djibouti, Eritrea and South Sudan. At the lower end, for instance, the tourism industry contributes 2% in Eritrea and 3.8% of GDP in Sudan rising to 7.6%, 10.7% and 11.4% for Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya respectively (Euromonitor, 2010; WTTC, 2011). The tourism industry, is also increasingly, being viewed as an important source of foreign exchange earnings within the region. Though there are disparities in terms of tourist receipts across region with three dominant countries i.e. Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, the prevailing trends, nonetheless, suggest an upward trajectory. In 2001, for example, the industry generated USD 186 million, 218 million and 536 million for Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya respectively compared to over USD 688 million for Uganda and over USD 1 billion for both Ethiopia and Kenya in 2009 (World Bank, 2011). The graph below illustrates the general trend of tourist receipts in the IGAD region between 2001 and 2010.

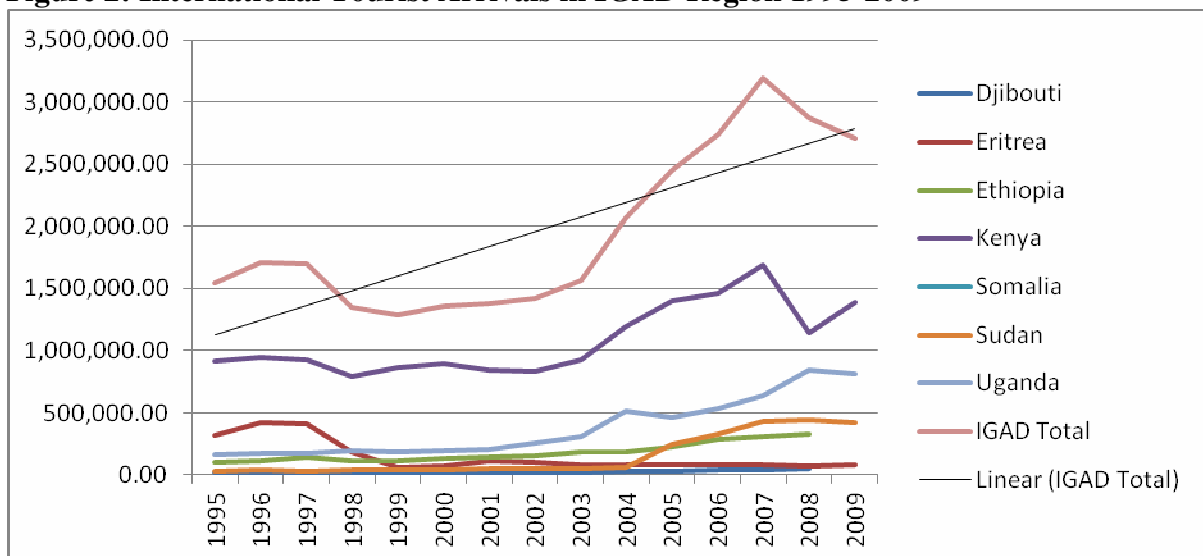
Figure 1: IGAD International Tourist Receipts 2001-2010 (USD)



Source: Adapted from World Bank (2011)

Just like the tourist receipts, international tourist arrivals in the IGAD region have been on upward path over the past two decades. Compared to 1995 when the region played host to only 1.5 million international tourist arrivals, this figure has more than doubled by 2007 (World Bank, 2011). Nonetheless, on the whole, the region's share of global tourist market remains insignificant with South Africa accounting for over a quarter of the total tourist arrivals in SSA (UNWTO, 2012). The graph below provides an illustration of international tourist arrivals in the IGAD region between 1995 and 2009.

Figure 2: International Tourist Arrivals in IGAD Region 1995-2009



Source: Adapted from World Bank (2011)

Though the current projections suggest an optimistic future in terms of international tourist arrivals to the region (World Bank, 2011), some member states appear to be on a downward path. A country like Eritrea, for example, with 417 000 international tourist arrivals in 1995, only received 79 000 international tourist arrivals in 2009 (World Bank, 2011). In addition, Figure 2 reveals that there was a slump in tourist arrivals between 1998 and 1999 from 1.34 million to 1.28 million compared to the total of 1.7 million in 1997 (World Bank, 2011). A similar trend was experienced in the region in 2008 with international tourist arrivals of 2.9 million and 2009 the drop to 2.7 million (excluding figures from Ethiopia and Djibouti). This trend point suggests the sensitivity of the industries in the region to externalities whereby in the case of 90s, the bombing of the American Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the ensuing United States retaliatory bombing of suspect terrorist strongholds in Sudan and the resulting travel advisories by the countries of the source markets, could have contributed to the slump. In the more recent case of 2008, the post election violence in Kenya and the global financial crisis are thought to have caused the decline in international tourist arrivals.

The tourism industry also plays an important role as a source of both direct and given the industry's multiplier effect, indirect employment as well. Estimates, for instance, show that in 2011 the tourism industry will create at least one in ten of the total jobs for Ethiopia and Kenya, with the industry generating 2.2 million and 0.64 million jobs respectively (WTTC, 2011). The table below presents both the total number and percentage of both direct and indirect employment for select countries in the IAD region.

Table 1: Tourism Industry 2011 Direct and Indirect Employment Projections for Select IGAD Countries

	Direct Employment in Tourism			Direct and Indirect Employment through Tourism	
	No. Employed	% Total Employment		No. Employed	% Total Employment
Ethiopia	904 000	3.8	Ethiopia	2 198 000	9.3
Kenya	245 000	3.8	Kenya	643 000	9.9
Sudan	80 000	1.3	Sudan	207 000	3.4
Uganda	181 000	2.7	Uganda	447 000	6.6

Source: WTTC, 2011

Theoretical and Historical Perspectives of Regional Integration in Africa

In the endeavour to understand the regional integration concept, a separate review of the two elements i.e. region and integrate is necessary. First, although no standard and widely accepted definition of the term region exists, it is often used to reflect some form of geographic location, area of government/s authority, some form economic association, or even in terms of socio-cultural characteristics (Chingono and Nakana, 2009). In this context, therefore, various typologies can be discerned including: transnational involving interest groups and informal interactions; intergovernmental; international whereby interactions of member states is almost equal; and core-periphery or hegemonic whereby there is one dominant state (Warleigh-Lack, 2006). Second, to integrate based certain motives, goals or objective/s, simply refers to bring together different parts, elements or components and hence, integration is an act or process of bringing together the different parts, elements or components through some form of framework, say legal, to fulfil the motives, goals or objective/s (Chingono and Nakana, 2009). Regional integration, also referred to as regionalisation (Warleigh-Lack, 2006), therefore, collectively connects the process of bringing together regions through a given framework to accomplish certain motives, goals or objectives. More specifically, Warleigh-Lack (2006:758) defines regionalisation as:

an explicit, but not necessarily formally institutionalised, process of adapting participant state norms, policy making processes, policy styles, policy content, political opportunity structures, economies and identity (potentially at both elite and popular levels) to both align with and shape a new collective set of priorities, norms and interests at regional level, which may itself then evolve, dissolve or reach stasis.

Though a process and dynamic one at that, it is nonetheless imperative to consider factors that could inform the success of regional integration based on the initial motives, goals or objectives. Regardless, Mattli (1999) observes, that the success of regional integration depends on the extent to which economic benefits are derived, enhanced legitimacy of stakeholders, leadership and existence of common formal institutions. In addition, an understanding of the level or degree of regional integration is important in further discerning the success factors. The degree or level of regional integration, be it economic or political, can best be understood by analysing the level of interest by the respective stakeholders, institutional roles and capacities, impacts of external factors to the region, and the level of regional identity (Breslein et al, 2002; Warleigh-Lack, 2006).

The concept of regional integration, thus, though currently prominent in the global scene mainly driven by the political economy, is not a recent phenomenon given the numerous examples of leagues, confederacies, commonwealths, associations and councils that existed in the past, with voluntary forms dating back to the early 19th century (Mattli, 1999). More recently, the upsurge of European integration only started in earnest towards the end of the 19th century (Mattli, 1999). Likewise, the quest for regional integration in Africa arguably dates back to 20th century during the onslaught of the Pan-African movement and its Pan-Africanism ideology that resulted in the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) whose goal was to liberate and unite Africa (Muriithi, 2007; Qobo, 2007). Though fraught with various challenges previously, such as colonialism, apartheid, socio-political and economic, African regional integration has in the 21st century greatly advanced and considered ideal in addressing the emerging developmental issues confronting the continent (Schiff and Winters, 2003; Ng'eno *et al*, 2003).

The quest for African regionalisation has been motivated by the need for both political and economic integration as a means of addressing issues relating to fragmentation, marginalisation and the need to advance the continent's agenda and the collective bargaining power in the global political scene (Sarbo, 2010). Towards this end, a number of initiatives and legal frameworks have been established including, Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act, the Abuja Treaty, Sirte Declaration that commenced the establishment of the African Union with its New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Accra Declaration on Union Government (AU, 2009).

At the sub-regional levels in Africa a number of regional integration initiatives exist such as, including Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), IGAD, NEPAD and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Given the commonalities in terms of goals and objectives of these regional economic communities (RECs), the AU view them as building blocks to the wider African Economic Community (AEC) and bold steps have been undertaken to upscale efforts towards integration. As part of this process, the Abuja Treaty, for instance, set targets for each of the RECs to establish customs union by 2017. However, the RECs face a number of challenges including, overlapping memberships by member states, insufficient

commitment to implementation programmes, dearth in technical capacity, conflicting macroeconomic policies, lack of political goodwill, and missing connection with the wider objectives of the AEC (UNECA, 2004; Qobo, 2007). Thus, in recognising that the set targets for RECs may not be achieved, the AU has put in place an instrument, the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP), to address the various challenges facing RECs with a view to speeding the African integration process (AU, 2009). In addition, AU/NEPAD Action Plan for Africa (AAP) 2010-2015 whose emphasis is on advancing regional and continental integration in Africa identifies priority programmes, projects, sectors and respective actions to be undertake, which will contribute greatly to regional and continental integration (AU, 2009).

Regional Integration and Tourism Development in Africa

Owing to the emerging developmental challenges brought about by the changing global trends, a number of countries increasingly have to integrate, for instance, in Europe and Asia, with a view to enhancing their respective comparative advantages and in so doing advancing their regional competitiveness. Just like in other economic sectors, the strategy of strength in numbers is increasingly gaining prominence as a viable tourism development strategy globally. The relationship between regional integration and tourism development, could therefore, be regarded as symbiotic, whereby, on the one hand the tourism industry is viewed, particularly by the RECs, as a vehicle for promoting regional integration. On the other hand, regional integration is also seen as an avenue through which countries can address the various tourism development challenges and maximise opportunities thereof.

First, there is strong evidence that points to the fact that there is a correlation between tourism flows and regional and international trade (Aradhyula and Tronstad, 2003; Fischer and Gil-Alana, 2009). The study by Kulendra and Wilson (2000) on tourism and international trade in Australia, for example, revealed that international travel (excluding business travel) enhanced international trade, particularly amongst the country's major trading partners. Such relationship between tourism and regional and international trade could be attributed to the fact that following the interactions between tourists and the host destination in general, a better understanding is generated, both by the visitors and hosts, not just in terms of environmental and cultural attributes, but also in terms of economic opportunities which may not necessarily but related or linked to tourism. It is perhaps this theory that informs the

current interest of the AU and NEPAD in promoting tourism within the African continent. The AU/NEPAD Tourism Action Plan for Africa, for instance, in making a case for the industry, observes that the industry has a great potential in promoting continental growth and regional integration (NEPAD, 2004). This is further re-emphasised in the AU's AAP whereby the industry is seen as *an engine and a catalyst for economic development and growth in Africa through the establishment of a conducive environment, regional cooperation, advocacy and stakeholder participation* (AU, 2009:75). The same has also been the case previously where the tourism industry has been a vehicle for diversifying regional economies, employment creation, widening income avenues and enhancing regional interactions for regional citizenry in such RECs as ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), and SADC (Ghimire, 2001).

Secondly, and as already observed, regional integration can be seen as avenue through which countries, both developed and developing, can address the various challenges they face in terms of developing the respective tourism industries and in so doing optimise the benefits. Such challenges may range from tourism product development, marketing, human resources development, to tourism product quality and standards. A closer look at the various regional integration initiatives reveals that one of the fundamental motivations for countries to integrate is to enhance their marketability as tourist destinations. In Europe, for instance, the European Travel Commission's (ETC) key mandate is to market Europe as a tourist destination of which 'Brand Europe' has already been developed (ETC, 2009). In line with this, the idea of selling regions as single destinations has necessitated the need for single regional tourist visas as is the case with the Schengen region in Europe and in consideration within the EAC (UNECA, 2011). In addition, therefore to facilitating movement of tourists within regions, regional integration can also enhance labour mobility, knowledge and skills transfer. Regional integration can also be viewed as a vehicle for enhancing tourism sustainability, especially between countries that, for instance, share cross-border natural resource, as is the case in most SSA neighbouring countries (Blatter, 2000). Nonetheless, the success of such regional integration initiatives appear to rely heavily on the existence of some form of organisational structure or framework, say institutional or legal, to provide guidance and coordination of implementation programmes. ETC, RETOSA (Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa) and ASEAN Tourism serve as examples in this regard.

Methodology

This study seeks to explore the pertinent issues concerning tourism development and regional integration and focuses on the eight member states of the IGAD region of Eastern Africa. As such, the study employs a multiple case study approach to enable an understanding dynamics of the pertinent issues in relation to tourism development, from both national and regional perspectives, given that such an approach is also preferred in facilitating understanding of contemporary issues, especially where comparison between phenomena under investigation is necessary (Yin, 2003). The study is based on a field survey conducted between January 2012 and June 2012 across all the member states excluding Eritrea (the country is currently under suspension) and Somalia. To facilitate the multiple case study methodology, a range of methods were used including, participant observation to collect first hand information of the prevailing situation across the member states, document analysis of existing relevant document and reports to gather secondary information, focus and in-depth semi-structured interviews to gather rich and in-depth qualitative data from respondents. Furthermore, both snowball and opportunistic sampling techniques were used to ensure that appropriate respondents were selected for the study (Veal, 2006). The sampling techniques yielded 35 semi-structured interviews which lasted between 2 to 3 hours on average. The respondents were mainly tourism industry stakeholders drawn from the civil society, academia, public and private sectors. Table 2 details a breakdown of respondents by category and country. A closer look at the table reveals that the distribution of respondents is not even across member states and across the various categories of stakeholders. This follows the deployment of the sampling procedures and alludes to the maturity of tourism development across the member states and sectors. For example, being a newly independent country, South Sudan's civil society, academia and private sectors are as developed as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

Table 2: Breakdown of Respondents during Field Survey January 2012-June 2012

Category	Respondent code	Country
Civil Society	CS1	Ethiopia
	CS2	Ethiopia
	CS3	Ethiopia
	CS4	Kenya
	CS5	Kenya
	CS6	South Sudan
	CS7	Uganda
	CS8	Uganda
	CS9	Uganda
Total	9	
Academia	AC1	Ethiopia
	AC2	Kenya
	AC3	Kenya
	AC4	Kenya
	AC5	Uganda
Total	5	
Public	PU1	Djibouti
	PU2	Ethiopia
	PU3	Ethiopia
	PU4	Kenya
	PU5	Kenya
	PU6	South Sudan
	PU7	South Sudan
	PU8	Sudan
	PU9	Sudan
	PU10	Uganda
	PU11	Uganda
	PU11	Uganda
Total	11	
Private	PR1	Djibouti
	PR2	Ethiopia
	PR3	Ethiopia
	PR4	Kenya
	PR5	Kenya
	PR6	Kenya
	PR7	Kenya
	PR8	South Sudan
	PR9	Uganda
	PR10	Uganda
Total	10	
Grand Total	35	

Findings

The field survey conducted over a period of six months, in line with the aim of the paper, sought to establish tourism stakeholders' views on regionalisation and tourism development within the IGAD region. The interviews were initially asked to share their opinions on the importance of the tourism industry in their respective countries. The respondents upheld the importance of the industry in terms of its potential contribution to GDP, foreign exchange

earnings, balance of payments, government revenues, employment generation, environmental conservation and as a tool for poverty reduction. The newly independent state of South Sudan, for example, sees the tourism industry as a viable vehicle for economic growth and development as summarised below:

... as you know we became independent last year (2011) and we need to provide opportunities for our people given the immense challenges the country faces. We see the tourism industry as one that can bring quick opportunities so that we can generate revenue, create employment, encourage investment...already we have received a requests from a number of potential investors... .. (PU6)

When asked to give opinions about the proposed IGAD regional framework for tourism development, the respondents' responses were generally supportive, though some member states expressed concern as to the level of integration. Respondents from South Sudan, for instance, felt that given the fact that they had recently attained their independence, the more mature states were likely to usurp the opportunities that would accrue from tourism development at the expense of their citizens, while some stakeholders from Uganda were concerned that Kenyans, given their experience in the tourism industry, were likely to take up most jobs generated by the industry as observed below:

... .. if we open up our borders, Kenyans who are better trained than will come and take up all the jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry. Already we have many of them working here and when you look at the top hotels, most the managers working there are Kenyans. (CS7)

On a more positive perspective, respondents from Djibouti, for instance, considered the regional integration initiative as avenue through which the country could enhance its tourism competitiveness as capture in the excerpt below:

We fully welcome this initiative as this will open opportunities for our country. We are a small country that faces a number of challenges when it comes to tourism development. Our human resource is not well developed for example, yet we see a lot of opportunities in tourism development. If this initiative is fully implemented then we could send our people to train in Kenya without restrictions, you know we consider Kenya to have excellent training resources and facilities. (PU1)

Moreover, some respondents welcomed the idea of regional integration arguing that given the abundance and diversity of tourism resources that exist in the region, there were great opportunities from complementing national tourism attractions and that member states needed to amalgamate efforts towards developing the region as a single tourism destination. This they observed, could only be achieved if member states were willing to open up their

borders and commit resources towards selling the region as a single destination and that measures needed to be put in place to facilitate the movement citizens from member states and international tourists across the region. The extract below best captures these sentiments:

... when you look at countries like Ethiopia and Sudan with the rich cultural heritage, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda with the abundance of natural heritage, the region is well endowed with unique world class attractions ... but how can we exploit these when member states still maintain barriers amongst themselves? I need a visa to visit South Sudan, which I need get in advance before travel! These barriers are unnecessary and are a hindrance to tourism and trade in the region ... moreover when tourists come to say Kenya, they may need to visit Uganda and Ethiopia, they will require visas for each country, and this is very cumbersome. (PR5)

What is more, respondents from the civil society fraternity opined that the regional integration initiative was welcome and timely and that it would facilitate the sustainable utilisation natural resources, particularly those that were cross-border. The respondents, further observed that in the endeavour to exploit such resources environmental conservation was key and that involvement of local communities was crucial and that benefits accruing thereof should be used to address their developmental priorities. The respondents further agree that the regional integration initiative could provide opportunities for member states to share best practice, especially in areas where environmental conservation was a priority, such as the development of innovative tourism concepts that also achieved that also address the socio-economic needs of local communities. The piece below provides a summary of these opinions:

... because of colonial borders, our resources and communities are spread across borders, you may recall that the concerted efforts of the civil society necessitated the Tanzanian government to suspend the road construction across the Serengeti which could have affected wildlife negatively and hurt Kenya's tourism ... we are also aware that though the tourism product is predominantly nature-based in the region and that local communities bear the brunt of human-wildlife conflicts, they are yet to benefit from tourism development. We are therefore optimistic that this regional initiative will provide a platform for dialogue amongst member states on how to enhance environmental conservation and management and in so doing achieve sustainable tourism development. (CS5)

When probed about what they foresaw as obstacles that would hinder the development of the IGAD region as a competitive destination, the respondents articulated a number issues which needed urgent attention. The respondents, for instance, felt that the prevailing perception of the insecurity and political instability in the region was a major concern in terms of attracting

both investors and tourists to the region. The killing of tourists in the Afar region of Ethiopia and kidnapping of tourists in the Lamu island of Kenya that resulted in the Kenya's military intervention in Somalia, were cited by members of the private sector as examples of activities that have led to the poor image, issuance of travel advisories by Western governments and the consequent decline in tourism businesses as a result of cancellation of bookings. The respondents, nonetheless, commended the current regional initiatives to bring about peace and stability. These sentiments are summarised below:

... how can we expect to develop the region as a competitive tourism destination when we have all these issues to do with insecurity...you recall last year's tourist kidnappings in Lamu, our partners at the coast suffered losses as a result of cancellations, Western governments still maintain the travel advisories as we still have bombings happening now and then all which have been blamed on Al Shabab of Somalia ...our members are happy with the current interventions in Somalia by the Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia governments to put a stop to the mess in Somalia. (PR10)

Furthermore, the respondents noted that the state of the prevailing transport infrastructure amongst member states and across the region in general was in a very poor state. The poor state of roads and the road network, especially those connecting member states, featured prominently in the interviews and was cited as a major impediment to regional tourism development. It was, for example, observed that though there were connecting roads between Assab in Eritrea and Djibouti, or Addis Ababa in Ethiopia and Nairobi in Kenya via the border town in Moyale, large sections of these roads were in deplorable states accessible only by rugged vehicles. Furthermore, although most countries in the region do have rail transport systems, these are currently not in use and where available the facilities are outdated and schedules unreliable. What is more, the respondents observed and as experienced during the field survey, that the cost of air travel across the region was prohibitive, with lack of direct flights to most destinations. Indeed, ticket prices in the region range between USD 200 and 300 for short-haul flights and USD 600 to 800 for long-haul flights, a fact that respondents contributed to the lack of national regional competitiveness.

On the issue of tourism specific infrastructure, particularly the hotels, the respondents noted that this was a major challenge facing all member states in terms of availability, quality and value for money. The respondents, for example, observed that the region in general lacked a sufficient number of hotels even in countries like Kenya and that as a result the hotel prices were quite high though the quality of service was not commensurate. Furthermore, the

majority of these hotels were located mainly in the capital cities of member states, which in turn meant that tourist activity was also restricted to these areas with minimal if any in the rural or non-urbanised areas as illustrated in excerpt below:

You tend to get that most hotels are located in cities and there seem to be no efforts to encourage investment in other towns or even the rural areas. If you come here when there is a major conference, you will not get a room in the city centre and if you do, my goodness, the price shoots up and as for the quality...I see this as a major challenge for us to be competitive as a tourist destination ...
(PR3)

The respondents, in addition, noted that there was a dearth of human resources necessary to develop the region as a competitive global destination. For instance, it was felt that the region was not producing sufficient manpower to match the growing demands of the tourism industry and that in most cases there was a skills mismatch. In line with this, the issue of lack of research and development was also raised as a key contributing factor for current lack of regional competitiveness. These views are captured in the excerpt below:

I do not see why other member states are worried that our graduates will take up their jobs, we are hardly producing enough for our country! The private is also complaining that the current crop of graduates being churned out into the job market do not possess apt skills ... how then can we expect to compete with other top destinations?... I think the biggest issue really is that for a long time the development of industry has not been informed by sound research and now we can see problems ... (AC2)

Moreover, another fundamental issue raised by the respondents in this regard, was the issue of policy and legislative frameworks across the member states that were not conducive for enhancing respective national and by extension regional competitiveness. Indeed an audit of the prevailing scenario across member states revealed that some countries did not even have tourism specific policies and legislative frameworks and those that did, such frameworks were either outdated and/or were not in tandem with the proposed regional integration initiative. For instance, the respondents felt that member states maintained retrogressive policies that did not encourage regional integration. The respondents, for example, felt that member states maintained stringent rules that hindered regional investment, capital and labour mobility and movement of tourists between countries. In addition, the respondents attributed the challenges of air travel across the region to the perception that member states were not keen on embarking on bilateral air services agreements of arrangements in earnest

and hence were not keen on proactively adopting open-sky policies coupled with the lack of appropriate air transport infrastructure in the region.

