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***Title: Marine Parks and Reserves: Opportunities for
Investments.***

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MARINE PARKS AND RESERVES, OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM INVESTMENT

By

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Background:

Tanzania's fabulous marine tourism resources remains the sole 'virgin' ecotourism destination to date, which has unrivalled potential marketing mix product in the whole central and southern Africa.

Tourism investment opportunities in Tanzania marine environment are justified by its extensive sandy beaches with azure waters, stretching over 800km between Kenya and Mozambique borders. A diverse of unique ecotourism resources and processes are interspersed between the Kenya and Mozambique coasts that include the famous Rufiji delta mangrove forests, numerous lagoons, estuaries and small islands, many sand dunes, extensive continental shelf, rich and endemic marine life, coupled with a rich and diverse friendly coastal cultures. The white sand beaches, the sea and the sunshine all the year round says it all.

The Parliament Act No. 29 of 1994 to oversee the management and development of Marine Protected areas in the Mainland Tanzania establishes the Marine Parks and Reserves Board of Trustee. The Board was formed in 1996. It operates through its secretariat the Marine Parks and Reserves Unit, which is charged with the mandate to establish, monitor, conserve, control and manage marine and freshwater protected areas in mainland Tanzania.

The Goal of Marine Parks and Reserves:

To ensure sustainable conservation of marine parks and reserves resources for the benefit of present and future generation.

The Objectives of Marine Parks and Reserves:

- To protect, conserve and restore the species and genetic diversity of living and non-living marine resources and ecosystem processes of marine and coastal areas.
- To stimulate the rational development of under utilized natural resources.
- To manage marine and coastal areas so as to promote sustainability of existing resources use and recovery of areas and resources that have been over exploited or otherwise damaged.

Attributes, which signify the importance of Marine Parks and Reserves as Tourist Destination:

- The presence of fine complexes of tropical marine and coastal habitats such as coral reefs, mangroves, sea grass and remnant coastal forests all interspersed in one area.
- Presence of expense sheltered and shallow or inter-tidal areas which provide conditions conducive to highly productive fisheries.
- Presence of nesting grounds for endangered species of sea turtles as well as playing grounds for dolphins and increasingly sightings of dugongs.
- Location of feeding grounds for wading birds and nesting areas for open billed stock and fish eagles.
- Presence of large colonies of fruit bat *Pteropus seychellensis comorensis*.
- Presence of cultural and historical sites, Ruins, Some which date back almost 1000 years, that encompass Shiraz, Arab, Portuguese, Germans and Swahili occupation and reflect the diverse cultural and history of East African Coast.

Potential tourist activities in Marine Parks and Reserves.

Tourism activities in Marine Parks and Reserves must be of low impact on nature and social aspects of the society as addressed in the national tourism policy. The activities might include:

- **Bird watching:** MPA are also important bird life areas; the elusive crab plover, famous fishing eagle, other bird life and various species of endemic birds being found here.
- **Boating and rowing** Our Marine parks and Reserves are located in areas that provide an ideal Seascape for Boating and rowing
- **Diving and Snorkeling:** One of the attributes of the Marine Parks and Reserves is the unspoiled and the most pristine underwater vistas in the West Indian region. The crystal clear water around the Marine Parks and Reserves can make diving and snorkeling enjoyed almost all year round. This is for watching coral reef and beautiful fishes, turtles and other marine life
- **Sailing and fishing:** Apart from diving; sailing and fishing form another pastime activities in a marine Park. Popular game fish include sailfish, Blue martin, jackfish and the like.
- **Trekking and camping:** Traveling on foot and enjoying beautiful landscape, intertidal shore, plants and wildlife.
- **Wilderness:** Particularly in coastal forests, mangroves and isolated sand island in the middle of nowhere.
- **Relaxing Beaches:** Pristine unspoiled beaches mostly fringed with palm trees or casuarinas trees.

- To ensure that villages and other local resident user in the vicinity of, or dependant on the Marine Park and or Marine Reserves are involved in all phases of the planning, development and management of the Marine Parks or Marine Reserves, share benefits of the operation of the protected area and have priority over the resources use and economic opportunity afforded by the establishment of Marine Park and Reserve.
- To promote community oriented education and dissemination of information concerning conservation and the sustainable use of the Marine Parks and Reserves.
- To facilitate research and to monitor resource conditions and uses within the Marine Park and reserve

The management approach is collaborative and integrated that foster cooperative and partnership arrangement with key stakeholders in its management units. Besides emphasis is on multiple use management that allows residents and private property development in areas designated as marine parks.

Since the Marine Parks and Reserves Board establishment in 1996, a total of two marine parks and five marine reserves have been gazetted and are operational. There are also twenty-five non-gazetted marine reserves along the Indian Ocean. Plans to establish a trans frontier conservation area on lake Nyasa are underway and at an advanced stage. Mafia Island Marine Park the largest Marine Park in the Indian Ocean (822 KM squared) has a Management Plan that is operational. Mnazi-bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (the 2nd Marine Park) management plan is being developed. The Management Plan process development for Dar-es-salaam marine reserves system that comprises of four marine reserves is due shortly in the current financial year. The draft Environmental Impact Assessment and Investment guideline document is in place and operational.

Tourism potential in Marine Parks and Reserves:

The Tanzania's Marine Parks and Reserves areas are excellent for offering a special holiday experience. The true potential of these areas lies in their unspoiled natural and peaceful environment. The natural and cultural resources provide an opportunity for national and foreign visitors to enjoy and generate revenue nationally, for the District and for local communities.

Possible areas of investments:

- Chartered day sailing
- Deep-sea fishing
- Excursions to islands (via helicopter, plane or boat)
- Scuba diving and Padi Diving certification
- Yacht and motorized boat charters
- Sunset and morning cruises
- Guided snorkelling trips
- Water-skiing
- Day light resorts
- Kayaking.

Conclusion:

There is a viable tourism investment opportunities in the marine parks and reserves domain as highlighted in the Tourism Master Plan. The uniqueness of Tanzania marine ecotourism product is the basis for Tanzania competitive edge advantages, and definitely its people and tranquillity. Furthermore, the ongoing national structural sector reform programme is boosting the marine resources investment competitiveness. These initiatives are to underscore the economic rationale of our marine resources in the light of broadening the national taxation base and bring about economic transformations at the household levels, as an important incentive for marine conservation.

Further more the Board of Trustees for Marine Parks and Reserves has been vested the responsibility to chart out strategies for better and effective management of coastal beaches along the whole stretch of the mainland coast. Marine Parks and Reserves is closely collaborating with local research institutions and other interested partners in scientific resources surveys and monitoring as a management strategy for effective management.

The enabling Act that established Marine Parks and Reserves is being reviewed with the view to accommodate the new changes in the Marine Parks and Reserves portfolio. Therefore concerted efforts are required to facilitate, design and strategize the tourism master plan for Tanzania tourism marketing mix product as an emergent ecotourism destination in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Thank you for your kind attention.