

The Victoria Falls Statement on Structural Change for Women in Tourism in Africa

We, **Ministers of Tourism from UN Tourism Member States**, meeting in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe (29 April – 1 May 2026), at the invitation of the Government of Zimbabwe, under the high patronage of **H.E. Dr. Auxillia Mnangagwa**, First Lady and Patron for Tourism, in the framework of the [2nd UN Tourism Regional Congress on Women Empowerment in Tourism in Africa under the theme Advancing from Empowerment to Leadership: Driving structural changes in the tourism sector in Africa](#) and in the presence of **Ms. Shaikha Al Nuwais**, UN Tourism Secretary-General, and **H.E. Barbara Rwodzi**, Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry do hereby:

1. **Align** our actions with the [African Union Agenda 2063](#) (*The Africa We Want*), the [UN Tourism Agenda for Africa: Tourism for Inclusive Growth](#), and [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development alongside the SDGs](#), **positioning women's empowerment and the targets of SDG 5** as central pillars for Africa's socio-economic transformation.
2. **Acknowledge** that while women make up to 78% of Africa's hospitality workforce, they remain concentrated in informal roles and underrepresented in leadership.
3. **Recognize** the progress toward gender parity, noting that in Africa women now lead 41% (21) of the national tourism ministries and authorities compared to 59% (30) led by men—a positive trend that requires continued structural change.
4. **Reaffirm** our commitment to the goals set in [Accra](#), Ghana (2019), and in [Freetown](#), Sierra Leone (2024) regarding education, innovation, and finance.
5. **Welcome** the 2026 [UN Tourism/ITF Global Report on Women in Tourism Transport](#), which highlights the underrepresentation and working conditions of women in the transport value chain.
6. **Commend** the growth of the **Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WITLAC)**¹, led by Sierra Leone and facilitated by UN Tourism, as a key regional advisory body and celebrating the announcement of the **UN Tourism Mentorship Programme for African Women with the support of the Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WITLAC)** as a vital initiative for developing the next generation of women tourism leaders.
7. Call on Member States, the private sector and civil society actors to undertake the following commitments under the "Victoria Falls Action Plan for Women in Tourism in Africa" (2026–2030):

¹ WITLAC: Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee. This committee was created in 2019 by African Women ministers, in the framework of the 1st UN Tourism Regional Congress on Women Empowerment in Tourism in Africa, Accra, Ghana with the main objectives to elevate the role of women in tourism, dismantling structural barriers and accelerate their full equal integration as leaders in the tourism sector.

I. Reform & Accountability

- **Data & Budgeting:** producing sex-disaggregated data to support effective policymaking.
- **Resource Allocation:** Partnering with relevant Ministries to promote gender-responsive budgeting that aligns national resources with women empowerment goals.
- **Policy Integration:** Implementing [UN Tourism Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for the public sector](#) and [Gender- inclusive strategy for Tourism Businesses](#).

II. UN Tourism Mentorship Programme for African Women with the support of the Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WITLAC)

- **Professional Pipeline:** UN Tourism Mentorship Programme for African Women with the support of the Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WITLAC) as a vehicle to equip women with the technical skills and professional networks required for strategic leadership.
- **Pathways to Authority:** Supporting initiatives that facilitate the transition of women into high-level executive and board-level positions, utilizing **WITLAC** as a strategic advisory body to guide these pathways.

III. Finance & Innovation

- **Investment-Ready SMEs:** Expanding access by women-led businesses to credit, grants, and financial instruments.
- **Digital Tools:** Facilitating women's use of AI and digital tools to boost competitiveness in the global tourism value chain.

IV. Solidarity & Advocacy

- **Strategic Sponsorship:** Promoting a culture of active advocacy and sponsorship to provide women with strong role models and the institutional support needed to dismantle systemic barriers to professional advancement.
- **Unified Voice:** Empowering **WITLAC** to represent African women's interests with the African Union and international partners.

We express our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe for their warm hospitality and outstanding organization of this important regional congress.

Adopted in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 1 May 2026