# Optimism in the air

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If the optimism at the recent tourism stakeholders' meeting held in Harare on the 25th and 26th of March was anything to go by, then it seems like Zimbabwe is on the right track for putting in place the correct policies for economic recovery. Already, **Germany, the United States and Japan have lifted travel warnings on Zimbabwe**. Although economic recovery is a long-term process and not an event, participants at the conference identified the **tourism sector** as the most appropriate vehicle for providing the quick-wins that the country needs to regain its status as one of the top destinations in Africa.

Issues discussed at the conference included the need for the country to establish an International Marketing Council, introduction of an '**Open Skies 'policy** and the creation of a Zimbabwe tourism fund. The next few months will be very exciting for us at African Sun as the conference resolutions are followed-up with appropriate policies.

The conference had high-level participation and it was good to see familiar faces from the private and public sectors, diplomatic corps and civil society. Also present at the conference was the country's Vice President, Joyce Mujuru, who gave the opening address, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Arthur Mutambara, who gave a passionate address on **Zimbabwe's country re-branding**.

African Sun has almost 60% share of the hospitality market in Zimbabwe, so this was definitely good news for us! With the 2010 World Cup fast approaching and also in anticipation of increasing tourist arrivals in the country, we have embarked on a refurbishment exercise of our key operations to be completed by then. Our Chief Executive Shingi Munyeza, in high spirits from his 2nd consecutive award as the Institute of Directors of Zimbabwe (IoDZ) Director of the Year, announced the group's intention to refurbish its hotels. So far three multilateral financial institutions have been positively engaged for this purpose and with the **liberalisation of the Zimbabwean economy** and increasing investor confidence in the country lines of credit have become more readily accessible.

No doubt the global economic crisis means that **tourist arrivals will be affected**, but if the goodwill and energy in Zimbabwe is there to get the tourism sector back on track, what better time to start than now, since the benefits will be long term?