TATO Rolls Out Safari Guides Code of Conduct to Foster Responsible Tourism

Tanzania Tour operators have unveiled a new safari guide code of conduct and ethics designed to elevate professional standards in the rapidly growing tourism industry.

Developed by the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO), this document serves as a key reference for promoting responsible and sustainable tourism.

Launched in Arusha on October 14, 2024, TATO Vice-Chairman Mr. Henry Kimambo described the document as a comprehensive set of principles to guide safari guides and tourists in fulfilling professional requirements.

"For the document to be effective, we expect all parties—state-run conservation agencies like Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA), the travel industry, communities, and tourists—to embrace it," Mr. Kimambo told stakeholders gathered at Gran Melia Hotel for the commemoration of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Day.

The code of conduct aims to maximize the benefits of the multi-billion-dollar industry while minimizing its potential negative impacts on Tanzania’s environment, cultural heritage, and communities.

TATO Chairman Mr. Wilbard Chambulo praised the Association’s conservation sub-committee for crafting the Safari Guide Code of Conduct and Ethics.

"This initiative will elevate safari guiding standards across Tanzania and strengthen our commitment to sustainable tourism and heritage preservation," he remarked, urging all tour operators to adopt the code and ensure their guides comply with its standards.

"By embracing these guidelines, we can significantly enhance the image and quality of safari guiding in Tanzania," Mr. Chambulo concluded.

The Chairman of the Tanzania Tour Guides Association (TTGA), Mr. Lembris Loipuko, endorsed the code, asserting that it will revolutionize the tourism industry.

"This is an invaluable tool for ensuring the sustainability of wildlife safaris in Tanzania, providing tourists with unforgettable experiences and safeguarding natural and cultural heritages," Mr. Loipuko emphasized.

TATO Executive Director Mr. Elirehema Maturo outlined the code’s seven key focus areas: professionalism and presentation, conduct and ethics, training and experience, vehicle protocols, environmental impact, wildlife interaction, and cultural sensitivity.

He highlighted that the code stresses professionalism in dress, language, and behavior, both on and off duty.

It also includes compliance with national laws, respect for privacy, inclusiveness, and prohibits illicit drug use and alcohol consumption while on duty.

Mr. Maturo emphasized the importance of safeguarding clients' privacy and data. He stated, "Guides should operate within their area of expertise and pursue ongoing professional development. The code includes emergency protocols and stresses the need for accurate information."

Regarding vehicle protocols, Mr. Maturo highlighted that the guidelines aim to ensure vehicle safety, adherence to speed limits, and respectful driving, all of which are essential for conservation and client safety.

On environmental matters, the code encourages responsible waste management, the avoidance of single-use plastics, and the protection of wildlife. Mr. Maturo underscored the responsibility guides have to minimize their ecological footprint and to educate clients on sustainability practices.

When it comes to wildlife interaction, the booklet emphasizes minimal interference with natural habitats, respect for animal comfort zones, and the discouragement of disruptive behaviors.

Mr. Maturo also addressed the cultural sensitivity component, advocating for safari guides to foster respectful engagements with local communities, thereby enriching tourists' cultural experiences.

TATO established in 1983 with merely 35 members, thanks to the efficiency of the association in representing private tour operators to the government, the membership base has grown by leaps and bounds over the years, reaching 300 plus members to-date.

This is equivalent to 78.48 percent of the total licensed tour operators in Tanzania, the home of the number one safari destination in the world.