

WOES » SECTOR YET TO RECOVER FROM THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF TERROR ATTACKS

# Boost for sickly tourism as chartered flights to resume

**Currently, only German airline Condor operates two charter flights a week from Frankfurt to Mombasa**

BY MATHIAS RINGA  
@mathiasringa  
mringa@kenationmedia.com

International tourist arrivals are expected to increase next month when chartered airlines from Europe resume flights to Mombasa.

Normally, during the low season (April to July 15), most flights withdraw from the route citing low passenger numbers. Currently, only German airline Condor operates two charter flights a week from Frankfurt.

The resumption of the chartered flights is good news for the sector that has been performing dismally for a while but has over the recent past shown some signs of recovery.

In March, the Ministry of Tourism projected that the sector would grow by 20 per cent this year compared to last year. And last month, ForwardKeys a global organisation, which monitors future travel patterns by analysing 14 million reservation transactions each day, indicated that international bookings to Kenya for the summer season had increased by 27.7 per cent compared to last year.

Since April, hotel occupancy in Mombasa has been averaging between 30 and 40 per cent. In Diani resort town in Kwale county, occupancy has been at below 20 per cent while in Malindi and Watamu tourist



**\$1.2bn**  
Amount that the government injected into charter incentive programme announced last year.

The CS said the government's reduction of park entry fees from \$19,000 per visitor to \$16,000 was also attracting wildlife enthusiasts to visit the country for safari during the high season.

Mr Balala said his ministry and KTB have been marketing the country aggressively in Europe, US and emerging markets such as China, India and the Middle East to help attract more holidaymakers.

The CS said leading tour operators in the traditional source markets are now selling Kenya as a safe holiday destination.

Mr Balala called on hotel-owners to upgrade their facilities and improve their products to attract more high-end holidaymakers.

The CS said he would soon meet with county officials from Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, Taita Taveta, Tana River and Lamu for talks on product development and beach management.

He called on the county governments to come up with laws to help address harassment of tourists on the beaches, keep the beaches clean and improve infrastructure.

Kenya Coast Tourism Association chairman Mohammed Hersi said he expects hotel occupancy in Mombasa to soar to 60 per cent when the high season begins next month.

Mr Balala said a team from his ministry and the Kenya Tourism Board have been creating awareness on the charter incentive programme in traditional source markets of Germany, UK, France and Italy to help attract more airlines.

Other markets targeted for charter flight incentives include Poland, Russia and Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

"The government's efforts to woo charter airlines to fly to Mombasa are bearing fruit as several airlines are expected to introduce flights to the coastal city," he said.

"We expect some airlines to resume flights to Mombasa from July 15 while others will follow suit in November this year."

Other factors which have attracted charter airlines, the minister said, include the waiver on landing fees and \$15,000 visa fee for children below 16 years.