

**POLITICS PRESIDENCY**



**TWITTER WARS**

# Joho-Uhuru feud flares up as governor tweets he was left out of Tourism meet

CS Najib Balala says his department had communicated to the county government but was directed to the Council of Governors

**MAUREEN MUDI AND CHARLES MGHENYI**  
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Differences between Mombasa Governor Hassan Joho and the government played out on the first day of President Uhuru Kenyatta's Coast tour.

During the State House Tourism Summit, Joho sent tweet after tweet claiming his government has not been invited to the event. He termed the summit a public relations stunt.

Mombasa Senator Hassan Omar also took to Twitter, attacking Joho,

**(+) GOVERNOR, PRESIDENT WRANGLES FAR FROM OVER**

On August 15, Governor Hassan Joho said he will not accept to be treated like a subordinate leader when President Uhuru Kenyatta arrives in Mombasa. The President was in Mombasa on a month-long visit in December and January, but for the first two weeks, he did not invite Joho to any of his functions. This caused friction between the two leaders, with Joho publicly accusing Uhuru of disrespecting him during a function in Likoni, where the President issued title deeds to occupants of the 900-acre Waitiki Farm. "I heard they announced they are coming back here. We are watching and waiting for them,"

accusing him of always whining. "I wasn't invited but I don't whine. I hope everyone plays their part as I play mine." He said leaders should be proactive rather than wait for a State House Summit then complain about not being invited.

Master of ceremonies Ted Josiah was seen heading to Tourism Cabinet Secretary Najib Balala from time to time to show him Joho's tweets. He wanted him to address the governor's concerns.

Several figures also questioned why the county government was ab-

sent. Kenya Association of Hotel Keepers and Caterers executive Sam Ilwaye said the county plays a major role in tourism and it is wrong not to have any county representative.

Joho dismissed calls by Balala for dialogue saying, "We could dialogue together as stakeholders if only we were invited to the forum. Dialogue is key to creating synergy."

Joho, who often criticises the administration, added, "National government is again talking at us instead of talking with us on tourism matters. Such PR exercises will not advance tourism."

Balala said his department had communicated to the county government but was directed to the Council of Governors.

"We respect institutions and I only had the influence of a quarter of the people who attended. It is a public event, and as I said from the beginning, we want to partner with the counties to make this a success," Balala said.

In another tweet, Joho said, "How can the CS talk about involving the county government and he doesn't invite the host and Coast counties to such a forum?" Balala said tourism at the Coast has declined due to insecurity, poor infrastructure and dirty streets, especially in Mombasa.

Tourism CS Najib Balala with some of the invited guests during the Tourism Summit at State House, Mombasa, yesterday  
/MKAMBURI  
/MWAH/ASI

**SEVERAL STAKEHOLDERS ALSO QUESTIONED WHY THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT WAS ABSENT**

**TOURISTS INFLOX**

## 10-member team to market Kenya as conference destination

A 10-member task force has been formed to establish a Convention Bureau.

Tourism Cabinet Secretary Najib Balala said the agency will market the country as a conference destination to increase tourist arrivals. It will be chaired by hotelier Jasneem Danji. Kenya has over the years has been marketed as a holiday destination.

However, in the recent years, conferences have increased. Kenya is currently ranked among the top three conference destinations in Africa, Balala said. He spoke yesterday during the Tour-

ism State House Summit in Mombasa town. The task force is expected to give its report within 30 days.

"We want to establish a bureau which will not only market Kenya International Convention Centre as the only convention centre, but also market Serena, Kempinski, Sarova and other facilities," the CS said.

He said the future of the tourism sector lies in convention tourism. Balala cited the just-ended Tokyo International Conference on African Development at the KICC. Some 47 head of state and government attended the conference.

Kenya has hosted several high-level conferences since last year. They include TICAD VI, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, UN Environment Assembly and the Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2015, which was attended by US President Barack Obama.

Balala said the government wants to expand KICC, renovate the Bonas of Kenya and build a 10,000-capacity conference facility at the Coast. "We will build a new conference hall at the KICC and look at how best to build a modern conference facility at Bonas."



Tourism CS Najib Balala/FILE