

DOMESTIC TOURISM PROMOTION DEPARTMENT

2024 CAPITAL PROGRAMME: DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL BLUE ECONOMY AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY IN TOURISM” (EGRP6208095) ORGANIZED BY THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ART, CULTURE, TOURISM AND CREATIVE ECONOMY IN COLLABORATION WITH THE INSTITUTE OF TOURISM PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA (ITPN) HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 23RD APRIL, 2025 AT SHEHU MUSA YAR’ADUA CENTER, CENTRAL AREA, ABUJA.

The seminar brought together stakeholders across government agencies, private sector players, tourism professionals, marine environmentalists, and representatives of coastal communities to discuss and chart a course for sustainable development of Nigeria’s maritime tourism within the context of the Blue Economy.

Opening Session

2. The Honourable Minister of the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, Barrister Hannatu Musa Musawa, represented by Mr. Bisong Sunday, Assistant Director overseeing the Department of Domestic Tourism and Promotions, officially declared the seminar open and highlighted Nigeria’s extensive 850km coastline, vibrant coastal communities, and rich marine biodiversity as key assets to be strategically harnessed under a well-structured blue economy that supports sustainable tourism, job creation, cultural heritage promotion, and marine ecosystem preservation in line with the government’s economic diversification agenda.

3. In her opening remarks, the Director Overseeing the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Akudo-Nwosu U.N., represented by Assistant Director (DTP), Mr. Tony Ukpoju, emphasized the importance of developing Nigeria’s Blue Economy and preserving coastal biodiversity through tourism, identifying tourism—alongside fisheries, marine transportation, and renewable energy—as a key pillar for inclusive growth, job creation, and environmental sustainability, while also reiterating the seminar’s alignment with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s Renewed Hope agenda and calling for active stakeholder engagement and unified efforts toward a sustainable and prosperous future.

4. Chief Abiodun Odusanwo, National President of the Institute of Tourism Professionals of Nigeria (ITPN), emphasized that Blue Economy offers a comprehensive framework for a sustainable, inclusive, and economically rewarding maritime tourism sector, highlighting the need to empower local communities as custodians of marine ecosystems and actively engage the private sector as a catalyst for innovation and investment.

4. Goodwill Messages

- i. Rear vice admiral Sunday Daniel Atakpa of the Nigerian Navy thanked the organizers of the programme while appreciating its aptness in view of the fact that

- he had long before now canvassed for a ministry of Blue Economy. He therefore expressed his joy and urged urgent action in harnessing Nigeria’s rich biodiversity.
- ii. The Vice Chancellor, University of Benin, represented by the Deputy vice chancellor Prof. Adeshina Ayinde emphasized the untapped scientific and pharmaceutical resources within Nigeria’s blue economy.
 - iii. The Director General, National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) represented by Dr. Babatunde Adebisi, in his good will message thanked the stakeholders for this seminar on the development of blue economy, he stressed the need to protect the ocean from archeological theft and highlighted the importance of Archeology and its resources in the development of sustainable blue economy and biodiversity in tourism.
 - iv. The Director General of National Gallery of Arts (NGA) represented by Mr Emeka Odiari stressed on the impact of human activities and effect of climate change in the coastal region which is why the commission is charged with deliberate effort in using art to raise awareness on the importance of preserving and protecting the oceans, coastlines as well as inspire people to take actions, make sustainable choices and support conservation efforts.
 - v. Mr. Edwin Enenta, National Institute of Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) highlighted the importance of marketing blue economy and coastal biodiversity in promoting sustainable Tourism.

5. Paper Presentations

Three technical papers were presented during the seminar:

- i. **“Blue Economy and its Relevance to Sustainable Maritime Tourism Development in Nigeria”** by *Alhaji Mohammed Sheriff (National Vice President, Institute for Tourism Professionals of Nigerian (ITPN)*

Alhaji Sheriff outlined the key principles of the blue economy—sustainability, inclusivity, innovation, environmental protection, and integrated planning—as vital to sustainable tourism. He highlighted Nigerian's potential in marine ecotourism, pescaturism, diving, and SAVE tourism, but warned of challenges such as weak governance and environmental degradation. He called for investment in sustainable infrastructure and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

- ii. **“Community Engagement and Capacity Building on Maritime Tourism in Nigeria”** by *Mr. Peter Ogar National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR)*

He emphasized the importance of empowering local communities through knowledge-sharing and skill development to manage tourism initiatives. He pointed out that local traditions, culture, and behaviors are integral to tourism experiences and should be preserved. Active participation of communities in tourism planning and implementation was identified as essential for sustainability.

- iii. **“Impact of Maritime Tourism on Coastal Biodiversity and Conservation in Nigeria”** by *Mr. Aminu Kyawa (Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy)*

Kiyawa stressed the need for responsible tourism practices to protect marine ecosystems. He advocated for sustainable tourism guidelines, pollution control, climate adaptation

(e.g., mangrove reforestation), and international partnerships, drawing inspiration from global examples like Norway and Singapore.

6. Panel Discussions

A six-member panel session was held, featuring the three paper presenters and three representatives from key institutions: Mr. Aminu Kiyawa of the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, Alhaji Mohammed Sheriff from the Institute for Tourism Professionals of Nigeria (ITPN), Mr. Peter Ogar and Mr. Edwin Eneta from the National Institute of Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR), Mr. Ahmed Abari of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and Mrs. Hannatu Jimeta of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority (NTDA), and which included Questions and Answers with participants. Key questions addressed included how Nigeria can develop its blue economy through infrastructure, policy, Public Private Partnership PPPs, and community training, and what lessons can be learned from countries with advanced blue economy systems.

7. Key issues raised during discussions included:

- Inconsistent policies and lack of harmonised regulations in the Blue Economy sector.
- Absence of comprehensive scientific data to inform sustainable marine resource management.
- Climate change, unregulated exploitation, and poor infrastructure affecting coastal biodiversity.
- Need for investment in critical infrastructure such as modern ports, coastal roads, and waste management systems.

The panelists collectively called for **multi-sectoral collaboration** among relevant players, government agencies, private investors, local communities, and non-governmental organisations—to unlock Nigeria’s economic potential through maritime tourism.

8. Suggestions/Recommendations:

- a) A call to reduce Nigeria’s overdependence on oil and gas, urging a shift towards marine-based economic activities.
- b) The need for inclusive policy design that actively involves local youths and coastal dwellers.
- c) Government and private sector stakeholders should increase investments in blue infrastructure including coastal access roads, eco-resorts, marine transport, and safety facilities

9. Conclusion

The seminar concluded with a resounding agreement on the urgent need to strengthen institutional frameworks, foster cross-sectoral partnerships, and implement inclusive policies to harness the immense potential of Nigeria’s maritime tourism and coastal

biodiversity under the Blue Economy framework. The event marked a crucial step toward aligning national development strategies with sustainable ocean-based economic opportunities, community empowerment, and environmental preservation.

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