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Unlocking Africa's rural tourism potential is crucial - Minister

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Kumawu (Ash), Dec. 23, GNA - Mrs Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, has called for the need to unlock Africa's rural tourism potential for the improvement of the lives of rural folks.

She said the sector had a tedious responsibility to unlock Africa's rural tourism potential in order to create economic opportunities in deprived communities.

Mrs Ofosu-Adjare was speaking at the inauguration of the Ghana Rural Tourism Development Forum in Kumawu, in the Sekyere Afram Plains District of the Ashanti Region.

The forum was put together by the New York University (NYU) Africa House and the Center for Technology and Economic Development (CTED) in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts.

The event brought together more than 200 participants to discuss the role of rural

tourism and technology in economic development.

The Minister along with Barima Sarfo Tweneboah Kodua, Kumawuhene and Nana Serwaa Amponsah, Kumawuhemaa also used the occasion to open the Kumawu Palace Museum.

Mrs Ofosu Adjare said using tourism to create jobs and improve income levels in the rural communities would better the living conditions of people.

That, she said, called for tourism administrators and policy makers to develop pro-poor tourism policies and programmes that benefit rural communities.

'Our tourism policies and strategies which focus on product development, tourism marketing, human development, tourism infrastructure and tourism research and information, must be reviewed with the aim of providing equal access of tourism opportunities in rural areas,' she added.

The Minister said in this regard, it was imperative for District Assemblies to work closely with rural destination managers to develop rural tourism products which often involve small-scale operations and culturally-based products that could be conducive to the wide participation of both communities and owners of such products.

She said Ghana believes that its success in unlocking Africa's Rural Tourism Potential for the benefits of rural communities depend on creating a platform to share knowledge of best practice, development opportunities and challenges in rural areas for tourism development.

Mrs Ofosu-Adjare said the country also believes that facilitating the coordination of rural tourism development initiatives amongst relevant stakeholders and creating an enabling environment for rural tourism development to stimulate job creation would unlock the potentials.

She said the Ministry would continue to strengthen collaboration with all its social partners towards the development of a viable tourism, culture and creative arts industry for national development.

She commended management of the New York University Africa House for their relentless efforts in establishing Centers for Technology and Economic Development in Accra and Kumawu.

She also lauded the support of the Kumawuhene, Barima Sarfo Tweneboah Kodua and the Kumawu Traditional Council for working closely with the team to establish the Kumawu Palace Museum.

The Minister urged stakeholders to strengthen the partnerships to help attract

hundreds of international and local researchers and tourists and create economic opportunities emerging from potential tourism and cultural enterprises.

She said the Ministry was poised to partner the New York University, Centre for Technology and Economic and Africa House in activities which would inure to the mutual benefit of all.

She said the initiative was in line with the Ministry's policy of developing community based tourism, culture and creative arts industry for the benefit of the local people.

Professor Yaw Nyarko, Director of New York University's CTED and Africa House, said, 'This is only the beginning for tourism development in Kumawu.'

He said the New York University CTED and Africa House were partnering with the Kumawu community to boost tourism and economic growth to transform the community to a sought-after destination for domestic and international tourists.

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