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FIFTH EDITION

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Hon. Rebecca Miano: Driving Kenya's Rise as Africa's Next Global Meetings Hub

Reimagining Accommodation Models for Experiential and High-Impact MICE Events

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Contents



05

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DESK

Executive Forward: It's A MICE World



06

NEWS

Africa MICE Summit 2026 Set to Take Place in Nairobi, Kenya, this September



23

TRENDS IN THE MICE INDUSTRY

Hon. Rebecca Miano: Driving Kenya's Rise as Africa's Next Global Meetings Hub



24

SUSTAINABLE AND GREEN INNOVATION

Aligning MICE with the SDGs - A Youth-Driven Perspective



28

TRADE & INVESTMENT

Where the Wild Meets the World Stage



34

TECHNOLOGY

The Psychology of First Impressions: What Event Registration Says About Your Brand

IT'S A MICE WORLD

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YOUTH AND INNOVATION

Reimagining Destinations Through Art: The Creative Vision of Watani Griffith




TRAVEL & ACCOMODATION


Reimagining Accommodation Models for Experiential and High-Impact MICE Events





SPORTS

Safari Rally Kenya: Driving the Rise of Sports Tourism in Africa

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EXECUTIVE FOREWORD

IT'S A MICE WORLD



Recently, while managing an international incentive group in **Bali**, Indonesia, I unexpectedly found myself stranded for several days due to air travel disruptions stemming from the ongoing tensions in the **Middle East**.

For anyone working in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) industry, moments like these are both professionally demanding and deeply reflective. As event professionals, our work thrives on precision planning, global connectivity, and seamless travel logistics. Yet, in an increasingly interconnected world, global crises can alter those plans in an instant.

While coordinating adjustments for the group and navigating changing travel schedules, I could not help but reflect on the delicate nature of the industry we operate in. The MICE ecosystem is dynamic, resilient, and full of opportunity, but it is also highly sensitive to global shifts beyond our control. That experience reinforced a powerful truth: resilience and preparedness must remain central to how we plan, manage, and grow the business events industry.

It is from this perspective that we introduce the ***fifth edition and the first publication of 2026 of It's a MICE World Magazine.***

The African MICE industry continues to gain remarkable momentum. Over the past year, destinations across the continent have made significant investments in infrastructure, strengthened convention bureaus, and expanded international partnerships to position themselves as competitive hosts for global meetings and exhibitions. These milestones demonstrate a

continent that is increasingly confident in its ability to convene the world.

However, as recent global events have reminded us, growth must go hand in hand with resilience. This edition, therefore, takes a deliberate look at both the opportunities and the emerging challenges shaping the industry today. Drawing on real-life experiences, industry insights, and conversations with leaders across the sector, this publication seeks not only to highlight developments but also to offer practical solutions to help the industry navigate uncertainty.

In this edition, you will explore Africa's MICE Industry at a Glance from Crisis Preparedness and Industry Resilience to the key developments and trends shaping 2026.

As we explore these themes, we also build momentum toward one of the continent's most anticipated industry gatherings, the Africa MICE Summit and Awards, scheduled to take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 9-11 September 2026. The summit will convene global and regional stakeholders to discuss the future of Africa's business events industry while celebrating excellence through the Africa MICE Awards.

If my unexpected pause in Bali reminded me of anything, it is that the MICE industry is more than logistics and venues; it is a community of professionals constantly adapting, learning, and finding ways to move forward even when circumstances change.

This edition is therefore an invitation to reflect, learn, and prepare for what lies ahead.

Enjoy the read.

Kezy Mukiri

Kezy Mukiri
Convener, Africa MICE Summit

Africa MICE Summit 2026 Set to Take Place in Nairobi, Kenya, this September



Africa MICE Summit 2025 speakers' group photo with a section of delegates.

The countdown to one of the continent's most influential industry gatherings has officially begun. The Africa MICE Summit 2026 is set to take place from 9th to 11th September 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya, bringing together Africa's most powerful voices in business events, trade, investment, and innovation.

Positioned as the continent's premier platform for the MICE industry, the Summit comes at a time when Africa is experiencing a remarkable transformation in how it connects markets, drives investment, and facilitates knowledge exchange.

Across the continent, the MICE industry is rapidly emerging as a strategic engine of economic

growth, connecting governments, investors, and industries to unlock real opportunities. From enabling cross-border trade to positioning African destinations on the global stage, business events are central to development.

The Africa MICE Summit 2026 is built on this momentum. It reflects a continent that is not just participating in global conversations but actively shaping them.

With major drivers such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA),¹ expanding aviation networks, and increased investment in world-class convention infrastructure, Africa is entering a new era of

¹ AfCFTA is increasingly positioning the MICE sector as a critical enabler of Africa's single market by facilitating cross-border business engagement, expanding intra-African trade platforms, and driving demand for regional events, despite persistent challenges related to infrastructure, policy harmonisation, and mobility. Read more on the impact of AfCFTA on MICE from the MICE Hub: <https://africamicehub.com/pub/afcfcta-effect-mice-forging-africa-single-market/>.

business events leadership. The Summit is designed to harness this moment, bringing together the stakeholders who will define what comes next.

The Africa MICE Summit 2026 is a strategic convening point for decision-makers across the entire business events ecosystem, with a projected attendance of over 500 high-level delegates from more than 20 countries.

What to expect

The 2026 edition features a carefully curated programme that blends policy, investment, innovation and networking into one impactful experience.

Key highlights include:

- ⦿ **High-Level Policy Forum** – bringing together ministers and industry leaders to shape enabling environments for MICE
- ⦿ **Infrastructure & Investment Roundtable** – connecting governments, developers, and investors to accelerate venue and hospitality development
- ⦿ **B2B Networking Sessions** – structured matchmaking designed to facilitate real business opportunities
- ⦿ **Technology Innovation Showcase** – spotlighting cutting-edge solutions transforming the industry
- ⦿ **Africa MICE Awards** – celebrating excellence and leadership across the continent

In addition, dedicated platforms such as the **Future Leaders Innovation Summit and Women in MICE** will ensure that inclusivity, innovation and next-generation leadership remain at the heart of the conversation.

A vision for Africa's future

At its core, the Africa MICE Summit 2026 is driven by a bold vision: to position Africa as a globally competitive destination for business events while building an interconnected ecosystem that accelerates trade, investment, and innovation.

Through its year-round initiatives, including industry reports, intelligence platforms, and capacity-building programmes, the Summit is part of a broader movement led by the Africa MICE Hub to strengthen Africa's business events landscape.

An invitation to shape the future

The **Africa MICE Summit 2026** invites industry leaders, innovators, and stakeholders from across the continent and beyond to take part in shaping the future of Africa's business events industry. Taking place, the Summit presents a unique opportunity to engage, connect, and contribute, whether as a delegate, partner, sponsor, exhibitor, media representative, or nominee for the Africa MICE Awards.

[Registrations, partnerships, and sponsorship opportunities are now open.](#)

As we countdown to September, one thing is clear: Africa's MICE industry is rising and the Africa MICE Summit 2026 is where that future will take shape.

The graphic features the Africa MICE Summit logo at the top left, which includes the text 'AFRICA MICE SUMMIT' and the tagline 'Collaborate. Connect. Convert.' Below the logo is a green globe icon. To the right of the globe, the text 'Africa MICE Summit 2026' is displayed in green and blue. The main body of the graphic is a green and blue box containing the following information:

- The Continent's Flagship Business Events Summit**
- Building Africa's MICE Ecosystem for Trade, Investment & Innovation
- 500+ LEADERS** and **20+ COUNTRIES**
- Policy . Investment . Innovation
- 9TH-11TH SEPT, 2026** in **Nairobi, Kenya**
- Register Now!** Scan Code to Register

A QR code is located at the bottom right of the graphic. At the bottom of the entire graphic, the text 'Join the Movement info@africamicesummit.org' is displayed.

Crisis Leadership in Action: Navigating Geopolitical Risk in Global Incentive Travel

By Kezy Mukiri, CEO, Zuri Events



Signing and adoption of the Nairobi declaration on global tourism resilience by Hon. Rebecca Miano, EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife Kenya, and Hon. Edmund Bartlett, OJ, CD, MP, Minister of Tourism Jamaica, at the 4th Global Tourism Resilience Day Conference and Expo in Nairobi, Kenya.

Crisis rarely announces itself politely. In the global **Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE)** industry, it often arrives in the middle of live operations, when hundreds of travellers are moving across borders, and every decision carries real human consequences.

For event leaders, risk management cannot remain a theoretical exercise. It must be operational, structured, and actionable.

Recently, my team at **Zuri Events** experienced this firsthand while managing an international

incentive programme amid escalating geopolitical tension affecting the Middle Eastern airspace.

At Zuri Events, we design and deliver international incentive programmes, conferences, and high-level convenings across multiple destinations. Delivering international events today requires organisers who can **operate seamlessly across destinations, aviation networks, and rapidly evolving geopolitical** realities. Building this level of operational readiness has become a core priority for us at Zuri Events.

While managing an international incentive group in **Bali, Indonesia**, our team found ourselves navigating rapidly evolving geopolitical developments that were beginning to affect global aviation routes.

News cycles were shifting by the hour, and aviation advisories were evolving in real time. For an event organiser responsible for the movement and safety of participants across international routes, theory quickly became reality.

In moments like these, clarity of priority matters. Incentive programmes are built on experience, recognition, and reward. But when risk emerges, the objective shifts instantly to protecting the people.

The first principle: Protect people

The first decision made was to focus entirely on safeguarding participants. Leadership during a crisis is not about appearing calm for optics. It is about building calm through structure.

Our response followed three operational pillars we have embedded in our event management systems:

- ⦿ Real-time intelligence monitoring
- ⦿ Centralised crisis communication
- ⦿ Scenario-based travel contingency planning

This meant assembling an immediate internal response structure linking operations teams, destination partners, airline contacts, and travel advisors into a real-time coordination loop.

It meant shifting to a 24-hour monitoring cycle and tracking verified updates from aviation authorities, security advisories, and airline networks, while ensuring that the information reaching participants remained clear, factual, and reassuring.

Information discipline in the age of noise

One of the most dangerous elements of the modern crisis environment is misinformation. Social media accelerates fear, and speculation often travels faster than fact.

Clarity is one of the most valuable leadership tools in moments of uncertainty. As leaders, our responsibility is to filter noise and communicate with precision.

During a crisis, it is critical to establish a **single-source-of-truth communication protocol**. In our case, all updates were centralised to ensure participants and partners received consistent, verified information. There was no fragmented communication and no conflicting messages. Every update was factual, transparent, and action-oriented.

Scenario planning in real time

Risk management is often discussed as a pre-emptive exercise. In reality, its true value emerges when it can evolve dynamically during live operations.

Within hours, our team activated a **scenario-planning framework**, mapping operational pathways based on evolving aviation advisories.

The situation required rerouting participants travelling from **Southeast Asia back to Africa while avoiding affected Middle Eastern airspace**, requiring rapid recalculation of long-haul aviation routes and coordination across multiple carriers.

Teams worked across time zones, balancing logistical recalculations with human reassurance.



One of the most dangerous elements of the modern crisis environment is misinformation. Social media accelerates fear, and speculation often travels faster than fact.



Participants needed to know they were not alone in navigating uncertainty. Our client needed confidence that decisions were proactive rather than reactive.

The human layer of crisis

Travellers on incentive programmes are often top performers within their organisations. They are achievers accustomed to control, structure, and predictability. A geopolitical crisis disrupts that sense of stability. In such moments, leadership must be both strategic and empathetic.

Visible leadership presence became essential. Regular briefings were instituted to ensure participants could ask questions and receive transparent answers.

Some participants were worried about family members following the news coverage. Others were concerned about flight disruptions. A few simply needed reassurance that someone competent was steering the ship.

Leadership in these moments becomes the art of **absorbing anxiety so that others can remain steady.**

Decisiveness when it matters most

By the time the geopolitical situation intensified, the incentive programme itself had concluded successfully. The challenge became ensuring the safe and efficient repatriation of participants.

We worked closely with our client to coordinate with airlines, travel advisors, and the Destination Management Company while monitoring airline updates.

Participants were rebooked across different airlines and rerouted through alternative hubs to facilitate their return home while avoiding affected airspace.

At the same time, we ensured participants remained comfortable and well supported during the disruption. This included arranging additional

hotel accommodation, meals, airport transfers, and maintaining regular updates.

Ultimately, the role of the organiser evolved into that of a **crisis host**, ensuring that even unexpected disruptions were handled professionally and that the overall experience ended with care and coordination.

The role of prepared partnerships

No organisation navigates crises alone. In most cases, crisis reveals the strength of your ecosystem. It tests whether partnerships are transactional or truly collaborative.

Our ability to respond decisively was anchored in a strong international partner network that includes destination management companies, aviation partners, travel advisors, security consultants, and insurers. Relationships built over years became operational advantages in days.

In crisis situations, these partnerships evolved from suppliers into **strategic collaborators, enabling rapid response across borders and time zones.**

What this means for the global MICE industry

This experience reinforced an important reality: As the global meetings industry continues to expand across emerging destinations, event organisers are increasingly required to **combine experience design with advanced risk awareness and operational agility.**

Destinations are interconnected. Therefore, airspace closures in one region can disrupt incentive travel routes thousands of miles away. Event organisers must therefore evolve beyond logistical coordination into **risk-aware operational leadership capable of navigating global uncertainty.**

Today's global events require organisers who can operate across destinations, aviation networks, and geopolitical realities. This level of operational readiness is what organisations like **Zuri Events continue to build and refine.**



No organisation navigates crises alone. In most cases, crisis reveals the strength of your ecosystem. It tests whether partnerships are transactional or truly collaborative.

Lessons reinforced

This experience did not introduce us to risk management. It reinforced core truths about it:

- ⦿ Preparedness is non-negotiable.
- ⦿ Communication must be centralised and disciplined.
- ⦿ Scenario planning must be actionable, not theoretical.
- ⦿ Empathy is as critical as logistics.
- ⦿ Decisive leadership protects long-term trust.

Most importantly, crisis leadership is not about eliminating uncertainty. It is about guiding people through it with clarity and courage.

Moving forward with stronger systems

Just days before this crisis unfolded, Zuri Events had just concluded the **4th Global Tourism Resilience Day Conference & Exhibition (GTRDCE 2026)**, which was hosted in Nairobi, Kenya, on 16th – 18 February, and convened under the theme:

“Tourism Resilience in Action: From Crisis Response to Impactful Transformation.”

The conference culminated in the **Nairobi Declaration on Global Tourism Resilience**, which outlined actionable pillars, including:



The declaration offers more than aspirational guidance. It provides a practical blueprint for navigating uncertainty in a sector that thrives on global connectivity.

Resilience in MICE means designing events with contingency embedded from the outset. It means negotiating flexible contracts, developing robust crisis communication systems, and ensuring that global travel logistics can adapt quickly to changing realities.

- ⦿ Institutionalising resilience frameworks
- ⦿ Financing preparedness
- ⦿ Accelerating digital transformation
- ⦿ Advancing climate and nature-positive strategies
- ⦿ Strengthening global cooperation

For MICE professionals, these principles translate into clear operational priorities:

- ⦿ Integrating risk assessment and scenario planning into event design.
- ⦿ Investing in digital tools that provide real-time travel data and early warning systems.
- ⦿ Building alternative routing and logistics plans for attendees.
- ⦿ Prioritising stakeholder communication and crisis messaging.
- ⦿ Developing flexible contracts that accommodate rapid changes.

The declaration offers more than aspirational guidance. It provides a practical blueprint for navigating uncertainty in a sector that thrives on global connectivity.

Resilience in MICE means designing events with contingency embedded from the outset. It means negotiating flexible contracts, developing robust crisis communication systems, and ensuring that global travel logistics can adapt quickly to changing realities.

Leading through complexity

Experiences like this reinforce an important truth about the future of global events. Event organisers are no longer simply planners of experiences. They are **custodians of safety, coordinators of global logistics, and leaders responsible for guiding participants through complex environments.**

At **Zuri Events**, we view crisis preparedness as an essential dimension of event excellence. Delivering memorable experiences must always be matched with the capability to manage the unexpected.

The future of the global MICE industry will belong to organisations that combine creativity with resilience, **hospitality with operational discipline, and experience design with strategic risk management.**

For us, this moment was not simply a crisis to navigate. It was a reminder that leadership in global events is ultimately measured by how effectively we guide people through uncertainty while preserving trust, safety, and excellence.

About the Author

Kezy Mukiri is the CEO of **Zuri Events**, a strategic event design and experience firm delivering international conferences, corporate incentive programmes, and high-level convenings across Africa and global destinations. She is actively involved in advancing Africa's MICE industry through initiatives such as the **Africa MICE Hub** and the **Africa MICE Summit**, platforms that promote innovation, collaboration, and global engagement within the business events ecosystem.

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Momentum and Milestones: The Rise of Africa’s MICE Powerhouse

By Alfred Mwangi



Kenyan delegation to Meetings Africa under Association of Kenya Business Events (AKBE) .

Africa’s MICE growth story is defined by deliberate milestones and sustained momentum across infrastructure, policy, and global positioning. Over the past two decades, the continent has invested in purpose-built convention centres, expanded international air connectivity, and strengthened professional conference organising capacity.

Landmark platforms such as **Meetings Africa**¹ reaching its 20-year milestone signal marketplace

maturity and long-term buyer confidence. The hosting of the **International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) Congress in Kigali**² marks global association trust in African destinations, while continental thought-leadership gatherings such as the **Africa MICE Summit** continue to strengthen intra-African collaboration and industry alignment.

This momentum is further driven by sustainability integration in bid strategies, youth-led innovation,

¹ A flagship tradeshow, owned by South Africa Tourism and has been operational for two decades, that offers a market access platform for African business events, products, and connects the continent to the world.

² Kigali, Rwanda, will be hosting the 66th ICCA Congress in 2027. This marks the first time in 20 years that ICCA Congress will be held on the African continent.



Africa's Eden 2026

and governments increasingly recognising business events as tools for trade, investment, and economic diplomacy. Together, these milestones reflect a continent transitioning from emerging participant to competitive and confident host within the global MICE rotation.

Over the past two decades, the continent has transitioned from being perceived primarily as a leisure and safari destination to positioning itself as a serious host of high-level global conferences, trade exhibitions, policy summits, and association congresses.

A 20-year testament: Meetings Africa

When Meetings Africa celebrated its 20th anniversary, it did more than mark a milestone—it affirmed Africa's sustained presence in the global business events marketplace. Hosted in Johannesburg, the trade show has evolved into the continent's premier platform connecting African destinations, suppliers, and global buyers.

Global association confidence: International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) in Kigali

The ICCA decision to host its global congress in Kigali marks a defining moment for Africa's association meetings sector. The ICCA Congress is one of the most respected gatherings of international association meeting planners worldwide. Its presence in Rwanda signals confidence not just in a city, but in a continent.

Kigali's successful execution demonstrates that African destinations can meet and exceed global association standards. It is also expected to catalyse knowledge transfer across regional stakeholders, strengthening Africa's bidding capacity for future international congresses.

Nature as venue: Africa's Eden travel show

Africa's Eden, a regional tourism trade initiative bringing together countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, and Namibia, underscores

a uniquely African advantage: the fusion of conservation, regional cooperation, and experiential trade engagement.

Unlike traditional indoor trade shows, Africa's Eden leverages natural heritage assets as part of the event narrative. This model reflects Africa's ability to design meetings that are immersive rather than transactional, blending policy dialogue with destination storytelling.

Strategic diplomacy and continental influence: G20 Summit³

While traditionally hosted by major global economies, Africa's increasing participation and readiness to host multilateral forums such as G20-related engagements signal growing geopolitical weight with implications that extend beyond Summits. They signal economic credibility, governance maturity, and international relevance.

Infrastructure as a statement of intent

Across the continent, governments and private investors are channelling resources into purpose-built convention infrastructure. African destinations are increasingly integrating sustainability benchmarks into facilities, energy efficiency systems, waste reduction frameworks, and community inclusion policies, aligning with global Environmental, Social, and Governance expectations.

The numbers behind the momentum

Business event delegates typically spend significantly more than leisure travellers. In emerging markets, this multiplier effect can transform local economies, impacting aviation routes, hotel occupancy rates, catering supply chains, and creative industries.

Moreover, association conferences often leave intellectual and policy legacies. Medical congresses introduce new treatment collaborations. Technology expos stimulate startup ecosystems. Agricultural forums shape food security policy.



Business event delegates typically spend significantly more than leisure travellers. In emerging markets, this multiplier effect can transform local economies, impacting aviation routes, hotel occupancy rates, catering supply chains, and creative industries.

The road ahead: From capacity to leadership

Africa's growing capacity to host global events reflects more than improved venues. It reflects institutional learning, professionalisation of event management, and stronger regional cooperation. Continental platforms such as Meetings Africa have built marketplace confidence.

To compete at the highest level, African destinations must:

- ⦿ Strengthen data collection and event impact measurement.
- ⦿ Deepen sustainability integration in bidding strategies.
- ⦿ Invest in youth and professional capacity development.
- ⦿ Enhance air connectivity and visa facilitation.
- ⦿ Position Africa not as an alternative, but as a preferred choice.

³ The 2025 G20 Summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa on November 22-23, 2025.



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Travelling to Kenya: Here is All you Need to Know

While Kenya is globally celebrated for its iconic safaris, pristine beaches, and breathtaking landscapes, it is equally emerging as one of Africa's most strategic business and investment destinations. Beyond the wildlife scenes of the Maasai **Mara National Reserve** and the coastal charm of **Diani Beach**, Kenya has built a strong reputation as a regional economic powerhouse and a gateway to East and Central Africa.

At the heart of this growth is **Nairobi**, a dynamic capital city that hosts multinational corporations, diplomatic missions, UN agencies, and high-level international conferences. Its expanding infrastructure, world-class hospitality sector, and growing MICE ecosystem have positioned the country as a preferred hub for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions across the continent.

Kenya offers something rare: the seamless fusion of business efficiency and experiential travel. A delegate can conclude a high-level summit in the morning and be on a sunset game drive or coastal retreat within hours. This unique balance has made Kenya particularly attractive

to investors, corporate travellers, sports tourists, and global event organisers.

If you are considering travelling to Kenya, here is a simplified guide to help you prepare.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Do I need a visa to travel to Kenya?

Most international travellers require an Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) before arrival. Applications are completed online prior to travel. Always check the current entry requirements for your nationality.

2. What is the best time to visit Kenya?

Kenya is a year-round destination.

- ⊙ July to October: Ideal for wildlife viewing and the Great Migration in the Maasai Mara.
- ⊙ January to March: Excellent for warm weather and clear skies.
- ⊙ Coastal destinations are pleasant most of the year.

3. What currency is used in Kenya?

The official currency is the Kenyan Shilling (KES). The popular funds transfer method is MPESA. However, Major hotels, malls, and tour operators accept international credit and debit cards.

4. Is Kenya safe for tourists?

Yes. Kenya is a popular and established tourism destination. Visitors are encouraged to follow standard travel precautions, use licensed tour operators, and stay informed through official travel advisories.

5. What languages are spoken?

English and Swahili are the official languages. English is widely spoken, especially in tourism, hospitality, and business settings.

6. What should I pack for a Kenyan safari?

- ⊙ Light, breathable clothing in neutral colours.
- ⊙ Comfortable walking shoes.
- ⊙ Sunscreen and a hat.
- ⊙ A light jacket for early morning or evening game drives.

7. Can I combine business travel with leisure?

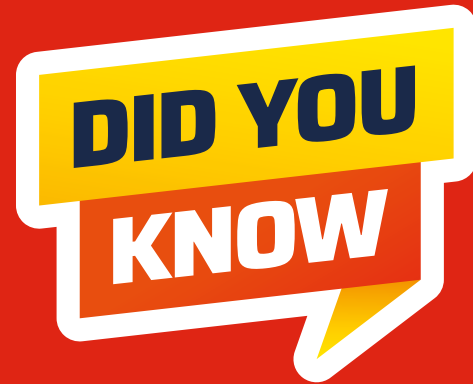
Absolutely. Kenya is a leading MICE destination in Africa, particularly in Nairobi. Many business travellers extend their stay to explore safari parks, cultural experiences, or coastal retreats.

8. What makes Kenya unique compared to other destinations?

Few countries offer the combination of:

- ⊙ Big Five wildlife experiences
- ⊙ Mountain trekking and scenic landscapes
- ⊙ Pristine beaches
- ⊙ Rich cultural heritage
- ⊙ A growing global business events ecosystem

In Kenya, every journey tells a story, whether it's a sunrise game drive, a high-level conference, or a quiet moment by the Indian Ocean. If you are planning your next African adventure, Kenya is not just a destination; it is an experience waiting to unfold.



Did you know that sustainability and Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations are now influencing bid selections for African events, with over 60 per cent of associations prioritising destinations that demonstrate measurable environmental and social impact?

Incorporating sustainable practices, from reducing carbon footprints and minimising waste to supporting local communities and promoting ethical supply chains, not only enhances a destination's competitiveness but also aligns events with global best practices and stakeholder expectations.

For African destinations, showcasing strong ESG credentials can be the deciding factor in winning high-profile conferences, exhibitions, and sporting events, positioning the region as a responsible, forward-thinking hub for the global MICE industry.





- If 70 per cent of attendees say their event experience is shaped within the first 10 minutes, which event touchpoint has the greatest influence on overall satisfaction?
- If an event has 1,000 attendees, of whom 30 per cent are decision-makers, and 20 per cent of those decision-makers convert into business leads worth \$10,000 each, what is the total potential revenue generated?
- Which factor most influences international association conferences when selecting a destination?
- True or False: The success of a MICE event is measured only by attendance numbers.
- What is the single most overlooked element that can disrupt a large-scale conference?

* Answers on page 27



[Africa MICE Summit 2026:](#)
September 9-11, Nairobi Kenya

[Africa MICE Expo:](#)
June 18-19, Nairobi, Kenya

[Business Travel Show Asia Pacific:](#)
April 14-15, Singapore.

[IMEX Frankfurt:](#)
May 19-21, Frankfurt.

[ITB China Conference:](#)
May 26-28, Shanghai.

[Meet Nairobi 2026:](#)
June 9-11, Nairobi.

[The Meetings Show:](#)
June 24-25, London.

[Sustainable Tourism Africa Summit 2026:](#)
May 14 - 15, Lake Naivasha Resort, Kenya.

[ICCA Congress 2026:](#)
8-11 November 2026, Panama City, Panama.



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Hon. Rebecca Miano: Driving Kenya's Rise as Africa's Next Global Meetings Hub



As Africa's MICE industry accelerates toward global competitiveness, visionary leadership remains the cornerstone of progress. Few leaders embody this momentum as strongly as Hon. **Rebecca Miano**, the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife in Kenya. Her contributions to Kenya's tourism, investment, and infrastructure landscape continue to shape the country's growing influence in the global events industry.

With a distinguished career spanning public service, corporate leadership, and national development, Miano has played a pivotal role in position-

ing Kenya as a strategic gateway for international meetings and business events in Africa.

Building the infrastructure for global events

One of the most transformative initiatives under her leadership has been the development of the **Bomas International Convention Complex (BICC)**, an ambitious project set to redefine Africa's conference landscape.

Once completed, the complex will feature an **11,000-seat plenary hall, a 5,000-seat convention centre, and multiple hospitality facilities**, effectively creating a fully integrated

conference city capable of hosting the world's largest gatherings. Already earmarked to host the **Africa-France Summit**,¹ the BICC signals Kenya's readiness to welcome high-level global forums, multilateral summits, and international exhibitions.

Complementing this infrastructure growth is the operationalisation of the **Kenya National Convention Bureau**, a strategic institution established to centralise the bidding, marketing, and coordination of international conferences and exhibitions. The bureau plays a crucial role in positioning Kenya as a competitive destination within the global MICE ecosystem.

Expanding MICE beyond the capital

Recognising that the benefits of business tourism should extend beyond major cities, Miano championed the **MICE Mashinani Initiative**, a bold programme designed to decentralise meetings and events across Kenya's counties.

By empowering regional destinations to bid for conferences and exhibitions, the initiative not only strengthens local economies but also unlocks Kenya's diverse cultural, ecological, and heritage assets as venues for immersive business experiences.

In parallel, the introduction of a **virtual exhibition platform at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre** has enabled Kenyan entrepreneurs, artists, and exhibitors to showcase products to international audiences year-round, bridging physical and digital participation in the evolving events landscape.

Strengthening Kenya's business tourism proposition

Kenya's MICE growth story is supported by strong tourism fundamentals. The country recorded **2.4 million international visitors in 2024**, generating approximately KSh 452 billion in tourism earnings and supporting over **1.1 million direct jobs**.

Through strategic integration of meetings with Kenya's globally renowned leisure offerings, including safaris, culture, and adventure tourism, Miano also championed the concept of **"bleisure" travel**, allowing delegates attending conferences to extend their stay and explore the destination.

This approach reinforces Kenya's unique advantage: a destination where **world-class business events seamlessly meet unforgettable travel experiences**.

A legacy of leadership and recognition

Miano's impact has been widely recognised both nationally and internationally. She is a recipient of the **Order of the Golden Heart** and the **Moran of the Order of the Burning Spear**, two of Kenya's most prestigious state honours.

In 2024, she was also named **Best Public Service Leader of the Year** at the East Africa Women of Excellence Awards. In 2025, she received the **National Tourism Leadership & Resilience Champion Award** during the **Global Tourism Resilience Day Conference and Expo**, acknowledging her role in strengthening the tourism and meetings sectors.

A future anchored in vision

As Africa's MICE industry grows in scale and sophistication, Kenya continues to position itself as a **strategic hub connecting global organisations, investors, and innovators**.

Through bold infrastructure investments, institutional reforms, and forward-thinking tourism strategies, leaders like Rebecca Miano are helping ensure that Kenya is not only ready to host global events but to shape the future of business tourism across the continent.

For international planners seeking destinations that combine **world-class facilities, strategic connectivity, and extraordinary experiences**, Kenya is no longer an emerging option; it is a **compelling global stage for the meetings industry**.

¹ The 2026 Africa-France Summit, scheduled for May 11-12, 2026, is to be hosted in Nairobi, Kenya, marking the first time this high-level gathering takes place outside of France or a Francophone African nation. The summit is expected to build Africa-France relations, with particular focus on climate change, environmental challenges and financial system reforms.

Aligning MICE with the SDGs - A Youth-Driven Perspective

By Arnold Gekonge, Founder, Champions for SDGs Youth



Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions is a multibillion-dollar sector whose sustainability touches on key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. The sector involves travelling, event hosting, use of energy to power sessions, preparing meals, and generating waste, among other activities that ordinarily have a significant impact on the environment.

This necessitates aligning with and adopting sustainable practices to reduce and eliminate the impacts of these activities. One of the key frameworks that could guide the entities involved towards sustainable and responsible practices is the SDGs.

The SDGs are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. Their main objective is to address the world's most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030. These goals seek to promote sustainable development by tackling issues such as health, education, gender equality, clean water, clean energy, economic growth, environmental protection and climate action, while ensuring that development impacts everyone.

The SDGs are guided by principles of universality, integration, and inclusivity, and provide a shared global framework for governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals to work together, emphasising leaving no one behind.

For close to seven years now, Champions for SDGs Youth, a diverse, youth-led organisation, has championed for positive youth development,



inclusion, and sustainable development in Kenya. Founded in 2019, the organisation empowers young people aged 18–35 to actively participate in policy dialogue, advocacy, and action aligned with the SDGs.

So far, the organisation has reached over 35,000 youth directly and indirectly through 50+ hybrid information sessions, dialogues, workshops, and conferences, thereby equipping them with relevant knowledge and skills to meaningfully engage in the implementation, monitoring, and review processes of the SDGs. During our events, we walk the talk by adopting and encouraging sustainable practices such as reducing, reusing, recycling, and requesting for sustainable catering, among others.

Young people, who comprise the majority of the Kenyan population (according to the 2019 Population and Census results, 75 per cent of the 47.6 million population is under the age of 35), are crucial stakeholders in the implementation and review of the SDGs.

When involved, these young people bring unique abilities geared towards sustainable practices through their creativity, innovation, adaptability, and strong engagement with new technologies and social movements. Their energy, fresh perspectives, and willingness to challenge

existing systems enable them to drive social change, advocate for environmental protection, and develop innovative solutions that support long-term sustainability.

The existence of the SDGs framework, experienced MICE experts, and youth innovators presents a unique opportunity to leverage intergenerational engagement, whose role has been evolving lately. These engagements and



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SUSTAINABLE AND GREEN INNOVATION

collaborations combine the experience and strategic insight of older professionals with the creativity, technological savvy, and sustainability-driven mindset of younger people to foster innovation, enhance problem-solving, and ensure that events are both efficient and forward-looking.

By bridging generational perspectives, the MICE industry can design inclusive, impactful, and sustainable events that reflect diverse needs while advancing the SDGs. Champions for SDGs Youth has embraced this approach during the 2025, 2024, 2023 and 2022 Annual National SDGs Multi-stakeholders' Youth Pre-conferences.

Through experience organising and being part of events aligned with the SDGs, Champions for SDGs Youth advocates for the following key measures:

1. MICE events can align with the SDGs by reducing their environmental footprint through sustainable practices such as minimising waste, using renewable energy, promoting recycling, and choosing sustainable venues and materials. These actions support goals related to responsible consumption, climate action, and environmental protection.
2. MICE event organisers can support local communities by sourcing goods and services from local suppliers, creating job opportunities, and ensuring events are accessible and inclusive for diverse participants. This contributes to SDGs focused on decent work, reduced inequalities, and sustainable economic growth.
3. MICE events bring together global stakeholders, making them powerful spaces to share knowledge, foster partnerships, and discuss sustainability challenges and solutions. By integrating SDGs-focused themes into event schedules, organisers can inspire collective action toward sustainable development while driving their missions.

In conclusion, aligning MICE with the SDGs is key to ensuring that events support sustainable economic growth, reduce environmental impacts, and contribute positively to social development. Additionally, collaborating with young people while doing so shapes events that promote sustainability, innovation, and responsible practices, helping build a future that reflects the priorities and well-being of the next generation.

About the Author

Arnold Gekonge is the Founder of Champions for SDGs Youth in Kenya, an organisation that works toward positive youth development, meaningful youth involvement, and just and inclusive societies. Arnold envisions an all-inclusive, equitable global society, where now marginalised populations, especially youth, are well-informed, empowered, and actively participate in Sustainable Development as global citizens. He is a 2025 Climate Reality Leader, a 2024 Danida fellow, a 2023 Global Peace Foundation President's fellow, a 2023 African United Nations youth fellow, a 2019 UNLEASH Innovation Lab for SDGs talent and an alumnus of the Regional Leadership Center, East Africa. <https://champions4sdgs.org> or arnold@champions4sdgs.org



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Sustainability Checklist for the Events Industry

By Shirneez Eboso, Student, Boma International Hospitality College (BIHC)

- **Circular infrastructure**
Use modular exhibition stands that can be reused instead of building stands that are used once and thrown away. This helps reduce construction waste and prevents materials from ending up in landfills.
- **Digital-first communication**
Reduce paper use by using digital tools like a summit app or QR codes for programmes, schedules, and contact information instead of printing them.
- **Sustainable catering**
Source most of the food from local suppliers within about 100 kilometre of the event location. This supports local businesses and reduces the environmental impact of transporting food long distances. Including more plant-based meals can also help reduce carbon emissions.
- **Proper waste management**
Provide clearly labelled bins for recycling and composting so attendees can easily separate their waste. Partnering with companies that recycle waste can help ensure waste is processed properly.
- **Sustainable transport options**
Encourage attendees to carpool to reduce travel-related carbon emissions.
- **Ethical and local gifts**
Instead of plastic promotional items, give sustainable gifts made by local artisans or social enterprises, such as recycled bags or eco-friendly notebooks.
- **Energy efficiency**
Choose venues that follow sustainable practices, and make sure lights and equipment are switched off when not needed to reduce energy use.
- **Water conservation**
Avoid single-use plastic water bottles and provide refill stations where attendees can refill reusable bottles.
- **Inclusive programming**
Make sure the event programme includes diverse speakers and gives equal opportunities to groups such as women and young professionals.
- **Measuring and reporting impact**
After the event, measure waste, energy use, and carbon emissions, and share the results in a sustainability report to improve future events.

ANSWERS



1. The registration process
2. \$600,000 potential revenue
3. Visa accessibility
4. False
5. Internet bandwidth limitations

Where the Wild Meets the World Stage

How Kenya's Bomas International Convention Complex (BICC) Is Redefining the Future of Business Events

By Jimmy Okidiang'I, Ag. CEO, Bomas of Kenya

Imagine concluding a high-level negotiation on continental trade policy and stepping outside to witness a pride of lions against the backdrop of the Nairobi skyline. Picture delegates from across the world exploring immersive digital journeys through Kenya's cultural heritage before experiencing vibrant traditional performances under African skies.

This is not aspirational tourism marketing—it is the emerging reality of the Bomas International Convention Complex (BICC), Kenya's bold new entry into the global MICE landscape.

Positioned at the intersection of culture, innovation, conservation, and world-class infrastructure, the BICC represents a transformative step in Kenya's journey to becoming one of Africa's leading destinations for international conferences and exhibitions.

For decades, Kenya has been recognised as East Africa's diplomatic and economic hub,





home to major global organisations and a thriving tourism sector. Yet despite this strong foundation, one key constraint has limited the country’s ability to compete for some of the world’s most prestigious gatherings—its limited large-scale venue capacity.

The BICC is Kenya’s strategic response to that challenge. More than simply expanding space, it reimagines what a modern convention centre can offer in an era where delegates seek immersive, meaningful and sustainable event experiences.

Breaking the capacity barrier

In the global MICE industry, capacity often determines competitiveness. Many international association congresses and industry summits now require venues capable of hosting 8,000 to 12,000 delegates. Until recently, this scale placed many African destinations at a disadvantage in the global bidding landscape. The Bomas

International Convention Complex decisively changes that equation.

With the ability to host up to 11,000 delegates, the complex positions Kenya among a select group of destinations worldwide capable of delivering large-scale international events.

Key facilities within the complex include:

- ⦿ A 5,000-seat convention hall supported by 4,600 square metres of flexible exhibition space.
- ⦿ A 3,500-seat auditorium designed for both global congresses and world-class cultural performances.
- ⦿ Presidential and executive meeting suites for high-level diplomatic engagements.
- ⦿ Multiple smart meeting rooms equipped with advanced audiovisual systems and hybrid conferencing capabilities.

TRADE & INVESTMENT

Every space within the complex has been designed with flexibility and scalability in mind—allowing event organisers to seamlessly transition between exhibitions, plenary sessions, corporate meetings, and cultural experiences.

This investment arrives at a pivotal moment. The global MICE industry is projected to exceed USD 1.4 trillion by 2030, yet Africa still hosts a relatively small share of the world's largest conferences.

By expanding Kenya's ability to host large-scale gatherings, the BICC opens the door for the region to compete for major international congresses that previously migrated to destinations in Europe, the Middle East, or Asia.

A convention center with cultural DNA

While scale is essential, the BICC's most distinctive advantage lies in its identity.

Many convention centres around the world function as neutral architectural spaces—efficient venues that could exist in almost any city. The BICC intentionally challenges that model by embedding Kenya's cultural heritage into the heart of the delegate experience. Located within the historic Bomas of Kenya cultural precinct, the complex integrates business events with authentic cultural engagement.

Through the Bomas Digital Cultural Zone, delegates will experience Kenya's heritage through a combination of live and digital interactions, including:

- ⦿ Traditional music and dance performances representing Kenya's diverse communities.
- ⦿ Interactive craft demonstrations and artisan workshops.
- ⦿ Virtual reality cultural journeys showcasing the country's landscapes and traditions.
- ⦿ Digital storytelling platforms preserving and sharing cultural heritage.

For international delegates, this creates an experience that goes beyond the meeting room.

Conferences become opportunities for genuine cultural exchange and a deeper connection with the destination.

For local communities, it ensures that culture remains a living economic asset—supporting creative industries, artisans, and performers.

Where business events meet nature

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the BICC is its relationship with nature. The complex sits adjacent to Nairobi National Park, the only national park in the world located within a capital city. Through the Bomas Ring, a protected wildlife corridor, the convention complex maintains ecological connectivity with the greater park ecosystem.

For event planners, this offers a destination experience unlike any other in the world. Within minutes of leaving a conference session, delegates can participate in:

- ⦿ Guided eco-walks along conservation landscapes.
- ⦿ Sunrise or sunset safari experiences.



Every space within the complex has been designed with flexibility and scalability in mind—allowing event organisers to seamlessly transition between exhibitions, plenary sessions, corporate meetings, and cultural experiences.



- ⦿ Wildlife observation from elevated viewing decks.
- ⦿ Unique photography moments where wildlife meets Nairobi's skyline.
- ⦿ Beyond its appeal to visitors, the Bomas Ring represents Kenya's broader commitment to sustainability and conservation-led development.

As sustainability increasingly influences venue selection, the BICC offers an authentic model in which environmental stewardship is integrated into the infrastructure itself.

A catalyst for economic growth

Large-scale business events create economic value far beyond the conference hall. From hotels and transport providers to creative professionals and technical service suppliers, the

ripple effect of international meetings supports a wide ecosystem of industries.

Kenya's tourism sector already supports over three million jobs, with the MICE segment contributing approximately 15 per cent of tourism revenue. With its expanded capacity and integrated design, the BICC is expected to significantly increase this contribution by enabling Kenya to host events that were previously beyond its reach.

The complex will stimulate employment across sectors such as:

- ⦿ Event production and management
- ⦿ Hospitality and catering services
- ⦿ Technical staging and audiovisual production
- ⦿ Cultural and creative industries
- ⦿ Transport and tourism services



This aligns with Kenya's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, which prioritises job creation, investment, and sustainable growth through strategic infrastructure development.

Redefining the African MICE Experience

The global business events landscape has evolved significantly in recent years. Today's delegates expect more than conference halls. They seek destinations that combine innovation, sustainability, cultural authenticity, and memorable experiences.

The Bomas International Convention Complex has been designed with precisely this future in mind. By combining advanced technology, cultural heritage, and conservation landscapes, the complex presents a new model for business events in Africa—one where meetings become platforms for cultural diplomacy, knowledge exchange, and sustainable tourism.

In doing so, it demonstrates that African destinations can help shape the future of global MICE, rather than follow established models.

An invitation to the global events community

As Kenya prepares to unveil the Bomas International Convention Complex, we extend an open invitation to the global meetings and events community.

- To international associations seeking distinctive destinations.

- To corporate event planners looking for memorable delegate experiences.
- To global organisations eager to engage with one of Africa's most dynamic regions.

Kenya is ready.

The infrastructure is taking shape.

The cultural experiences are authentic.

The natural landscapes are unmatched.

At the BICC, your next global event can unfold in a setting where innovation meets heritage, where business meets nature, and where the energy of Africa meets the world stage.

We invite you to bring your next congress, summit, or exhibition to Kenya—and experience first-hand where the wild truly meets the world stage.

About the author

Mr Jimmy Okidiang'i serves as Ag. CEO and Board Member of Bomas of Kenya Ltd., appointed November 2024. With 18 years in human capital management and corporate governance, he previously led HR and Administration at BoK. He holds a BBA, an MSc in Human Resource Management, a Higher Diploma in HRM, and a Senior Management Certification from the Kenya School of Government. A certified IHRM member and ISO 9001:2015 Lead Auditor, he drove the organisation's quality certification and strategic transformation. He currently spearheads strategic planning and management of the BICC project development, leveraging his expertise to advance organisational excellence and sustainable growth.



The **Africa MICE Hub** is the continent's leading centre for **research, innovation, and sustainable growth** in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE) sector.

We provide the **intelligence, platforms, and partnerships** to unlock MICE as a catalyst for trade, investment, and human capital development across Africa.



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Investor guides, fact sheets, and market insights to drive decision-making.



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The Psychology of First Impressions: What Event Registration Says About Your Brand

By Oladayo Popoola, CEO, Liveet

I didn't just go into events; I was born into it. My mum was an event caterer, and my uncle started one of Nigeria's earliest mobile event catering services. Growing up around them gave me a front row seat to how events really work, not from the stage, but from the kitchen, the guest entrance, and the quiet moments where experiences are shaped.

That early exposure shaped how I understand the psychology of first impressions. Long before I built Liveet, I noticed something most people overlook. Guests form opinions about events long before the programme begins. Not during the keynote. Not during the entertainment. But at the very first interaction, registration.

Registration is not merely a technical step. It is a psychological moment. The structure around registration quietly communicates the competence of the brand behind the event. Is the process clear or confusing? Structured or chaotic? Simple or overwhelming? These subtle signals shape perception faster than most organisers realise.

Even the interface speaks. A clean, friendly, easy-to-navigate registration page communicates confidence and care. It tells guests, "We are organised. We respect your time. We value your experience." In contrast, a cluttered form filled with unnecessary fields introduces friction. And friction, however small, creates doubt. These details may seem minor, but they are not.

People instinctively associate simplicity with competence. When registration feels stressful or disjointed, guests begin to question what the rest of the event will feel like. The experience creates an emotional tone that lingers, often subconsciously.

That realisation is what drives everything we do at Liveet. We built the platform on a simple belief: the guest is the most important stakeholder in any event. Every feature we design starts from that premise. Registration should feel effortless, whether the event is free or paid. No friction. No confusion. No unnecessary steps. Just a seamless, intuitive

experience that immediately conveys professionalism and intentionality. When registration feels easy, confidence in the event naturally follows.

But a strong first impression does not end at sign-up. To keep the event top of mind, it is important to engage guests across multiple communication channels. This is why, at Liveet, we reach guests via SMS, WhatsApp, email, and pre-recorded voice calls. This multi-channel approach ensures clarity and continuity, while also making guests feel remembered. They are not just entries in a database, but participants in a carefully considered experience. Registration is not only about collecting information, but it also about building anticipation.

Through Liveet's meeting features, guests can begin interacting before the event even starts. They can discover who else is attending, start conversations, and schedule meetings in advance. They can also explore the event agenda, see session breakdowns, and learn more about speakers in advance.

This transforms registration from a passive transaction into the beginning of a shared experience. Guests arrive not just informed, but invested. They already have context, connection, and something to look forward to.

Event day is where first impressions become reality

Registration sets expectations. Check-in confirms them. On event day, the very first physical interaction a guest has with your event is the check-in experience. This moment carries more weight than many organisers realise.

Queues create frustration. Delays create tension. Confusion creates doubt. And unfortunately, guests rarely forget how they felt at the entrance.

At Liveet, we are intentional about the arrival experience. Our self-check-in kiosks are designed to process guests in as little as four seconds. The objective is simple: eliminate queues and replace friction with flow. Guests



walk in smoothly, confidently, and with the reassuring sense that this event respects their time. When a guest walks in feeling like a VIP, that emotional imprint extends far beyond the registration desk. It shapes how they experience the entire event.

The ability to organise is one of the defining traits that separates human beings from other species. Few things organise people as powerfully as events. Whether it is a corporate conference, a product launch, or a social celebration, events bring structure to human interaction. They gather intention, align purpose, and create shared moments. Within that structure, every touchpoint communicates something about the event and the brand behind it.

The very first of those touchpoints, registration and check-in, speaks the loudest. A chaotic entry signals poor planning. A slow check-in suggests disorganisation. An unclear process introduces doubt. Conversely, a seamless arrival communicates professionalism, attention to detail, and genuine care for the guest experience.

During the event, Liveet continues to support the experience. We help organisers manage breakout sessions seamlessly, making it easy for guests to navigate tracks and move between sessions without confusion. Since events are inherently social, they are about connection and

shared moments. With Liveet albums, guests can relive the event through curated photo galleries. Using our Find My Face feature, they can instantly locate photos they appear in, without endlessly searching through hundreds of images. Because long after the event ends, what remains are the memories, helping guests rediscover those moments keeps the experience alive well beyond the day itself.

Why this matters more than ever

For anyone who works in events, there is one principle that must remain central: the guest is the most important stakeholder. Therefore, the first experience must be right because it lingers far longer than many expect. Guests may forget specific sessions or segments of the programme, but they rarely forget how they felt when they arrived.

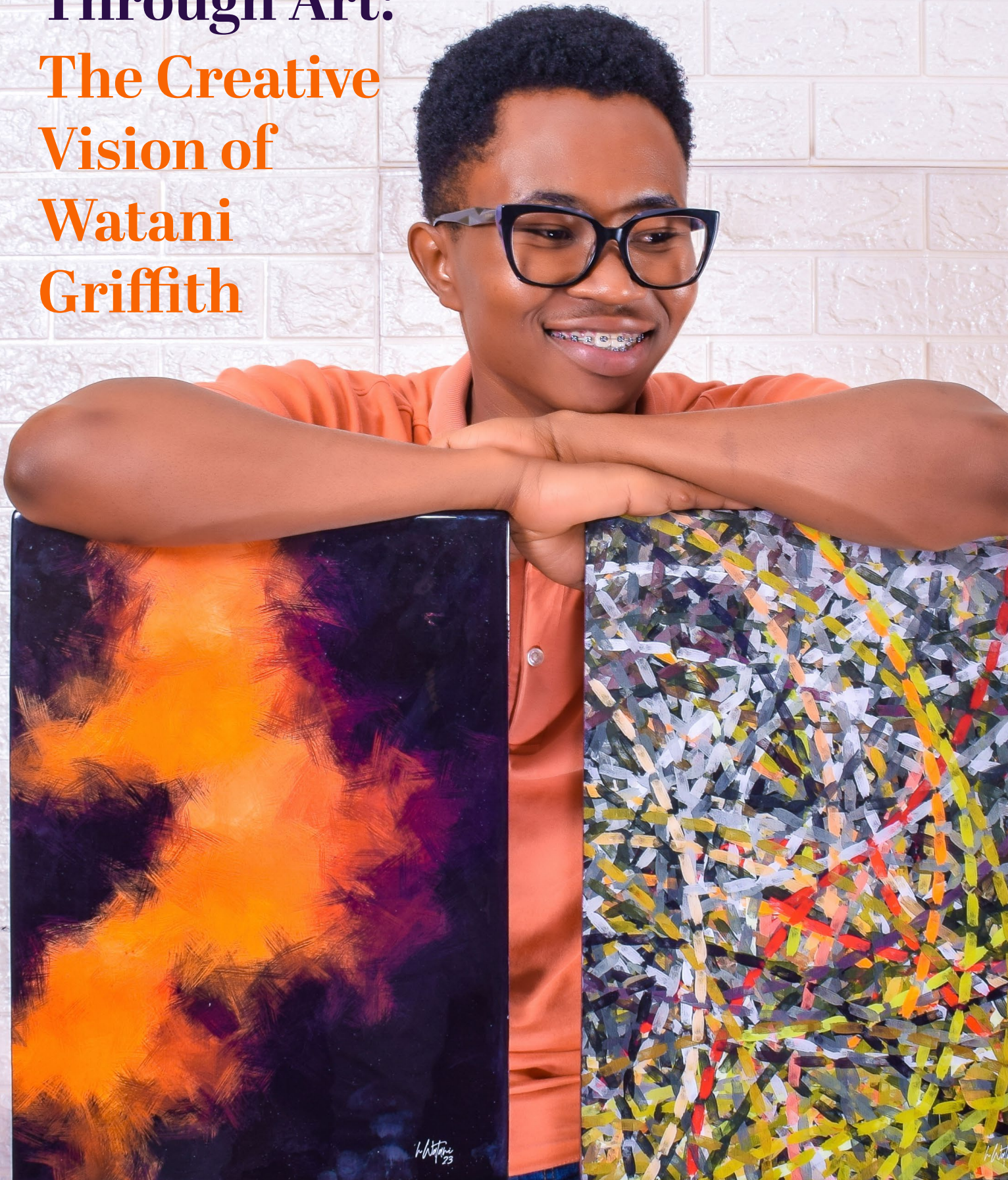
That emotional imprint becomes the lens through which the entire event is remembered. That is the psychology of first impressions.

At Liveet, we take that responsibility seriously. Every feature we build, every experience we design, and every event we support is guided by a single mission: to help events start right. Because when the first impression is right, everything else flows more naturally.

About the Author

Oladayo Popoola is a seasoned business leader with a background in Banking and Finance and over a decade in edtech and event technology. He held key roles at BIL and uLesson, including Head of Sales, and later served as Country Manager at Teachmint. In 2019, he founded Livvi, bringing concerts to life in virtual reality for artists like Burna Boy and Wizkid. Observing gaps in guest experience and event logistics, he created Liveet, a versatile guest management platform. Oladayo currently serves as CEO of Liveet, a company that simplifies and elevates event experiences. He enjoys hiking, tennis, and football.

Reimagining Destinations Through Art: The Creative Vision of Watani Griffith





In the evolving landscape of MICE and tourism industries, innovation is no longer defined solely by infrastructure, technology, or large-scale venues. Increasingly, it is being shaped by creative storytellers who are redefining how destinations are perceived and experienced.

One such innovator is **Watani Griffith**, a Kenyan creative entrepreneur whose work sits at the intersection of art, culture, and destination storytelling. Through his multidisciplinary collective, **Watani Griffith Creative Designs**, he is pioneering a bold concept: reconstructing tourism destinations through digital art.

Watani's journey into digital art began as a deeply personal exploration of self-expression, but it quickly evolved into something much larger. Recognising the power of visual storytelling, he began using digital art to reinterpret landscapes, historical narratives, wildlife, and cultural identities across Africa. At the core of his creative philosophy lies a simple but powerful belief: art is not just decorative; it is a narrative infrastructure. Through his flagship brand, **Arts by Watani Décor**, he produces

high-resolution digital wall art that captures the emotional essence of destinations, transforming them into immersive visual stories rather than static images.

His work gained significant conceptual momentum through the **Anhelos Collection**, a series that digitally reconstructs historically and culturally significant locations across East Africa and the wider continent. Pieces such as *Echoes of the Old Town*, *Where Freedom Began*, and *The Lunatic Express* reinterpret familiar places through layered artistic storytelling, inviting audiences to engage with destinations not just geographically, but emotionally.

For Watani, this approach addresses a critical gap in destination marketing. While photography and video effectively showcase what a place looks like, they often fail to capture what a place feels like, its memories, symbolism, and deeper cultural identity. Digital art, he explains, allows destinations to be reimagined through emotional layering, blending research, historical context, and artistic interpretation to create visuals that spark curiosity and imagination.

This perspective holds particular significance for the MICE sector, where experience design has become central to event success. Conference venues, hotels, and exhibition spaces are no longer simply functional environments; they are experiential spaces where branding, atmosphere, and storytelling shape the delegate journey.

Watani believes digital art can play a transformative role in these spaces, elevating interiors, reinforcing destination identity, and creating immersive environments that resonate with global delegates.

His creative process reflects the precision of both an artist and a strategist. Each artwork begins with extensive research into the historical, geographical, and cultural context of a destination.

This is followed by conceptual development to determine the emotional tone of the piece, before moving into digital reconstruction that involves layering textures, lighting, symbolism, and colour to balance realism with artistic expression.

The final work is then optimised for large-format display, ensuring it integrates seamlessly into interior environments such as hotels, conference halls, and tourism spaces.

Despite the innovation behind his concept, the path has not been without challenges. As a young creative entrepreneur, Watani faced skepticism about whether digital art could be positioned as serious industry work within tourism and destination branding.

Limited funding and the challenge of building brand credibility required persistence and strategic portfolio development. Over time, however, the growing body of work from his collections has begun to attract the attention of institutions and industry players who are increasingly recognising the value of creative storytelling in tourism marketing.

Beyond his artistic achievements, Watani's work represents a broader shift toward youth-driven innovation within Africa's tourism ecosystem. He encourages young creatives to view their skills



not as hobbies but as economic infrastructure, tools that can be monetised, packaged, and scaled within industries like tourism, culture, and hospitality. In his view, the next generation of innovators must move beyond simply creating products and instead focus on building creative ecosystems and intellectual property that shape markets.

Looking ahead, Watani envisions his collective collaborating with tourism boards, cultural institutions, and hospitality brands across Africa. His ambition is to see digital art integrated into destination marketing campaigns, international exhibitions, and MICE environments, positioning African creativity as a strategic asset in shaping global perception. At the heart of this vision is a powerful idea: Africa must tell its own visual story, confidently, creatively, and commercially.

In many ways, Watani Griffith represents the emerging generation of African innovators redefining the tourism narrative. By blending art, technology, and cultural memory, he is demonstrating that destinations are more than coordinates on a map; they are stories waiting to be reimaged.

As he succinctly puts it: **“Art transforms a destination from a location on a map into an experience in the imagination.”**

Travel Insights: Reimagining Accommodation Models for Experiential and High- Impact MICE Events

By Arnold Mboya, Sales and Marketing Executive, Ciala Resort



The MICE industry is undergoing a significant transformation. Today's event organisers are no longer searching solely for venues that provide accommodation and conference halls. They are seeking destinations that create meaningful experiences, drive collaboration, and deliver measurable outcomes. Across Africa, and particularly within emerging regional destinations, hospitality providers must rethink how accommodation models support the evolving expectations of modern business events.

At Ciala Resort in Kisumu, we have observed firsthand that the success of a MICE event increasingly depends on how well accommodation integrates with experience design. Delegates want more than convenience, connection, immersion, and environments that inspire productivity while supporting wellbeing. This shift calls for accommodation models that move beyond traditional hotel operations toward experiential hospitality.

First, accommodation must function as an extension of the meeting itself. Traditional models often separate conferencing from guest experience, but modern MICE travellers expect continuity. At Ciala Resort, room layouts, shared spaces, and outdoor environments are intentionally designed to encourage informal networking. Many breakthrough conversations occur outside formal sessions, in gardens,

lounges, or walking paths, where participants feel relaxed and open to collaboration.

Second, experiential environments enhance learning retention and engagement. Research and practical experience show that delegates absorb information better when events include sensory and cultural elements. Incorporating local experiences, nature-based settings, and authentic regional storytelling transforms accommodation from a passive service into an active contributor to event impact. Kisumu's cultural richness and lakeside ecosystem allow organisers to integrate community and destination experiences into conference programmes, making events memorable and purposeful.

Third, flexibility is now a defining requirement. MICE planners increasingly demand adaptable spaces that can transition seamlessly between plenary sessions, workshops, breakout discussions, and social engagements. Accommodation providers must invest in modular meeting spaces, hybrid-ready technology, and responsive service teams that can quickly adjust setups. At Ciala Resort, flexibility has proven essential in supporting non-governmental organisations, corporate retreats, and development partners whose programmes evolve dynamically during multi-day events.





Another critical shift is the growing emphasis on wellness and productivity. High-impact events recognise that delegate performance is closely tied to physical and mental well-being. Accommodation models must therefore integrate green spaces, quiet zones, healthy dining options, and opportunities for relaxation. Natural environments reduce fatigue and improve focus, enabling participants to engage more meaningfully throughout long conference schedules. Our experience shows that delegates consistently value calm, nature-inspired settings that balance work and rest.

Sustainability is equally central to the future of MICE accommodation. Organisations increasingly align their events with environmental and social responsibility goals. Resorts and hotels must therefore demonstrate responsible resource

use, community engagement, and sustainable operations. By sourcing locally, supporting regional suppliers, and minimising environmental impact, accommodation providers contribute to both destination development and organisational values. Sustainable practices are no longer optional; they are a competitive advantage.

Technology integration also plays a defining role in reimagined accommodation models. Hybrid and digitally supported events have become standard expectations rather than temporary solutions. Reliable connectivity, hybrid conferencing capabilities, and seamless digital support ensure inclusivity for remote participants while enhancing in-person engagement. Accommodation facilities must therefore operate as technology-enabled environments rather than traditional lodging spaces.



Importantly, successful MICE accommodation prioritises personalisation. Event organisers increasingly seek partners who understand their objectives rather than vendors who simply provide rooms and meals. Customising menus, scheduling support, activity planning, and delegate experiences allows venues to align with each organisation’s mission and outcomes. At Ciala Resort, collaboration with planners begins long before arrival, ensuring that every element from arrival experience to departure supports the event’s goals.

Regional destinations are also gaining prominence within Aria’s MICE landscape. While major cities remain important, secondary destinations offer unique advantages: reduced congestion, enhanced security, immersive environments, and stronger delegate focus. Kisumu represents this growing trend, where accessibility meets authenticity. Accommodation providers in such destinations have an opportunity to position themselves as experience-driven hubs rather than alternatives to urban venues.

Reimagining accommodation models ultimately requires a mindset shift within hospitality

leadership. Hotels must view themselves not just as service providers but as strategic partners in delivering impactful events. This means investing in staff training, experience design, destination storytelling, and long-term relationships with organisers.

Looking ahead, the future of MICE accommodation will be defined by integration, where lodging, learning, culture, wellness, and technology merge into a cohesive experience. Facilities that embrace this evolution will not only attract events but will shape how business gatherings are experienced across the continent.

At Ciala Resort, our journey continues to demonstrate that experiential hospitality is not a trend but a necessity. As organisations seek meaningful engagement and measurable outcomes from their events, accommodation providers must rise to the challenge by creating environments that inspire collaboration, creativity, and lasting impact. The next generation of MICE events will belong to destinations that understand one fundamental truth: where people stay influences how they think, connect, and innovate.

SPORTS

Safari Rally Kenya: Driving the Rise of Sports Tourism in Africa

By Susan Agoi



Few sporting events capture the spirit of adventure and endurance quite like the iconic **Safari Rally Kenya**, one of the most celebrated motorsport events in the world. For decades, the rally has not only been a thrilling spectacle for motorsport enthusiasts but also a powerful driver of sports tourism, positioning Kenya as a premier destination for global sporting events.

The Safari Rally was first held in **1953** to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. What began as the East African Coronation Safari quickly evolved into one of the most demanding rallies on the global motorsport calendar. Its reputation was built on rugged terrain, unpredictable weather, wildlife crossings, and long endurance routes that tested both man and machine. Over the years, the event became a cornerstone of the **World Rally Championship (WRC)**, attracting elite drivers and teams from across the world. Kenyan drivers have also left their mark on the event, with local champions winning the rally **18 times**, cementing the country's deep motorsport heritage.

After being dropped from the WRC calendar in **2003**, the Safari Rally returned triumphantly in 2021 after a 19-year hiatus, marking a significant milestone for Kenya's sports tourism ambitions. Its comeback immediately captured global attention. In fact, the 2021 edition became the **most-followed WRC event globally**, with over **31.8 million social media views**, highlighting the rally's immense international appeal.



Today, the rally is primarily hosted around **Naivasha**, about 90 kilometres from **Nairobi**, with dramatic landscapes including the Great Rift Valley, Hell's Gate National Park, and Lake Naivasha forming the backdrop of the race. The event combines high-speed motorsport with Kenya's unique natural environment, creating a rare fusion of sport, adventure, and destination marketing.

The modern edition of the Safari Rally continues to grow in scale and global visibility. Recent editions have attracted **over 400,000 spectators during rally week**, including thousands of international visitors from more than **40 nationalities**. Hotels and hospitality facilities in Naivasha and surrounding areas often operate at full capacity during the event, underscoring its strong draw for tourism and business activity.

The economic benefits of hosting such a globally recognised sporting event are substantial. The rally attracts more than **100,000 visitors annually**, generating approximately **KSh 24.7 billion** in employment and economic activity, while also delivering global media exposure valued at about **KSh 8 billion**. The total economic value of the event has been estimated at **KSh 63.3 billion**, demonstrating the powerful role of sports events in national development and tourism promotion.

Beyond immediate economic impact, the Safari Rally stimulates long-term investment in infrastructure and hospitality. Since its return



to the WRC calendar, Naivasha has witnessed increased development of hotels, serviced apartments, retail outlets, and transport services to cater for the surge in visitors. Local businesses, from restaurants to farm suppliers, benefit from the influx of tourists and motorsport teams, creating a ripple effect across the local economy.

Looking ahead, the rally continues to evolve as one of Africa's most powerful sports tourism platforms. The **2025 edition**, part of the WRC's global championship series, featured a competitive route spanning **over 380 kilometres of stages**, making it one of the longest rallies in recent years. The event blends cutting-edge motorsport technology with Kenya's challenging landscapes, maintaining its reputation as one of the toughest rallies in the world.

The 2026 WRC Safari Rally Kenya was held in Naivasha, Kenya, from 12th to 15th March 2026, marking the historic 74th running of one of the most iconic and demanding events on the World Rally Championship calendar.

The event attracted significant local and international attention, drawing thousands of motorsport fans and high-profile guests. Among those

in attendance were the President of Kenya, H.E. Dr William Samoei Ruto, as well as dignitaries and stakeholders from the global sports, travel, and tourism industries. Their presence underscored the rally's growing importance not only as a premier motorsport spectacle but also as a key platform for promoting Kenya's tourism, investment opportunities, and international profile.

As global tourism trends increasingly embrace experiential travel, sports tourism has emerged as a vital pillar of destination marketing. Events like the Safari Rally showcase how sporting spectacles can attract international audiences, generate economic value, and elevate a country's global brand.

For Kenya, the Safari Rally is more than just a race; it is a symbol of resilience, heritage, and national pride. Each year, as engines roar across the dusty plains of the Rift Valley, the rally reminds the world that Kenya is not only a land of breathtaking wildlife and landscapes but also a global stage for world-class sporting events.



About Us

Ignite Trade Africa is a Pan-African platform committed to advancing trade, entrepreneurship, and sustainable business growth across the continent. We empower businesses—especially SMEs and youth-led enterprises—to access markets, build capacity, and unlock opportunities that drive Africa’s economic transformation.

Operating at the intersection of policy, investment, and enterprise development, Ignite Trade Africa leverages the MICE industry to convene stakeholders, foster collaboration, and inspire action. Through trade fairs, business summits, exhibitions, and capacity-building workshops, we curate dynamic experiences that bring together entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and development partners to shape Africa’s trade and innovation agenda.

Our events serve as gateways for SMEs and entrepreneurs to showcase products, access mentorship, and connect with markets, while also providing governments and institutions with platforms to advance policy dialogue, forge partnerships, and mobilize investment. By combining thought leadership with practical opportunities, Ignite Trade Africa ensures that every engagement delivers lasting impact.

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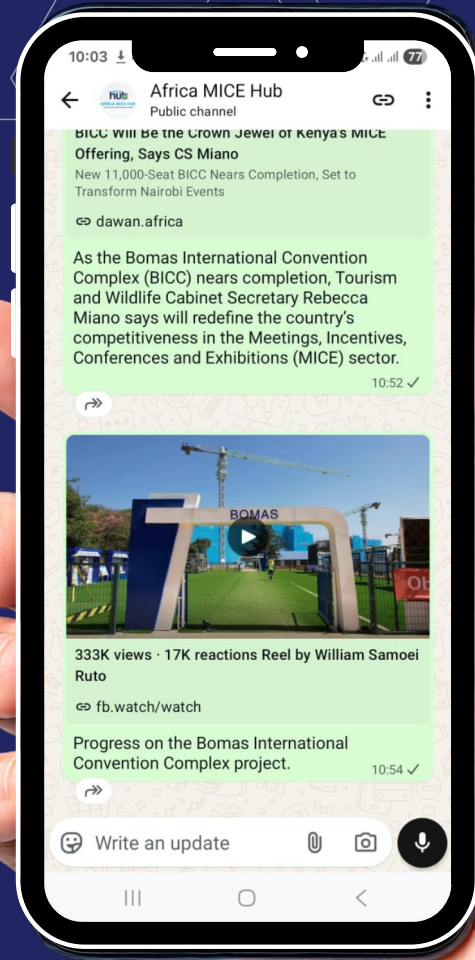
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