



## **Tralliance and UNWTO Unveil Africa Virtual Heritage Management Project**

### *Embracing Entire Continent .travel Initiative to Protect African Nations' Place Names*

September 11, 2006

Tralliance Corporation, the .travel Registry, working with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) today announced the establishment of the Africa Virtual Heritage Management Project (VHMP) before an audience of travel industry leadership at the Tourism Africa 2006 Conference. The inaugural conference is taking place under the patronage of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and its president Jean-Claude Baumgarten, which also was the first travel trade association to support the global .travel initiative.

The progressive initiative will ensure the registration of each country's place names including cities, towns, heritage and sacred sites, and national parks and reserves for all African nations are rightfully secured within the growing .travel Internet space. In line with the UNWTO's ongoing commitment to develop tourism in Africa, the project will ensure that each African country will be able to market its tourism assets through the .travel brand equally with the rest of the world now and in the future.

The project is designed to ensure that once registered through the VHMP, approximately 4,000 primary Africa place names, from all 55 African nations, will be held in trust by the UNWTO for an initial period of up to five years. At any time, each African nation will be able to request the transfer of respective place names to the rightful authorities within their country in accordance with .travel policies.

The VHMP comes as the .travel Place Name Priority Right deadline is drawing near. The December 31, 2006 deadline is looming large for all nations in the world. After this time, all place names left unclaimed by any country will be open to commercial travel entities. Any businesses that may share a place name will have the legal right to register the name.

With the support of the UNWTO and key African travel and tourism organizations, including the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) and Egyptian Tourist Authority, Tralliance is coordinating the four-month project to ensure that all African place names are registered by the December 31, 2006 deadline. Dr. Tanya Abrahamse, Tralliance's Managing Director, Africa, will be

at the helm of the Africa VHMP.

"The Virtual Heritage Management Project will greatly benefit the nations of our extraordinary continent," says Abrahamse. "Through assisting Africa's nations to claim their respective .travel place names, each country on the continent will be able to achieve a renewed, maximum return on their tourism assets for decades to come. The pioneering policies and approach of .travel will guarantee equitable access to global markets."

To ensure that the interim funding is in place while Tralliance identifies the appropriate African development institution, the VHMP initiative has received support from two key patrons and distinguished business leaders in South Africa and Egypt, Cyril Ramaphosa, prominent leader of the liberation movement and member of the South African Tourism Board, and Elhamy El Zayat, Chairman and CEO of Emeco Travel. These African businessmen, from the continent's south and north respectively, recognize the need to support the heritage of their African brothers and sisters and for future generations by committing to back this unprecedented project.

"Protecting all of Africa's iconic place names via the Virtual Heritage Management Project will become the cornerstone in preserving African patrimony over its rich and diverse tourism assets," shared Ramaphosa.

El Zayat notes, "It is imperative that Africa establishes its rightful place alongside the rest of the nations of the world. The use of the Internet is one of the fastest growing phenomena in the tourism industry; through .travel, Africa can take a collective leap forward by monetizing all of its tourism assets."

Egypt was the inspiration for the project and has set the example for African nations with the development of its official [www.egypt.travel](http://www.egypt.travel) portal, created as part of a national objective to promote all of Egypt's place names through its .travel domain.

"We felt we had another chance to protect our country's key tourism assets, such as our famed pyramids, archaeological and historic sites, but also recognized the opportunity to strengthen Egypt's presence in the global market by establishing our very own space on the Internet," says Ahmed El-Khadem, Chairman of the Egyptian Tourist Authority. "By utilizing .travel as a marketing tool, we are able to communicate to the global traveling consumer that this domain is the source of all Egypt-related online travel information, and are already seeing the benefits. Since its introduction in March 2006, [www.egypt.travel](http://www.egypt.travel) has received nearly 2 million unique visitors, a significantly larger number than we have ever seen before."

"The success of Egypt was the catalyst for the AVHM project. We hope all African nations will be encouraged to protect, promote and maximize their tourism assets in the online global marketplace, as Egypt has done, as a result of this initiative," says Ron Andruff, President of Tralliance Corporation, the .travel Registry. ".travel, its attendant [directory.travel](http://directory.travel) and [search.travel](http://search.travel), can empower an emerging Africa, rapidly bringing it into parity with more mature tourism destinations in other parts of the world to the benefit of everyone."

"Without visionaries like Mr. Ramaphosa and Mr. El Zayat, and the commitment of the UNWTO to Africa and the Millennium Development Goals, this would not have been possible."