

## **EDITORIAL**

It is with great pleasure and high sense of responsibility that I welcome you to this edition of JTHS in which we interrogate a very topical issue. The papers published in this volume were drawn from the Third Biennial Conference of Association for Tourism Development in Nigeria, publishers of the journal, which held in March, 2017 at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The theme of the conference: **“Promoting Regional Integration and Tourism within West Africa Sub Region”**, is very apt at this time, particularly when considered against the quantum of resources we lose annually and capital flight from this sub-region. In actual fact, there is low level of visitation, socio-cultural interaction and trade amongst member states despite the formation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) over four decades ago.

A number of issues majorly account for this development. These include the continued dependence on the West and their products, lack of common currency, stringent Customs and Immigration formalities, security issues (herdsmen, borderline, terrorism, robbery, and kidnapping), inter-group considerations and lack of pragmatic framework for sectoral integration etc.

The conference sought to interrogate the above issues, and the challenges they pose to regional integration and tourism promotion with a view to finding the way forward. The following questions among others guided the discourse. (1) How do we promote inter-group cooperation among countries in the sub-region? (2) How do we promote trade and visitations across the region and overcome the low level of tourism activities within the region? (3) How do we ensure a pragmatic implementation of the current common currency policy? (5) How do we reduce the hassles at the frontiers and the associated formalities? (6) How do we ensure adequate security in the face of increased terrorism, robbery, kidnapping and threat by herdsmen? (7) How do we address nagging environmental issues, heritage preservation, sale of antiquity, and other socio-economic problems?

While the first paper provided the historical background and examined the challenges and prospects of regional integration in West Africa, the second and third contributors who handled “Tourism and Regional Integration...” and “The Economics of Regional Integration”, respectively evaluated conceptual and practical issues that provoked further debate on the subject of regional integration in the sub-region. The fourth paper is an advocacy paper. It x-rayed tourism readiness... and development in southeast Nigeria. In the next paper, the convergence of theatre and tourism and their implications on cultural promotion and expression came handy, followed by the impacts of religious and sport tourism in southeast and southwest Nigeria, respectively. The last paper discussed monuments as living heritage ... in southeast Nigeria, the challenges they face and the way forward. Indeed, the papers published in this edition are very insightful and thoughtful, and will hopefully address some of the issues that impede tourism development and regional integration in these parts.

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Editor