

# Zimbabwe outlines plans for 'Disneyland in Africa'

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The Victoria Falls resort town will host the multi-million dollar complex

**Zimbabwe plans to build a "Disneyland in Africa" at the world famous Victoria Falls to boost tourism, a government minister has told the BBC.**

The government would spend more than \$300m (£193m) on the theme park, said Tourist Minister Walter Mzembi.

Zimbabwe is trying to rebuild its tourism industry after a decade of conflict and hyperinflation.

President Robert Mugabe was elected for a seventh term in peaceful but disputed elections last month.

Zimbabwe is not leveraging the Victoria Falls enough, Mr Mzembi told the BBC on Tuesday, describing it as a "sleeping giant".

"It's a wake-up call for us...we must build a new tourism facility with an impact," he said.

"We think it should be modelled along the size and the kind of vision that is on Disneyland, including hotels, entertainment parks, restaurants, conferencing facilities. This is the vision and we need people who can run with it."

**'Free zone'**

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Mr Mzembi earlier told Zimbabwe's official news agency New Ziana that the government wanted to create a free zone with a banking centre "where even people who do not necessarily live in Zimbabwe can open bank accounts" .

He announced the plans at the UN World Tourism Organisation general assembly, which Zimbabwe is co-hosting with Zambia.

The decision to award the conference to Zimbabwe was condemned by UN Watch, an independent human rights group based in Geneva, citing reports of human rights abuses and election rigging.

"The notion that the UN should spin this country as a lovely tourist destination is, frankly, sickening," UN Watch head Hillel Neuer said.

The government already has plans to expand the Victoria Falls airport, saying it will invest about \$150m in the project.

In the first quarter of this year, Zimbabwe's tourism authority said the country registered a 17% increase in visitors.

If the country remains stable, it says, tourism is set to contribute 15% to the country's GDP.

Over the past decade, Zimbabwe recorded the world's highest inflation with its economy in virtual collapse. However, a power-sharing deal reached after an acrimonious election in 2008 helped to stabilise the economy.