

Policy Paper

On

ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS IN UGANDA'S TOURISM SECTOR FOR GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

By National Planning Authority



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Contents

1.0	Background	2
1.1	Uganda's Tourist Potential	3
1.2	SWOT Analysis of Uganda's tourism sector	4
1.3	Key challenges to the tourism growth and development:	4
1.4	Justifications for enhancing competitiveness in the tourism sector	5
2.0	On-going initiatives towards development of the tourism sector	
2.1	Policy and regulatory framework	8
2.2	Skills Development	8
3.0	How to enhance competitiveness (required actions) in the tourism sector:	g
4.0	Policy recommendations.	10
4.1 billi	Increase Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) funding from the current UGX1.54 billion on per year to:	
4.2	Product development and diversification	11
4.3	Policy Pronouncements	11
4.4	Infrastructure	12
5.0	Conclusion	12
6.0	Summary Budget Estimates	13
7.0	References	14

1.0 Background

Tourism in Uganda, a top African destination in the 1960s, has reawakened over the past decade. Uganda Vision 2040 includes tourism as among the growth sectors with great development opportunities. Tourism was designated as a primary growth sector in the National Development Plan (NDP) and subsequently a stand-alone ministry, the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Heritage (MTWH), was created. As a result, the sector is already a major contributor to employment, revenue, and foreign exchange generation and yet Uganda still lags far behind its regional competitors in terms of tourism market share. Indeed, tourism has now become number one foreign earner (USD 1,003 million up from USD 805 million in 2011) taking over remittances (USD 700 down from USD 813 million (2011). It is projected to grow further as Uganda moves into the top 5 tourist destinations in Africa (World Bank Assessment Report June 2013).

The sector's contribution to GDP increased from 7.6 percent in 2010/11 to 9 percent (US \$1.7 billion) in 2011/12 equivalent to 23.9 percent of total exports in 2012. The sector provided over 220,000 direct jobs in 2011 (3.4 percent of the labour force) and if combined with indirect jobs, the number stood at 552,000 jobs (World Travel & Tourism Council).

GDP by economic activity at constant (2002) prices, percentage change, calendar years

years	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total GDP at market prices Agriculture, forestry and fishing	10.4	4.1	6.2	6.2	2.8
Cash crops	11.6	5.2	-3.0	8.6	-2.1
Food crops	2.6	2.6	2.7	-1.3	-2.1
Livestock	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5
Forestry	4.2	5.9	1.9	3.4	-0.4
Fishing	-9.6	-7.3	3.0	1.4	2.6
Industry	15.4	0.5	8.0	9.2	3.6
Mining &quarrying	10.4	-8.1	35.7	13.5	-1.8
Manufacturing	7.2	10.8	5.3	4.5	3.4
Formal	8.0	12.9	5.0	3.8	3.6
Informal	4.9	4.7	6.3	6.6	2.8
Electricity supply	1.7	18.6	13.1	3.4	18.6
Water supply	5.1	5.3	3.6	4.3	4.3
Construction	21.6	-5.1	8.9	12.2	2.8
Services	10.5	6.2	8.7	6.5	3.4
Wholesale & retailtrade; repairs	13.6	0.6	4.7	2.4	1.9
Hotels &restaurants	12.5	10.9	3.8	7.6	6.1
Transport &communications	22.7	9.0	12.2	17.6	11.5
Road, rail & water transport	7.1	11.7	1.4	2.3	4.3
Air transport and support services	6.2	-4.3	4.8	3.1	15.0
Posts and telecommunication	39.6	9.7	20.4	28.0	14.4

Financial services	14.9	28.8	36.1	12.4	-1.1
Real estate activities	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.8
Other business services	12.5	8.1	12.3	7.2	5.1
Public Administration & Defence	8.7	10.7	13.8	-2.9	-6.0
Education	-1.0	1.4	4.3	1.4	-1.6
Health	-4.0	-1.3	3.1	1.6	-2.3
Other personal & community	12.5	12.0	11.6	14.7	5.0
services					
Adjustments	11.6	5.6	-5.4	4.2	2.4
FISIM	22.7	42.1	76.3	9.7	-5.5
Taxes on products	12.6	9.2	5.0	5.4	0.6

Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2013)

The sector is forecast to grow by 1.3 percent in 2013, and grow by 5.0 percent pa, from 2013-2023, to \$1,654million 2023 (17.7 percent).

In terms of visitor arrivals, Uganda received 1,196,000 visitor arrivals in the year 2012 up from 1,151,000 visitor arrivals in the year 2011 representing an increase of 4 percent (World Bank). Of these 239,200 visitors (20 percent of the total visitors) were leisure and holiday visitors. However, National Park arrivals decreased from 208,000 in 2011 to 182,000 in 2012 representing a decline of 12.5 percent. This was caused by incidences of Marburg and Ebola in the Western Uganda, the economic meltdown in the source market countries, negative security advisories on Uganda by the source markets and the war in Eastern DRC.

1.1 Uganda's Tourist Potential

- Over 5 ecological zones of Africa converge on Uganda thus the only country in Africa with this combination!
- Over 53 percent of the mountain gorilla in the world;
- Over 1,000 Bird species (over 10 percent of global diversity) and over 50 percent of Africa's bird life;.
- Hosts to over 7percent global mammal species diversity and 39percent of Africa's mammal diversity;
- Host to 19 percent and 14 percent of Africa's amphibian and reptile diversity;
- Host the largest lake fresh water and second deepest fresh water lake in the world, Lake Victoria;
- Source of the 2nd longest river in world;
- Host to the youngest king in world (King Oyo);
- Rich cultural diversity; 56 tribes, friendly and hospitable people, the only country in the world where a cultural leader has authority in two states, His Highness the Emorimori of Teso and

• Faith based tourist sites; Namugongo Martyrs, Kyanda in Busoga, Wipolo shrine in Agago district.

1.2 SWOT Analysis of Uganda's tourism sector

Strengths:	Opportunities:			
 Abundant tourist attractions (wildlife, 	 Abundant trainable labour force 			
agriculture, eco-tourism)	 Relative political stability 			
 Rich cultural diversity 	 Emerging private sector 			
Unique sceneries	• Increasing recognition of tourism			
 Faith based tourism sites with 	contribution to the national economy			
Weaknesses:	Threats:			
• Underdeveloped products e.g. source	 Increasing competition from the 			
of the Nile	region			
• Weak supportive infrastructures	Discovery of oil in the Albertine			
(physical, social	region (within National Park)			
• Lack of structured marketing and	 Animal-Human life conflicts 			
limited promotion				
 Inadequate skills 				
 Inadequate funding 				
 Lack of accurate data 				
 Lack of a clear brand 				
Weak regulations resulting into poor				
standards				
• Inadequate and high cost of inter-				
connectivity to tourist areas				

1.3 Key challenges to the tourism growth and development:

- Lack of tourism capacity at local government: There are few, if any tourism-relian t countries with so little presence of tourism experts at the sub-national level. Uga nda, with just one exception, has no tourism officers even at the district level. In m ost districts with some tourism activity, officers from other departments, such as c ommerce and natural resource development, are assigned to cover tourism. Yet the y have limited time and tourism knowledge. As such, tourism issues are rarely add ressed adequately at the local level, even in districts where tourism represents one of the principal economic activities.
- Lack of adequate and efficient physical infrastructure: Most of Uganda's tourist sites are located in the remote areas far away from the major cities with poor road access, inadequate accommodation and relative expensive, connectivity and communication challenges. Tourists often want to travel conveniently and comfortably without physical stress. Uganda is not yet well suited for Foreign Independent Tourists (FITs). Despite being heralded as the top destination in 2012 by Lonely Planet, widely considered to be independent tourists' most trusted information source, Uganda still lags behind countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and Namibia in terms of its appeal and accessibility for FITs.

- skills and manpower: The sector still faces serious challenges of manpower both in terms of number and quantity. The Hotel and tourism training institute (HTTI) that is expected to produce the necessary manpower is ill equipped. Despite these need, HTTI's budget was actually reduced from 500 to 400 million UGX (from roughly US\$200,000 in FY 2011/12 to US\$160,000 USD)in the FY 2012/13. Skill gaps tra nslate into reduced private sector competitiveness in that service quality suffers an d, in many cases, expensive foreign labour must be recruited. As such, opportuniti es for employment and career advancement of Ugandans are limited. This is espec ially the case for women, who generally represent the majority of hospitality work ers. Further, the shortage of skilled workers translates into a significant deterrent f or attracting investment that is essential to the sector's economic productivity and s ustainability.
- iv) Regulation: The sector has weak regulations to steer development and this undermines the standards and quality of services that puts Uganda at great disadvantage against her regional competitors. Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), an institution that is expected to lead the crusade is underfunded and understaffed to make any meaningful impact.
- v) **Destination Marketing:** Unlike her competitors (Kenya, Rwanda & Tanzania) in the region who have well defined budget for promotionUganda's annual tourism marketing budget of around US\$300,000 is very low, even in the East African context where Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda's annual marketing budgets are US\$23 million, US\$10 million, and US\$5 million, respectively (World Bank). The lack of brand consistency further undermines the efforts for example "The Pearl of Africa" was seemingly replaced by "Gifted by Nature" in 2006, but both are currently being utilized. The issue is further complicated by the tagline of "Irresistible Uganda" recently coined by PRESTO. These haveresulted into confused messages between the brand and positioning strategy. It is not surprising that the private sector will find it challenging to sell the brand; 'Uganda, the Pearl of Africa'.
- vi) Limited diversity of tourism attractions and under developed tourism products especially those beyond nature attractions: Some of Uganda's current product offerings are not adequate or up to international standards. Furthermore, few examples of innovative tourism products can be found in Uganda. As Uganda looks to upgrade and diversify its products, it should primarily focus upon those which will serve proven markets such as nature tourists, adventure tourists, bird watchers, sport fishers, and faith based tourists.

1.4 Justifications for enhancing competitiveness in the tourism sector

Contribution to GDP: The sector only receives 0.13 percent of the national budget (FY 2012/13) while its total contribution to the country's economy has been estimated at US\$ 1.7 billion, or 9.0percent of GDP. The corresponding figures for Rwanda, Kenya, and Tanzania were 8.4percent,

13.7percent, and 13.3 percent, respectively implying that with increased funding the sector can significantly contribute to the GDP.

Employment: Globally, there is projection that the sector will witness growth of about 4.3-5 percent and increase in international arrivals. Uganda should position herself strategically to tap from abundant tourism resources. Tourism is already providing 225,000 jobs directly (UBOS 2012) and about twice this number if indirectly induced jobs are considered. Uganda currently is faced with unemployment especially among the youth who are projected to constitute 50 percent of the total population by 2040. Tourism therefore presents an opportunity for employment in catering, guides, hospitality and entertainment among others. Tourism development often provides the dual advantages of generating employment and income while promoting cultural heritage and traditions.

Sectoral linkage: Tourism has enormous linkages with other sectors and can drive growth in transportation, banking, agriculture, art and craft through the direct and indirect services they provide hence enhancing the sector will have multiplier effects across the entire economy thus resulting in social and economic transformation. Promoting tourism can support economic development, because the industry cuts across and is linked to many other industries in the economy, generating additional demand in a wide range of services and professions. In addition to the direct and indirect effects, Travel & Tourism also generates valuable spinoff benefits by developing infrastructure that other industries can use, and by boosting trade, skills, and investments in other industries that are not directly related.

Global Competitive Index rates Uganda very low, 129/148 behind Rwanda at 66, Kenya at 96 and Tanzania at 125 (World Economic Forum 2013/14) and this means Uganda has to improve on her competitive index if Uganda is to attract foreign tourists and investors. It is also not surprising that the TTCI competitive index ranks Uganda behind her peers in EAC; Uganda at 115/139 compared to Kenya at 103, Rwanda at 102 and Tanzania at 110.

- In terms of physical **infrastructure**, Kenya ranks at 102, Rwanda at 104, Uganda is at 133 and Tanzania at 134. In terms of quality of roads, Rwanda ranks at 56/139, Kenya at 77, Tanzania at 104 and Uganda at 119. This affects the quality of Uganda products and ultimately the experience of the visitors.
- Qualified labour: The Travel &Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI) rates Uganda 114 and 115 (of 139) in "education and training" and "availability of qualified labour", respectively. Skill gaps translate into reduced private sector competitiveness in that service quality suffers and, in many cases, expensive foreign labour must be recruited to fill the gap. As such, opportunities for employment and career advancement of Ugandans are limited. This is especially the case for women, who generally represent the majority of hospitality workers. Further, the shortage of skilled workers translates into a significant deterrent for attracting investment that is essential to the sector's economic productivity and sustainability. Tourism is a people-to-people activity where human interaction plays an important role. For any tourism destination to emerge as an important stop on the itinerary of the international tourist, the human factor and the quality of service is very important

- International Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE): According to ICCA (2012) Uganda is ranked the 8thMICE destination in Africa tying in the same position with Jo hannesburg and Mombasa. Uganda is also ranked the 85thcountry in the global MICE industry attracting 0.08percent of international MICE volume. The MICE market is seen as the segment for future growth and its inter-linkages with culture and the bonding effect cannot be underestimated.
- Lack of sustainable marketing mechanism: Uganda's annual tourism marketing budget of aboutUS\$300,000 is very low, even in the East African context where Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda's annual marketing budgets are US\$23 million, US\$10 million, and US\$5 million, respectively. A tourism levy, such as the one that has been successfully implemented in Kenya to support its marketing efforts, was agreed upon by key stakeholders and incorporated into the 2008 Tourism Act. Yet to date the levy has not been implemented. It is not surprising that, the 2011 TTCI ranks Uganda well below its regional competitors in "effectiveness of marketing and branding": 82 compared to 3 for Rwanda, 19 for Kenya, and 74 for Tanzania.
- Consolidation of the gains: Uganda has continued to receive accolades for example the country was voted Top Tourist Destination for 2012 by Lonely Planet magazine, Virun gas; one of 20 Must-See Places for 2012 (National Geographic Traveler Magazine), Bwindi; best African Birding Destination (2011), (Travel Africa Magazine), Rwenzori Mountains: One of World's 15 Best Hikes (2011) by National Geographic Society and 45 Places to Go in 2012 by New York Times. It should be noted these accolades pose serious challenges for Uganda to live up to expectations or risk being outcompeted. Unsatisfied customer will not only come back but will also badmouth you and ruin market/reputation.
- **Regional commitment:** Under East African Community (EAC) all the 4 partner states have agreed to promote and market EAC as single tourism destination and issuance of single tourism visa. Uganda stands to lose out if it cannot compete favourably with the rest of the partners in terms of infrastructure, human skills, product offers and service delivery.

2.0 On-going initiatives towards development of the tourism sector

The recognition of tourism as a key growth driver of the economy necessitated that Government proactively responds to the challenges facing the sector in order to maximize the potential. Government has therefore moved in to address the policy, regulatory, infrastructural and skills gaps:

2.1 Policy and regulatory framework

The Ministry in consultation with key stakeholders has updated a number of the relevant legal and regulatory framework to guide the development of the sector and these include for example, the Museum and Monument policy, Wildlife policy etc.

The tourism policy and master plan are yet to be finalized and the development of the guidelines to operationalize the tourism levy that is expected to boost revenue for the development and marketing of tourism. **2.2 Infrastructure**

As part of this overall initiative, Government held a Tourist Roads Forum in July 2012 with public and private sector representatives of the tourism industry to identify specific priorities for the industry. Collectively priority roads were identified and Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) has already started working on them. The routes identified are consistent with the plan for the infrastructure needs for tourism development in Uganda Vision 2040.

Civil Aviation Authority is currently developing a 20 year master plan for expansion and development of airports and aerodromes thereby improving connectivity to the tourist sites. The long distances between Kampala/Entebbe and the Albertine Rift attractions represent a competitive disadvantage for Uganda. While it takes travelers flying into Entebbe over 10 hours to reach gorilla tracking areas, the corresponding figure for those flying through Kigali is around three hours.

2.2 Skills Development

With support from World Bank, the Hotel Training & Tourism Institute (HTTI) is to receive a facelift and equipment so that it can produce graduates who are well groomed and match the industry needs of the private sector. Some of HTTI's needs are being addressed through a project pending funding from the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF). Over three years, roughly US\$3 million would be provided to build instructor capacity, construct ten demonstration hotel rooms, and upgrade kitchen and laundry equipment.

3.0 How to enhance competitiveness (required actions) in the tourism sector:

Tourism is a multi-sectoral discipline involving different sector agencies and departments and therefore close co-operation is critical. For example, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) needs to increase rural electrification so that the operators can light their establishments instead of operating generators, ICT should provide connectivity so that the tourists can remain in touch with their beloved ones hence feeling home away from home. In order to enhance competitiveness of the tourism sector, it is necessary to undertake the following measures:

- i) **Enforce standards and regulations:** This is a requirement to ensure quality, safety and confidence of the consumers. Tourism is a service that is experienced unlike goods which are consumed. Tourists often have expectations and experience that have to be satisfied or else they witness a quality gap.
- ii) Increase in investment for promotion and marketing: Uganda's tourism attractions are minimally known and even with the accolades by the world tourism magazine 'Lonely Planet' without sustainable marketing Uganda's brand will remain low especially in the source markets.
- iii) **Institute tour programme:** In all international conferences organised by government whether singly or in partnership with the private sector. This will promote domestic tourism and make tourism more sustainable even with minimal international visitors
- iv) Support communities and MSE around tourism sites to identify and engage in business opportunities: Through the communities will be able to appreciate tourism, increase peaceful co-existence of human-wildlife and ensure that revenue from tourism remains within the community.
- v) Establish a Gift policy: develop standardised marketing souvenirs and artifacts for Ugandan officials on trips abroad or official guests to carry gifts with inscription **'establish a Gift** to help build image and brand Uganda.

4.0 Policy recommendations

4.1 Increase Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) funding from the current UGX1.54 billion to UGX 11.1 billion per year to:

- i) Procure 4 market representations (Foreign Sales Office) in China, Germany (Germany, Austria and Netherlands), USA (USA & Canada) and UK (England, Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland). The choice of the location of the sales markets was based on statistics on top 10 tourism spenders (UNWTO 2013). This would require USD 2 million per year.
- ii) Produce adequate promotional material and brand country's tourist attractions. This will require UGX 2.3 billion over 3 years.
- iii) Intensify the publicity of the National brand 'Pearl of Africa' as the official brand for Uganda through better structured positioning strategies like 'Gifted by Nature', Irresistible Uganda' etc. In addition, the Attorney General should fast the registration of the brand and its logo with World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva.
- iv) Participate in regional and international tourism exhibitions including MICE; this will require UGX 8.3 billion over 3 years.
- v) Strengthen the capacities of UTB for tourism marketing and local authorities in enforcing quality assurance of tourist facilities including self-policing. This will require UGX3.9 billion over 3 years.
- vi) Intensify promotion of Uganda's domestic tourism to make it a sustainable market segment by supporting Cultural institutions and regional tourism clusters to undertake product development and expos/exhibitions. This would require UGX 2.34 billion. Regional tourism clusters such as Banyakigezi, Busoga and Buganda have proved that they can spur tourism development in their area through organizing exhibitions while raising tourism awareness among the local communities hence promoting domestic tourism. The Martyrs day celebrations present another opportunity for increased tourism awareness. In addition, 'Miss Tourism' should be promoted and made an annual event.

Undertake refresher training of tourism industry players and all Ugandans at all levels starting with airport staff since they are usually the first point of contact with tourists. This will enable them handle the tourists professionally.

Source of funding for the above activities

- Operationalize the Tourism Act; this will enable the Institution to regularly undertake licensing, inspection, grading and classification.
- For sustainability of tourism marketing, CAA should remit **USD 5** on every inbound airport ticket fee to the *Tourism Fund*. The current inbound travelers are 1.3 million. This is expected to generate UGX **6.5 billion** every financial year. In the same spirit, for every gorilla permit purchased, **USD10** should contribute towards marketing of the country's attraction sites. This is expected to generate UGX. USD150,000 a year while increasing at a rate of 8.7 percent.

- The current staffing levels of 62 percent at the Ministry Headquarters is inadequate to handle the fast growing sector like tourism and this calls for fast tracking the recruitment of staff to fill the gap. Capacity building is also needed at all levels of government on tourism including local administrations, and also in destination-level communities. These will require **UGX 3 billion** over three years.
- Conduct refresher trainings for all Ugandan diplomats abroad and facilitate them to undertake tourism promotion and marketing. This requires **UGX 340 million** every year.

4.2 Product development and diversification

- Develop infrastructure at the source of Nile to make it more attractive. This will require **USD1,000,000**.
- Develop Canopy walks in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Kibaale National Park. This will translate into UGX1.6bn million.

Source of funding

Set up a special credit line of **UGX 36.4 billion** at an interest rate of 5 percent for increased investment in the tourism sector. The areas of investment are accommodation facilities, transport vessels, human resource development, and product development.

4.3 Policy Pronouncements

- i) All schools should visit at least one national park once in a year and this should also apply to all government ministries/agencies.
- ii) All government conferences or conventions should always include on their programme time for tours/visits around the country and tour guides should be used as opposed to Ministry drivers who may not possess the right skills.
- iii) Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA) should formulate a gift policy that will guide and help image building and branding of the country.
- iv) The Ministry should strengthen the Wildlife Act to curb increasing poaching in the wildlife protected areas.
- v) The Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities should work with Uganda Communication Commission in engaging the media into responsible reporting. Negative reporting can scare tourists and therefore regulations should be reviewed.
- vi) The Ministry (MTWA)should urgently establish a Tourism Sector Working Group for improved coordination of the sector activities
- vii) National Planning Authority should support the Ministry to develop a Sector Development Plan (SDP) that should be aligned to NDP II and Uganda Vision 2040.

4.4 Infrastructure

- Government should undertake a feasibility study on the operational of vessels on Lake Victoria plying between Entebbe, Jinja and Kalangala islands. These are intended to tap into conference visitors. Government should enter into an understanding with airlines plying to Uganda for promotion of Uganda's tourist attractions.
- Construct tourism stop overs and lease them out to the private sector to generate tax revenue for government. This will create jobs for communities around the establishments, markets for their products including agricultural produce among others.

5.0 Conclusion

Uganda stands to lose her competitiveness in the region if status quo is maintained. Whereas tourism is predominantly private sector driven, Government has the responsibility in regulation, classification and licensing, product development, Infrastructure development, training, advice and technical support, financial support, international and domestic marketing. With the country's huge tourism potential, investment in the sector will spur economic growth by creating jobs within the country. It is therefore justifiable that **Shs. 81.5 billion** investment is made over 3 years if tourism is to remain and play its pivotal role in the socio-economic transformation of Uganda and the attainment of Uganda Vision 2040.

6.0 Summary Budget Estimates

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR ENHANCEMENT OF TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS					
			2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Item	Qty	Unit cost	Total amount	Total amount	Total amount
Overseas Sales Representations	1	5,200,000,000	5,200,000,000	5,200,000,000	5,200,000,000
Promotional Materials	lumpsum		900,000,000	769,600,000	769,600,000
Participation in internation trad	lumpsum		2,785,000,000	2,785,000,000	2,785,000,000
promotion of domestic tourism			780,000,000	780,000,000	780,000,000
Facilitate Missions abroad to					
undertake tourism promotion			113,333,333	113,333,333.30	113,333,333
Regulations and Standards			1,331,800,000	1,331,800,000	1,331,800,000
Product development			1,500,000,000	1,000,000,000.00	700,000,000
Support to cultural institutions			800,000,000	700,000,000.00	500,000,000
Procure creditline			12,133,333,333	12,133,333,333.33	12,133,333,333
Skill development			1,000,000,000	1,000,000,000	1,000,000,000
Infrastructure: Vessels	3	300,000,000	300,000,000	300,000,000	300,000,000
Tourism stop overs	5	600,000,000	1,000,000,000	1,000,000,000	1,000,000,000
Total			27,843,466,667	27,113,066,667	26,613,066,667

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