

# NMG's Batte wins best tourism storyteller award

BY TREVOR LUTALO

**KAMPALA.** Nation Media Group Uganda journalist Edgar Raymond Batte emerged winner of the Best Tourism Storyteller Award at the 2026 Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (POATE) Awards held at Speke Resort Munyonyo on Saturday.

Batte walked away with a cash prize of Shs3 million in recognition of his contribution to tourism storytelling and promoting Uganda through journalism and feature writing.

Over the years, Batte has built a reputation for documenting Uganda's tourism, culture and lifestyle experiences through authentic storytelling, earning both local and international recognition.

The awards were introduced as part of celebrations marking 50 years of cooper-

ation between Uganda and the European Union. Organisers said the initiative aims to recognise excellence, creativity and innovation within Uganda's tourism and creative sectors while encouraging high-quality storytelling around tourism and sustainable travel.

According to organisers, the awards also seek to strengthen community identity and expand opportunities for Ugandan creatives involved in tourism promotion. Other winners at the awards included Africa Runners Co Limited, which won Best Tourism Booth/Exhibitor, while Ruboni Community Camp received the Best Tourism Community Programme award.

Nile Safari Lodge won the Best Eco Lodge category, while Destination Jungle was recognised as Best Eco Tour Operator.

Ssebuuma Ivan won Best Tourism Pho-



The president of the Uganda Tourism Association, Ms Yogi Biriggwa, hands over an accolade and dummy cheque to Mr Edgar Batte on Saturday. PHOTO/TREVOR LUTALO

tographer (Professional) award, while Alex Busingye took the Best Tourism

Photographer (Amateur) award. Nakabugo Queen Tracy won Best Tourism Influencer, while Welomé to the Pearl of Africa by Soosi won Best Tourism Documentary.

Speaking during the awards ceremony, the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities Permanent Secretary, Ms Doreen Katusiime, said Uganda remains a strong and resilient tourism destination despite global concerns around health challenges.

"We want to firmly reassure the global community that Uganda boasts robust, world-class health management systems. We are entirely capable of swiftly averting, managing and overcoming these health challenges," she said.

Ms Katusiime also called upon the media and social media users to report responsibly, warning against alarmist messaging that could negatively affect livelihoods dependent on tourism.

"Most people who visit Uganda leave with glowing testimonies of our famously warm and friendly people and our beautiful year-round weather," she said. "Several hosted buyers also highlighted Uganda's culinary diversity and authentic cultural experiences."

She commended businesses investing in sustainability, innovation and community inclusion, and congratulated all nominees and winners.

Uganda Tourism Board Chief Executive Officer Juliana Kagwa described the awards as an important recognition platform for tourism enterprises and creatives championing sustainable tourism.

"As we close the 10th edition of POATE tonight, we also celebrate outstanding individuals and tourism enterprises that have made a significant impact on Uganda's tourism sector through their commitment to sustainable tourism," Kagwa said.

European Union Ambassador to Uganda Jan Sadek used the occasion to announce the launch of the Sustainable Tourism Value Chain Initiative, a new four-year programme aimed at supporting tourism destination development, improving standards, strengthening international marketing and expanding access to finance for tourism enterprises.

"It is ambitious, comprehensive and designed to respond to the needs of the sector," Sadek said.