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*Fostering sustainable socio-economic development in host communities***

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Session 2: Religious heritage and tourism routes – promoting cross border cooperation

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Bio:

Koji Oyama is Heritage and Tourism Expert of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and currently working as Heritage Tourism Development Advisor for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) in Jordan. Since 2002, he has been working in the field of archaeology, heritage, tourism and museum mainly in the Tourism Sector Development Project in Jordan, which has been implemented by MOTA and JICA. His work includes heritage tourism development in Amman downtown zone, medieval Crusader/Islamic castle of Karak, old historical city of Salt (Salt Ecomuseum), and Dead Sea area (Dead Sea Museum and Dead Sea Panoramic Complex). The work also includes the establishment of several museums (Jordan Museum, Karak Archaeological Museum, Historic Old Salt Museum and Eco-museum, Dead Sea Museum) and heritage trails. He is currently cooperating with the new Petra Museum project cooperated by JICA, and cooperating with regional heritage tourism development around Jordan. His interests include thematic tourist trails and cultural routes connecting several heritage sites and museums under common themes.

Abstract: Possibility of connecting religious and historical heritage sites in Jordan and surrounding areas by trans-national thematic cultural route

As a cross point of multi civilization, Jordan has rich religious and historical heritage sites. There are heritage sites related with early Islamic history and culture, such as Umayyad desert castle like Qusayr Amra or Umayyad Palace complex in Amman citadel. Those sites can be connected with Hisham's Palace in Jericho under common theme as early Islamic culture. Also, heritage sites in Jordan relating with early Christian culture and history, such as Bethany beyond Jordan (Baptism Site) or Mukawir can be connected with Mount of Temptation in Jericho, Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem or Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem under same theme.

In Jordan, several tourist trails have been developed by Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as well as JICA projects. Heritage sites within the region are networked by tourist trail. The concept of tourist trail or cultural route can be introduced to religious heritage tourism in trans-national levels as well. Under common theme, such as "Islamic history and culture" or "Christian history and culture", it is possible to plan trans-national thematic cultural route.

Museum can play an important role in thematic cultural route, through presentation of regional heritages and background culture/history by exhibition, as well as research/documentation and educational activity to local community relating with heritage sites in thematic cultural trail. Based on experience of JICA museum project in several areas including Amman, Karak, Dead Sea and Salt, possible role of museum for thematic cultural route will be discussed.