

Sofia Declaration on World Civilizations and Creative Tourism

The Ministers of Tourism and heads of delegation of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Member States, representatives of the cultural and tourism institutions, private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia, meeting on the occasion of the International Congress on World Civilizations and Creative Tourism, held from 29 November to 1 December in Sofia, Bulgaria;

Recalling that:

- Tourism is one of the leading global socio-economic sectors of our times, creating when managed in a sustainable way, opportunities for inclusive economic growth, cultural and environmental preservation, mutual understanding, peace and security;
- World civilizations are a treasure trove of human creativity and achievements, and their many manifestations, including history, folklore, myths, architecture and arts, can contribute significantly to the sustainable development of tourism; and
- Cultural and creative tourism can make important contributions to cultural preservation and the socio-economic development and empowerment of local communities, especially when world civilizations are linked to creative tourism.

Considering that:

- The UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, approved by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999 and endorsed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2001, highlights the role of tourism as a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and a contributor to its enhancement;
- Tourism is identified in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development as a contributor to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- The 2013 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Culture and Sustainable Development (A/RES/68/223), acknowledges that culture contributes to inclusive economic development;
- The Siem Reap Declaration on Tourism and Culture of February 2015 reinforces the close relationship between the two sectors; and
- In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly approved the adoption of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Reaffirm their commitment to:

- 1. *Promote the conservation and promotion of world civilizations through creative tourism by***
 - 1.1. Protecting and raising awareness of World civilizations' heritage as a source of creativity and inspiration for sustainable tourism development;
 - 1.2. Sharing insights and good practices on how to combine creativity and innovation in order to successfully contribute to the development and promotion of world civilization heritage through tourism; and
 - 1.3. Encouraging the development of physical infrastructure and institutional frameworks that sustains local creative tourism experiences related to world civilizations.

2. *Develop a sustainable tourism strategy for World Civilization heritage by*

- 2.1. Encouraging tourism activities that contribute to increasing public awareness and support for the protection and conservation of cultural heritage; in particular, by communicating heritage characteristics and values through the tourism experience;
- 2.2. Implementing effective and appropriate heritage and socio-economic sustainability impact measures associated with World Civilizations and the local communities in the vicinity of such sites; and
- 2.3. Advancing service quality, the use of technology and research in order to enhance the experience and increase the competitiveness of cultural heritage sites.

3. *Build partnerships between tourism and creative industries by*

- 3.1. Reducing barriers and facilitating effective partnership models and governance structures within government at national, regional and local levels, and developing creative tourism policies that recognize, protect and promote the authenticity of culture and cultural heritage;
- 3.2. Providing opportunities for cultural tourism to be a valuable generator of business opportunities and socio-economic development for creative industries and the cultural sector;
- 3.3. Encouraging local cultural traditions, museums and contemporary creative industries to become part of the programmes for urban development and/or regeneration; and
- 3.4. Promoting sustainable value chains within local communities to ensure a consistent quality and creativity, fostering local training and educational opportunities in creative and cultural industries; and encouraging public and private investment to sustain local creative industries.

And express their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Ministry of Tourism of Bulgaria, for the warm hospitality, the excellent arrangements for the Congress and the fundamental contribution to advance tourism development and its economic, cultural and social benefits to host communities and creative industries.

Sofia, Bulgaria 2 December 2016.