



UNWTO

World Tourism Organization

ON THE GROUND

Fostering Tourism for Development

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Message from the Executive Director

One of the fundamental pillars of the World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) programme of work is the provision of technical assistance to develop and promote the tourism industry as an engine for socio-economic growth and poverty alleviation through the creation of livelihoods.

As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNWTO provides technical assistance to Member States in developing their tourism sectors to be competitive while promoting the creation of sustainable livelihoods, combatting poverty, and preserving and protecting cultural and natural heritage. In this way, UNWTO is able to cater its vast expertise in the fields of sustainable tourism development; statistics and tourism satellite account development; tourism trends and marketing; destination management; risk and crisis management; and international and regional best practice to the individual and unique needs of each Member State.

Within this context, and as illustrated in this edition of the newsletter, UNWTO is actively implementing projects worldwide covering a wide range of topics from tourism marketing strategies and tourism statistics to tourism awards. For the first time, this newsletter also features information on activities carried out within the framework of the UNWTO Silk Road initiative.

Apart from showcasing some of the projects on the ground, this newsletter sheds light on our growing number of partners and donors. I hope it will prove useful in providing our Members with a cross-section of the different types of technical assistance UNWTO provides. I take this opportunity to reiterate to our Members that we are here to serve them and that we shall do our utmost to meet their requests for technical assistance and be their partners in achieving sustainable development of tourism.



Shanzhong Zhu
Executive Director



Revision of the Hotel Classification Scheme in Egypt

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism in Egypt (MOT), undertook in August 2018 an initial assessment of the current status of quality services in tourism accommodation establishments in Egypt, in order to prepare a roadmap for the updating and revision of the existing hotel classification scheme for the country based on international best practices.

Tourism is an important activity for Egypt; 2017 was a good year for Egyptian tourism and all indicators point towards a continued recovery of the sector. The government is keen to further develop tourism after realizing its importance to the economy, providing jobs, improving livelihoods and making a contribution to GDP and government revenues.

Increasingly, UNWTO's Member States prioritize the quality assurance systems of their tourism sectors and, as such, request UNWTO's technical assistance in the formulation of new or revised hotel classification criteria. These criteria are based on international best practices and catered to the specific characteristics of countries' respective tourism accommodation sectors.

During this mission, a detailed situation analysis was conducted by UNWTO at a diverse range of tourism accommodation establishments (hotels, floating hotels, resorts, etc.) in Cairo and other tourism destinations of Egypt, such as Sharm El Sheikh and Aswan. The analysis identified potential issues and constraints, reviewed the quality of standards and their compliance with regulations, maintenance and hygiene standards; and prepared a roadmap for the design and implementation of the hotel classification scheme in the coming months. The roadmap of the project is structured in three phases. The first phase of four months will review and update criteria, provide training to inspectors and undertake blank visits to hotels. The second phase will consist of a grace period of 12 months in which UNWTO can reinforce training for inspectors and provide further guidance to establishments on self-assessments. The third phase of 11 months will be launched after the grace period and consist of official classification visits undertaken by inspectors, accompanied by UNWTO experts. MOT and UNWTO have agreed to start implementing those activities in early 2019.



Meeting between the Egyptian Minister of Tourism, Dr. Rania Al-Mashat (far right) and with Hotel Association representatives to discuss the revision of the hotel classification scheme in Egypt

Spotlight on Senior Tourism

UNWTO participated in the First World Senior Tourism Congress, held in Yantai City, Shandong, China on 24-26 May 2018. The organization of events to promote senior tourism is part of the many recommendations of the Tourism Development Master Plan that UNWTO helped formulate in 2017 for the Shandong Provincial Tourism Development Commission (SDTDC).

Organized by the SDTDC, the International Association of Universities of Third Age (AIUTA), and the China and Shandong Associations of Universities for the Aged, the congress provided an opportunity for destinations and tourism entities from the public and private sectors to exchange information with senior tourism associations and universities of the aged on senior tourism and its demand, both worldwide and regionally. The first of its kind, the congress gave the topic of senior tourism a spotlight on the world stage. Upon conclusion the conference released the Yantai Declaration, which proposes for Yantai to be the permanent site of the World Senior Tourism Congress, as well as to establish an International Network on Senior Tourism.

The second World Senior Tourism Congress is to be held again in Yantai City, in May 2019.



A symposium on senior tourism during the First World Senior Tourism Congress

Interview with Dr. François Vellas, President of AIUTA



What are the objectives and achievements of your role as President of AIUTA with regards to the development of senior tourism?

AIUTA is the main international network to provide lifelong learning, with more than 8 million senior students and over 30.000 universities of third age (U3As) in the world. Most of these students are travellers looking to discover new countries and meet people.

How was the experience of organizing the first World Senior Tourism Congress (WSTC), why was it important to organize such an event, and what was the impact of UNWTO's participation?

WSTC's goal is to promote a "Senior Study Tour" worldwide where senior tourists can come first to U3As to attend lectures in order to better understand the heritage, national resources and culture of the destination. The first WSTC was dedicated to senior travelers' requirements with a view to preparing a specific new tourism product. UNWTO's participation in the first WSTC provided guidelines to develop senior tourism as an international tourism market segment over the next decade.

Could you tell us about the second edition of WSTC?

WSTC 2019 will focus on the supply side, with presentations of more than 50 examples and experiences of senior study tours from the five continents. WSTC 2019 will be the place to develop more international cooperation on tourism products for seniors.

Formulating a Strategy for the Marketing and Promotion of the Image of Algeria

Insights from the Directorate of Cooperation and Communication, Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts of Algeria

What is the vision of the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts for the promotion of the tourism sector in Algeria?

Algeria's natural assets have the potential to be developed for various types of tourism, including coastal, spa, cultural, Saharan and mountain tourism as well as business tourism. Seven of Algeria's sites are inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list. From the Tassili desert to the alleyways of the Kasbah of Algiers, through the Tipasa ruins and the extraordinary structures of the M'Zab valley, Algeria offers treasures to its tourists. The country received almost 2.5 million international tourists in 2017.

Our vision is based on the government's economic action plan, which has designated tourism as one of the strategic and priority non-hydrocarbon sectors under the national development policy for 2030. This is reflected in the Master Plan for Tourism Development, which defines the major strategic choices in order to build our tourism sector.

This plan is based on five actions, namely: the improvement of the availability of land for tourism use by boosting private investment in expansion areas and tourism sites; the reinforcement of existing reception capacities; the implementation of the tourism quality plan; the training and the upgrading of human resources; and lastly, the promotion of Algeria as a destination and reorganization of Algeria's tourism marketing activity.

Our vision aims to promote Algeria in international markets as a prime tourism destination and to support the constantly evolving domestic demand. In this respect, several activities have been carried out, including: the launch of a new web portal for Algeria as a destination; the revamp of our ministry website; tourism promotion on social networks; participation in tourism events; the organization of trips for tourism professionals and national and foreign media; and initiatives to market and promote handicraft products.

The project focusing on the promotion of Algeria as a destination is a reflection of the efforts carried out by the government to position tourism as a pillar of economic development. What are the ministry's expectations for its implementation?

Our expectations include: building a suitable brand of Algeria as a domestic and international destination, in high-growth sectors and in captive markets; improving the quality of the tourism

products on offer and promoting them both at home and abroad; promoting the emergence of prime tourism hubs; achieving choice positioning among tourism destinations; and making tourism a main employer especially for young people.

With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Algeria and UNWTO, will tourism be a key sector for economic diversification and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at national level?

The support and expertise of these institutions contributes to improving the understanding of sustainable tourism in Algeria to adopt sustainability principles. Algeria is strongly committed at the national and international levels to the achievement of the SDGs, among whose targets tourism is explicitly mentioned. With a view to creating wealth in the long term, this cooperation encourages the adoption of tourism practices that lead to an environmentally responsible 'green and blue' economy in Algeria, and to achieve the economic and social sustainability of our destinations by meeting the needs of visitors and host communities.

In addition, this tripartite cooperation has been an opportunity to increase the contribution of the tourism sector to sustainability at key international development events, namely: the High Level Conference on the New Blue Economy Initiative, held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2018; and the Ministerial Conference of the West MED Initiative for Sustainable Development and the Blue Economy held in Algiers in December 2018.

Given the place of sustainable tourism in the 2030 Agenda, it would also be beneficial for our sector to have a defined implementation framework for increasing sustainability, as well as adequate financing and investment in complementary technologies, infrastructure and human resource development.



The Development of a Strengthened System of Tourism Statistics for Myanmar and the States of Kayah and Tanintharyi

Interview with Giulia Macola
Associate Programme Officer, NTF IV Myanmar
International Trade Centre (ITC)



Can you briefly explain what ITC is and why it is interested in the development of the tourism sector?

ITC is a joint development agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations, with a mandate to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to connect to international value chains. ITC prioritizes trade because of its proven role as a driver of faster growth in developing countries. We focus on MSMEs because they employ most people.

Tourism is trade and trade is tourism. Tourism is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors worldwide. Trade in services is growing faster than trade in agricultural and manufactured products, making services an increasingly important driver of value addition. Tourism accounts for roughly 30% of global trade in services. For many developing countries, it is the single largest earner of foreign exchange. Tourism is also predominantly driven by MSMEs, and because of its employment-intensive nature, tourism offers substantial potential for poverty alleviation and the creation of economic opportunities, especially for youth and women.

Through the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF), ITC is currently implementing a project on Inclusive Tourism in Myanmar. A significant component of the project is development of a strengthened system of tourism statistics for Myanmar. What are the main objectives of this project and why do tourism statistics feature so importantly?

The International Trade Centre's NTF IV inclusive tourism project in Myanmar, funded by the Netherlands, builds on the results of the previous "NTF III Myanmar – Inclusive Tourism focusing on Kayah state" project by expanding tourism product development to Tanintharyi Region and consolidating achieved results at national level and at Kayah State level.

Running from December 2017 to June 2021, the project is implemented in partnership with Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT).

It aims to develop destination marketing and branding, improve tourism statistics, strengthen tourism-related associations and encourage business links at national and regional levels. This will contribute to creating income and jobs, particularly for women and youth, and thus reducing poverty through inclusive and sustainable tourism development.

The need for a sound and reliable system of tourism statistics, currently lacking in the country, was immediately identified and highlighted during a recent high-level stakeholder meeting by the MoHT's acting director-general Daw Khin Tan Win. He said: "The MoHT is particularly keen to receive further support for an improved system of tourism statistics, which is crucial for good understanding and planning of tourism development opportunities. In this respect, I welcome the collaboration between ITC and UNWTO, and I am looking forward to working with them".

Why has ITC decided to partner with UNWTO in this initiative?

UNWTO is a specialized agency of the United Nations and the leading public international organization in the field of tourism. It has developed the methodological framework for the systematic collection and analysis of national tourism statistical systems, which is implemented worldwide.

Hence, ITC sought the partnership of UNWTO to provide technical assistance to Myanmar in the strengthening of the tourism statistical system. After a positive start during the previous project phase, ITC will continue this partnership to ensure data collection that will help identify the future needs of Myanmar's tourism industry and provide user-friendly data to tourism operators at national and state levels.

International Tourism Marketing Strategy for Hainan Province (China)

Can you share with us some of ITC's programmes and projects for the tourism sector in 2019?

Under the NTF IV project, ITC will continue to work in Myanmar along the tourism value chain –supporting development of innovative and sustainable tourism products and services, strengthening local tourism associations over tourism statistics, assisting with destination marketing and branding, and encouraging business links at national and regional levels.

One of the first activities of 2019 will Myanmar's participation in ITB Berlin, the world's largest tourism trade fair, and the launch of Tanintharyi as a new destination.

ITC has recently started another tourism project in Myanmar in line with the NTF IV project. This is a UN Cluster project and encompasses four UN implementing agencies including ITC. The project aims at improving the horticulture and tourism value chains with focus on Shan state. ITC will develop tourism activities at village level, improve food quality and support national and regional marketing and branding.

ITC is also working in the Gambia to develop and market community-based tourism, as part of the Youth Empowerment Project funded by the EU and aimed at improving the employability of the country's youth population.

Activities are being launched in Hainan, China for the preparation of an international tourism marketing strategy for the island for the period of 2019-2025. UNWTO is collaborating with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Radio, Television and Sports of Hainan Province in this endeavour, for which a cooperation agreement was signed in August 2018.

Hainan has a pleasant sub-tropical climate and is endowed with an attractive coastline, scenic spots and cultural heritage ranging from Buddhist temples, traditional festivals and events such as the coconut festival and the Sanya dragon boat race, and the living heritage of various indigenous ethnic groups. While over the past decades the island has gradually become an important tourism destination for the domestic Chinese market, it has not yet fully utilized its potential to attract international tourists.

The tourism marketing strategy will therefore be prepared based on a review of the current brand and marketing activities, as well as an assessment of the available tourism product and its potential appeal to different international market segments, comparing Hainan with other tropical island destinations. The strategy will also assess the effect of previous promotional activities for international markets, identify the training needed to strengthen its marketing capacity, and make specific recommendations on using e-marketing tools.



Meeting with stakeholders during the inception phase of the project

Activities along the Silk Road

8th UNWTO International Meeting on Silk Road, Thessaloniki, Greece, 10-12 October 2018

Jointly organized by UNWTO, the Ministry of Tourism of Greece and the Region of Central Macedonia, 16 countries from the Silk Road region convened to discuss the overarching role and relevance of the Silk Road within a globalized tourism framework.

Also attended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and many representatives from the private tourism sector and academia, the two-day event featured a Silk Road ministerial roundtable moderated by CNN Greece, specialized panel sessions and a joint UNWTO/PATA session focused on digitalization and storytelling in tourism. During the first day of the event, UNWTO and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki agreed to foment cooperation and tourism research on Silk Road heritage throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region.

More information: silkroad.unwto.org



The Silk Road Ministerial Roundtable in Greece focused on the Silk Road within a globalised tourism framework

Second International Congress on World Civilizations and Historic Routes, Sofia, Bulgaria, 15-16 November 2018

Jointly organized by UNWTO and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria, this international congress explored the role of ancient civilizations in creating new socio-economic opportunities on the local, regional and national tourism levels.

The panel focused on the challenges and opportunities of developing transnational tourism routes, and featured input from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Eastguides West and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The congress in Bulgaria explored the role of governments and regional policies in the development of historic routes

More information: <http://europe.unwto.org/>

7th Greater Tumen Initiative (GTI) North-east Asia Tourism Forum, Hunchun, Jilin Province, China, 3-4 August 2018

At a workshop delivered for tourism stakeholders from Mongolia, China and Russia, UNWTO's Silk Road initiative was presented as a best-practice example in the field of transnational tourism development. With input focusing on how to maximize available resources for transnational tourism development, UNWTO offered its support to the GTI Secretariat, an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism supported by China, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and UNDP.

Tourism Week on the Great Silk Road, Republic of Buryatia, Russian Federation, July 2018

Organized by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Buryatia and supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the International Center of Wine and Gastronomy, this tourism week highlighted the role of gastronomy in favouring tourism activities and projects, especially linked to the development of Silk Road routes.

By officially opening the tourism week, UNWTO offered its support to the Republic of Buryatia, a federal Russian region strategically located close to Mongolia and China, with important tourism resources such as Lake Baikal and Buddhist and nomadic cultural heritage.

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