



PAL/Conf/Rel/ProvProg

International Conference on Religious Tourism: *Fostering sustainable socio-economic development in host communities*

Bethlehem, State of Palestine, 15-16 June 2015

Provisional Programme

Travel and Tourism for religious purposes have been closely interconnected since ancient times. The first travels had religious motivation led by pilgrimages to the holy places of the various religions and up until today visiting the sacred places of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and other religions, remains one of the main motivations for travelers from around the world.

The *International Conference on Religious Tourism: Fostering sustainable socio-economic development in host communities* will provide a forum for tourism authorities, representatives of religious communities, the private sector, academia, international and regional development organizations, to exchange views, perspectives and experiences on how to develop and promote religious tourism as a tool for inclusive socio-economic development focusing on partnerships and initiatives that warrant the engagement and empowerment of local communities.

The Conference will be structured around four key topics:

1. Global trends shaping religious tourism and the development of competitive products and experiences;
2. Challenges and opportunities for the development and promotion of religious tourism routes;
3. Innovative approaches to tourism management at religious sites, balancing heritage preservation and tourism development; and
4. Promoting the participation of host communities and enhancing the socio-economic benefits of religious tourism at local level.

The work carried out by UNWTO on tourism and world heritage sites, many of which have a religious significance, on tourism routes, often inspired by a religious character, and on spiritual tourism, will contribute to enriching the debate.

Monday, 15 June

08.00 – 13.00 Registration

15.00 – 17.00 Registration

18.00 – 19.00 Opening session

- **H.E. Mrs. Rula Ma'ayah**, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of the State of Palestine
- **Mr. Taleb Rifai**, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
- **H.E. Dr. Rami Al-Hamdallah**, Prime Minister of State of Palestine

19.00 – 19.45 Cultural performance

19.45 – 20.30 Opening of the Exhibition "Palestine"

20.30 Dinner

Tuesday, 16 June

09:00 – 10:30 **Session 1: *Understanding religious tourism - motivations and trends***

Religious tourism, including non-pilgrimage religious practices and spiritual tourism, represents a sizeable share of domestic and international tourism. This session will debate the main characteristics of religious tourism, its trends and how destinations and host communities can develop and promote competitive religious tourism products and experiences.

Moderator: Dr. Kiran Shinde, Professor, Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University, India

Speakers:

- H.E. Mr. Nayef H. Al-Fayez, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan
- P. Gianfranco Pinto Ostuni, Director, Pregrinatio Terrae Sanctae, Italy
- Dr. Josep Maria Mallarach, IUCN representative, Member of the Steering Committee of Cultural and Spiritual Values of protected Areas and joint-coordinator of The Delos Initiative
- Dr. Yonca Kösebay Erkan, Representative of ICOMOS Working Group on Places of Religion and Ritual (PRERICO)
- Dr. Rami Isaac, Senior Lecturer in Tourism, NHTV Breda University, Netherlands and University of Bethlehem, Palestine

Debate

10.30 – 10.45 **Coffee break**

10.45 – 12.15 **Session 2: *Religious heritage and tourism routes***

Cultural routes offer important opportunities for sustainable tourism, regional integration and economic development, while promoting the revitalization and promotion of cultural and economic links at national and international levels. When applied to religious tourism, different aspects need to be taken into consideration to safeguard the pious character of the tangible and intangible religious heritage while promoting its values along the route.

Moderator: Dr. John Eade, Professor, University of Roehampton, United Kingdom.

Speakers:

- Ms. Francesca Barracciu, State Undersecretary of Culture and Tourism, Italy
- Ms. Maria Nava Castro, Director of Tourism of Galicia, Spain
- Ms. Dina Tadros, Managing Director and Partner, ITALÔTEL Tours, Egypt
- Dott.ssa Barbara Chiodi, Executive Director, Brevivet, Italy
- Mr. Koji Oyama, Heritage Tourism Development Advisor to the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- Mr. Hani Abu Dayeh, President, Net Tours, Palestine

Debate

12.15 – 13.45 **Session 3: *Innovative approaches to tourism management in religious sites***

With the increased competition and the variety of options that are offered to tourists, destination managers are increasingly looking for new approaches to manage and market old or forgotten religious sites. Simultaneously, the growth of visitation into religious sites creates challenges in terms of balancing preservation and tourism development. This session will explore the development of innovative products and services that can boost visitor experiences and add value to existing religious sites while ensuring its sustainable management.

Moderator: Ms. Alison Hilliard, The Green Pilgrimage Network, United Kingdom

Speakers:

- Mr. Adolfo Mesquita Nunes, Secretary of State for Tourism, Portugal
- Ms. Felicitas Wressnig, President of the World Federation of Tourist Guides, Austria
- Mr. Szymon Gatlik, Office of Mayor of Cracow, Poland
- Eng. Issam Juha, Vice-Mayor, Bethlehem Municipality, Palestine

Debate

14.00 – 15.30 **Lunch**

15.30 – 17.00 Session 4: *Inclusive socio-economic development of local communities – promoting partnerships that work*

Through their direct contacts with host communities, the millions of tourists travelling for religious purposes create immense opportunities to foster socio-economic development at local level. These include not only the provision of direct tourism services, such as local guides, transport, accommodation or catering, but also the creation of important linkages with other sectors of the economy such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing or creative industries, throughout the tourism value chain.

This session will highlight how to set adequate and effective public-private partnership models and initiatives that involve spiritual leaders, empower host communities and widen their participation in the development of responsible and sustainable religious tourism products and services, maximize socio-economic benefits and enhance the quality of visitor experience.

Moderator: I Gede Ardika, Member of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, former Minister of Tourism and Culture of Indonesia

Speakers:

- H.E. Mr. Lahcen Haddad, Minister of Tourism, Morocco
- Ms. Maru Acevedo, Vice-Minister of Tourism, Guatemala
- Mr. Keiichiro Takadera, Member, Supporting Committee for Tourism Project, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- Rev. Berit Lanke, National Pilgrim Centre, Trondheim, Norway
- Archbishop Atallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sebastia, Palestine
- Sheikh Abd El Majid Atta Al-Amarneh, Mufti of Bethlehem, Palestine
- Arch. Fida Tuma, Director of Rehabilitation Projects, Welfare Association, Palestine

Debate

17.00 – 17.30 Closing session

Bethlehem Declaration on Religious Tourism

- **Mr. Amr Abdel-Ghaffar**, Regional Director for the Middle East of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
- **H.E. Mrs. Rula Ma'ayah**, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of the State of Palestine

20.00 Dinner