

Report of the 7th Meeting of the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum

(5 September 2019, İstanbul)

1. The 7th Meeting of the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum was held on 5 September 2019 in İstanbul with the theme of "Prospects for the Development of Health Tourism in the OIC Member States".
2. The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Başak ÖNSAL DEMİR, Coordinator of Multilateral Relations at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Republic of Turkey.
3. The Meeting agreed on the following Agenda items:
 - Market Share of OIC Countries in International Tourism
 - Health Tourism as An Umbrella Concept, What We Know About It, Causing and Supporting Factors
 - Health Tourism, A Relatively New Area, Challenges and Opportunities
 - Promotion and Marketing of Health Tourism
 - Health Tourism from the Perspective of a Private Healthcare Group
 - Using the Potential, Thermal Tourism
 - Private Sector Perspective to Health Tourism
 - Member State Presentations
 - Road Map and Recommendations
4. The Meeting was attended by the public and private sector representatives from the following Member States.
 - Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
 - Republic of Albania
 - People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - People's Republic of Bangladesh
 - Republic of Cameroon
 - Republic of Iraq
 - Islamic Republic of Iran
 - Kingdom of Morocco
 - Federal Republic of Nigeria
 - Republic of Tajikistan
 - Republic of Turkey
 - United Arab Emirates
 - Republic of Uzbekistan
5. In addition to the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO), representatives from the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Akdeniz University Health Tourism and Thalassotherapy Training,

Research and Application Center (SATTMER), International Health Services Joint Stock Company (USHAŞ), Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), Medipol Healthcare Group (MEDIPOL), Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB) and some other guests attended the Meeting.

(The list of participants is attached in Annex-I).

6. At the outset, Ms. Başak ÖNSAL DEMİR, delivered an opening speech and welcomed the participants to the meeting. She highlighted the importance of OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forums, as an effective platform, that enhances cooperation among member states exchanging ideas, knowledge and best practices. She mentioned that, thanks to the Forum, public and private sector perspectives are merged together to reach concrete solutions to the current needs. While she was indicating that health tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism forms and is a popular area among the member states depending on the number of participants, she added also that the data about health tourism is fragmented and very limited. She concluded her speech expressing her hope that, through the Forum, a comprehensive and illuminating frame could be formed and could be seen the current and future situations of OIC region.
7. In her opening statement, Ms. Ayten AKMAN, Expert at the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO), explained how much COMCEC Coordination Office attaches importance to all activities held in the name of COMCEC such as Working Group Meetings, Forums and Project Funding Mechanism which are banding together member states to be able to cooperate. She underlined that tourism is a crucial issue for the member states and health tourism is a rapid growing sub category of tourism. She indicated also that COMCEC Coordination Office is going to organize working group meetings under the theme of health tourism in the year of 2021.
8. Mr. Cem TİNTİN, Senior Researcher at Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) presented a report entitled “International Tourism in OIC Member States: Prospects and Challenges for the Development of Health Tourism”. He interpreted with statistics current situation and recent developments of tourism in OIC member states. He explained changing dynamics of health tourism and mentioned success stories of member states on health tourism. He touched on the major challenges of the tourism sector and ended his presentation with the recommendations oriented to these challenges.
9. Mr. Yıldırım YILMAZ, Assoc. Prof. Dr. at Akdeniz University, Director at the Health Tourism and Thalassotherapy Training, Research and Application Center (SATTMER) made a presentation. Mr. YILMAZ informed the participants about the umbrella concept of health tourism showing the shifts among the sub services and indicating the growth reasons of health tourism throughout the years. He touched on the health tourism strategies of some countries and their complementary efforts to establish international health care industry parks. He ended his presentation with

recommendations to improve health tourism in the OIC region highlighting the different angles of the sector.

10. Mr. Mehmet Ali KILIÇKAYA, General Director at the International Health Services Joint Stock Company (USHAŞ), explained why an international patient should choose Turkey for treatment during his presentation entitled “Health Tourism in Turkey-A New Strategy: USHAŞ”. He informed participants about the establishment and working area of USHAŞ, public-private partnership models of Ministry of Health of Republic of Turkey and new healthcare information and management systems.
11. Prof. Dr. Gazi YİĞİTBAŞI, Chairman of Health Business Council at the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) shared information on the establishment, organization form and health business council structure of DEİK. He underlined the health cooperation activities, health transformation program 2003-2013 of DEİK. He shared also statistics on total and accredited hospitals, international patients and medical tourism income of Turkey. He concluded his speech by expressing that Turkey is open to new partnerships and international cooperation.
12. Ms. Zulfiyya GULUZADE, Marketing and Business Development Specialist at the Medipol Education and Healthcare Group (MEDIPOL) made a presentation. She explained in depth about the health services provided by MEDIPOL, Turkey’s Largest Private Hospital Complex, such as medical departments and medical infrastructure. She ended her presentation by underlining that MEDIPOL offers special services to international patients to be able to make them feel comfortable.
13. On behalf of Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey (MoCT), Mr. Gürdal BOZKURT, Culture and Tourism Expert, made a presentation. He informed the participants about the activities of the Ministry in the field of thermal tourism. He touched on Turkey Tourism Strategy 2023, Turkey Tourism Master Plan 2007-2023 and 10th Country Development Plan of Turkey. He shared statistics on tourism, thermal tourism and government incentives of Turkey. He mentioned five thermal tourism centers of Turkey accepted as priority regions according to development plan. At the end, he presented some solution proposals for current problems of thermal tourism.
14. Ms. Ayşe Nur İYİLER, Member of Health Tourism Expertise Division at the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB) made a presentation informing about the health tourism policy of Turkey, health tourism strategy of TURSAB and the opportunities of health tourism in Turkey. She also touched on the health tourism workshop of TURSAB cooperated by USHAŞ in 2019.
15. In the member state presentations section, representatives of Uzbekistan, Iran, Algeria, Bangladesh, Iraq, Nigeria and Cameroon took the floor.

16. Mr. Tulkin Alikulov, Deputy Head of the Department for the Further Diversification of Types of Tourism at the Tourism State Committee of Republic of Uzbekistan and Mr. Khadjimukhamedov Bekzod, Ophthalmologist at the Doctor Maksudova Clinic, made introductory presentations on health and medical tourism of Uzbekistan. They shared information about goals, advantages, statistics, benefits and preferences of health tourism sector and highlighted the medical services of Uzbekistan.
17. Mr. Arash Anissian, Vice-Chairman of Iranian International Healthcare Organization, presented with statistics the profile of Iranian health tourism. He pointed out investment and development plans for health tourism of Iran. He mentioned also why Iran is ideal health tourism destination for investors. He concluded his speech with suggestions for joint policy making and action plans among OIC member states.
18. Mr. Bekhti Said, Ceo of Sidi Fredj Thalassotherapy Center, and Mr. Hichem Attar, Ceo and Founder of Aom Invest Spa., a public-private partnership model, made introductory presentations on health tourism of Algeria and informed the participants about their companies.
19. Ms. Abeda Akhter, Joint Secretary at the Tourism Organization under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism of the People's Republic of Bangladesh mentioned the present situation of Bangladesh health tourism. She explained that Bangladesh is not much familiar with health tourism and not a destination for it, but they would like to develop this sector in the country. She also pointed out that many countries have health tourism offices in Bangladesh.
20. Mr. Ammar Yasir Gattan El-Sayeri, General Director in the Department of Tourism Facilities at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities of Republic of Iraq, mentioned the current situation of health tourism of Iraq and explained that they would like to benefit from the experience of Turkey to improve their health tourism sector.
21. Mr. Benjamin Olafaju, First Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Federal Republic of Nigeria, pointed out that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the government tries to expand capacity building in health sector throughout the country, but Nigeria is not yet a destination for health tourism and their citizens go out to seek medical care. He indicated that as a business segment, health tourism offers a big profit to investors, so they would be appreciated if member states of OIC, especially Turkey, would like to collaborate with Nigeria to develop health tourism sector opening there offices, centers, hospitals, headquarters etc.
22. Ms. Tania Rose Maria Sapouma, Assistant Research Officer at the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure of Republic of Cameroon, mentioned that Cameroon became a tourism destination in 2010 and they formed an official team to develop tourism nationally and internationally. She underlined that in health tourism which is a new

concept, they have public and private institutions with international reputation, but the sector needs to be developed. She declared that Cameroon is willing to collaborate in all areas in this regard with the member states of OIC such as facilitating visas, opening offices to strengthen the cooperation, to create jobs, to increase number of foreign tourists and tourism revenue etc.

23. Mrs. Başak ÖNSAL DEMİR, the Moderator, thanked to all distinguished participants and speakers for their invaluable efforts and contributions. She wrapped up the previous sessions and presented the conclusions, that could be probed into by COMCEC and SESRIC and other related bodies in future works.

24. The participants highlighted the following items to focus in order to improve Intra-OIC cooperation for health tourism:

- Properly Planned Management Systems
- Standardization, Certification, Legislative Regulations
- Partnerships and Experience Sharing
- Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field
- Joint Policies and Action Plans
- Marketing and Promotion, Brand and Image Creation
- Diversification and Quality
- Awareness Raising
- Educational and Technical Improvement
- Data Building and Monitoring

25. The meeting ended with vote of thanks.