

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 13TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC TOURISM WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) has successfully held its 13th Meeting on September 13th, 2019 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Sustainable Destination Management Strategies in the OIC Member Countries.” During the Meeting, Tourism Working Group, made deliberations on sustainable destination management strategies in the OIC Member Countries in tourism sector. Accordingly, the participants has come up with some policy recommendations.

Policy Advice 1. Improving community participation fair representation by offering human resources training, capacity building and certification programs, enhancing local value chain, integrating local production into procurement and minimize leakages, encouraging local entrepreneurship in tourism, conducting media campaigns as well as raising tourist awareness about tourism sustainability.

Rationale:

When a tourism culture is established in the destination, locals are likely to participate more in decision-making processes and because they are the real owners of the destination, they are more likely to protect it. When for example, tourism investments are taken over by foreigners, who employ outsiders and import the inputs and raw materials, locals would be alienated with the destination and the resources. Thus, the local involvement at every possible channel should be encouraged and facilitated while continuously improving tourism’s direct and indirect benefits and value chain for locals. Such tools include percentage of local employment rules, incubation, credit facilities and support for potential local entrepreneurs, integrating local products to tourisms supply chain and promoting a sustainable tourism culture while minimizing leakages from the local economy.

Policy Advice 2. Identifying KPIs for sustainable tourism development based on international standards and climate change agreement to monitor each country’s performance against a set of pre-determined indicators and to encourage remedial actions when targets are not met.

Rationale:

One of the most important factors for achieving sustainable outcomes at the destination level is effective and independent monitoring of current practices on site. Since destinations will vary considerably, it is important that monitoring protocols are developed in context-specific and locally meaningful ways. Each member country needs to determine its position regarding its overall tourism climate, based on where it sits in destination life cycle models, what its tourism resources are, and what its total tourism budget is based on the suggested list of KPIs. This involves an on-going process of acquiring valid and reliable data across these sectors in ways that, ideally, lead to cross-country comparisons.

Policy advice 3. Identifying current and potential tangible and intangible tourism resources by taking into consideration destinations carrying capacity, and their long term protection and survival while avoiding over tourism.

Rationale:

Destinations have different natural and cultural attractions that have different levels of vulnerability to different types and volumes of touristic activity. The current and potential resources of destinations should be identified, threats should be eliminated, and their exposure to tourism activity should be managed. Their allocation needs to be limited with their capacity to handle tourist volume. This not only applies to natural resources and species but also cultural resources such as locals' way of life. Over tourism is important challenge for many tourism destinations. There are concerns about the energy consumption, resource depletion, waste management, impacts of tourism on wildlife and global warming. In this respect, carrying capacities, green certification and legislations would be tackled in the OIC region to create a more environmentally responsible tourism.

Policy advice 4. The required mechanisms (e.g. voluntary contribution, tourist tax, environmental fees) might be introduced to fund the sustainability activities that aim to protect, preserve the local quality of life and minimize the costs associated with tourism.

Rationale:

The negative side effects of tourism should be compensated by the actors who are responsible or benefiting from it. Because different tourism activities create pressures on local quality of life, the deterioration and use of resources that normally belong to locals should be paid for while the benefits of tourism towards locals should be enhanced. Tourist taxes, landing fees, entrance fees to the sites, waste taxes and so on can be introduced to create the finances needed to invest on sustainability and correct negative consequences.

Policy advice 5. Ensuring effective destination planning and marketing in such a way that the supply and demand meet at the optimum level and diversified.

Rationale:

Mass tourism involves huge numbers of tourists with relatively low spending capacity. According to Tourism Statistics, though the number of tourists is increasing, their spending has not increased as desired. Current spending in the OIC is around 750 USD per tourist which is well below the global average. Therefore, the product development and marketing activities need to target less price sensitive markets. The OIC have various potential tourism products that can attract diverse markets through an effective planning and marketing.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

- **COMCEC Tourism Working Group:** In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.
- **COMCEC Project Funding:** Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for projects each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the Member Countries participating in the Working Groups can submit

multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above-mentioned policy areas, the Member Countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organizing seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents.

- **OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum:** In its meetings, the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum may elaborate on the above-mentioned policy areas and the sub-areas from the private sector perspective.