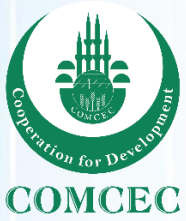


 **TOURISM**



CCO BRIEF ON TOURISM

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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CCO BRIEF ON TOURISM

1. Introduction

Tourism has become an important global economic activity especially after second half of the 20th century. Today, with a 4–5% growth rate, tourism volume by itself meets 8% of global products and 10% of employment (UNWTO, 2020). In addition, tourism affects economic activities in more than 135 sectors with its high multiplier effect, contributes to the balance of payments by creating a foreign currency input, and triggers many leading industries, such as transportation, trade, construction, health, and finance. Apart from its economic contributions, tourism has many social, cultural, and political benefits. Despite being an important global economic sector, tourism is very vulnerable to crises from any country or region of the world.

In the post COVID period, International tourism continued to show strong signs of recovery, with arrivals reaching 57% of pre-pandemic levels in the first seven months of 2022. Global tourism experienced a 4% upturn in 2021, compared to 2020 (415 million versus 400 million). However, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) were still 72% below the pre-pandemic year of 2019, according to preliminary estimates by UNWTO. This follows on from 2020, the worst year on record for tourism, when international arrivals decreased by 73%.

According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, international tourist arrivals almost tripled in January to July 2022 (+172%) compared to the same period of 2021. This means the sector recovered almost 60% of pre-pandemic levels. The steady recovery reflects strong pent-up demand for international travel as well as the easing or lifting of travel restrictions to date (86 countries had no COVID-19 related restrictions as of September 19, 2022). Tourism is also a crucial sector for the OIC in terms of income generation and its contribution to employment. Prior to the pandemic, the OIC countries' share of the worldwide international tourist arrivals was 10.7% representing 12.4% of the global tourism receipts (SESRIC).

Tourism may constitute the substructure of a country, create jobs and provide an essential sense of cultural exchange. One of the keys to absolute success in the tourism sector is effective, efficient and proactive human resources management. Human resource management also constitutes the core capability in tourism. In this regard, formulation of sustainable human resources policies in the tourism sector is highly important and should be planned as short, medium and long-term periods. In the short term, it is necessary to develop strategies for the destruction caused by the global epidemic. Medium and long-term strategies should be planned by prioritizing cultural awareness and industry 4.0.

COMCEC Tourism Cooperation

COMCEC attaches utmost importance to enhance the cooperation in tourism domain among the OIC Member Countries. Taking into account the emerging area in tourism sector, COMCEC Tourism Working Group devoted its last two consecutive meetings to elaborate on the theme of Sustainable human resource management in tourism.

2. Sustainable Human Resource Management in Tourism

Since the 37th Session of the COMCEC, the 18th Meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) was held on May 12, 2022 and the 19th Meeting was held on October 5, 2022 respectively, in a virtual-only format, with the theme of “Sustainable Human Resource Management in Tourism.

A research report with the same theme is being prepared for two consecutive COMCEC TWG meetings (18th and 19th). While the first draft of the report along with a case country study was submitted to the 18th TWG meeting, the final version of the report was submitted to the 19th TWG meeting. The main objective of the study was to establish a conceptual foundation for better understanding of the current and future implications sustainable human resource management on tourism in the OIC Member Countries and to come up with sound human resource management strategies and policies to tackle the challenges arisen so far.

The first draft of the report revealed important findings in terms of sustainable human resource management for tourism sector in the world as well as in the OIC Member Countries. It provided a conceptual framework about sustainable human resource management on the tourism sector in the world as well as in the OIC region, and the global on the tourism. In light of the discussion during the meeting and with the active contribution of the member countries, the draft version of the report was improved.

The final version of the report highlighted the major challenges faced by the OIC member countries with sustainable human resource management and include sound, specific, and practical policy recommendations for developing/improving human resource management for tourism in the OIC member countries.

The 19th Meeting of Tourism Working Group has come up with the following policy recommendations:

- Improving/Developing strategic COVID alert and new normal adjustment sustainability policies in human resources.
- Promoting in-service training, tourism schools, certificate programs, international exchange programs, and internship opportunities with a view to improving service and quality in the tourism industry.
- Ensuring the sustainability of Staff/Employee well-being through, among others, rewards, bonuses, raises in salary or possibility for employees to become shareholders and favorable working circumstances.
- Increasing synergy between businesses and partners.
- Encouraging governments to get more attention and support to maintain the sustainability of resources in tourism activities in the management of resources in tourism activities.

The reports and presentations submitted to the Working Group are available on the COMCEC web page. (<http://www.comcec.org/>)

3. The COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism

COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) is the other important instrument of the Strategy. Projects financed under the CPF need to serve cooperation among member countries and must be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in the tourism section. Projects also play important roles in realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the TWG meetings.

Within the scope of 9th Call for Project Proposals, two projects were selected to be financed by the CCO in 2022. The selected projects to be completed under the 9th Call are as follows;

The project, titled “A Two-Day Training on Human Resource Management in Tourism Sector” is being implemented by Nigeria with the partnership of three beneficiary countries. The project aims to enhance the human resource management capacity of the participants with a view to enhancing their productivity and effectiveness for sustainable tourism development in tourism sector. Project activities consist of training and local site visit on analyzing, planning and communication on human resource management and workshop on learning and sharing best practices.

The other project, titled “Risk Analysis and Crisis Planning and Management for Community Based Tourism”, is being implemented by Uganda with partnership of three beneficiary countries. The project purpose is to increase the capacity of stakeholders involved in community-based tourism in risk analysis and crisis planning and management. Project activities are a training and local site visit to be carried out in the above-specified areas to ensure the sustainability of the tourism sector.

3.1. COMCEC COVID Response

The COMCEC COVID Response (CCR) is mainly about alleviating the negative impacts of the pandemic on member country economies. The program is based on financing certain types of projects, which would focus on needs assessment, sharing expertise, providing direct grants to final beneficiaries.

Under the 2nd Call for Project Proposals of CCR, two projects were selected to be financed by the CCO in 2022.

The project, titled “Preparation of COVID-19 Hygiene Protocol and Training of Employees within the Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Sector”, is being implemented by Sierra Leone. The purpose of this project is to prepare the COVID-19 hygiene protocol handbook for safe tourism operations and to train staff/employees in tourism and hospitality establishments on the prepared protocol.

3.2. COMCEC Al-Quds Program

Furthermore, considering the current situation and special conditions in Palestine, especially in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and the resolutions of the recent Extraordinary Islamic Summits on Al-Quds, the CCO has initiated the Al-Quds Program, which focuses on destination development and management as well as community based tourism in Al-Quds. Implemented in

collaboration with the Ministry of National Economy of Palestine, the program consists of several projects to be carried out between 2020 and 2022.

As a part of the program, five projects were implemented by the Ministry of National Economy of Palestine between 2021 and 2022. The activities of the projects consist of, among others, exhibitions, art production, trainings, capacity building, procurement of machinery/equipment/service, online platform development, renovations, research, audio-visual material production etc. Titles of the projects are as follows;

Project Owner	Project Title
The Ministry of National Economy of Palestine	The Artists’ Identity Path: Tracing Heritage in Al-Quds
	Jerusalemites” Because We Are the Place and Time - “Maqdisiyyoon” Li’anana Al Zaman Wal Makan
	Enjoy the Hidden Jewels of Al Quds
	Old City Bakeries: Food Tourism and Heritage
	Al-Quds: Secrets and Narratives to Unfold

With the first project, titled “Al-Quds: Secrets and Narratives to Unfold”, it was aimed to increase the permanence of tourists visiting Al-Quds in their tourism experiences, understood the essence of Palestinian cultural heritage and organized exhibitions for enhancing the attractiveness in tourism. In this regard, realized activities were making renovation investments to improve the existing exhibitions that had to be closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, preparing a 3D model that promotes selected institutions from the old city and creating a website to increase recognition.

Within the framework of the second project titled “The Artists’ Identity Path: Tracing Heritage in Al-Quds”, it was aimed to bring a focus to Jerusalem’s rich Palestinian cultural heritage through contemporary artists’ perspectives and fostering multi-sectorial collaborations and engage artists with the local community. In line with this aim, a chain of 10 artworks was developed for promoting Jerusalem’s cultural heritage and creating touristic appreciation.

With the third project, titled “Jerusalemites: Because We Are the Place and Time”, it was aimed to preserve the Palestinian character and cultural heritage as well as enhancing communities’ resilience of the Old City of Jerusalem. In this context, a series of activities was realized consisting of involving a research on three tourism pathways (historical, religious and economic) in Al-Quds, audio-visual-written material production, heritage camp organization and training of Jerusalemite women to become tourist guides.

Under the project, titled “Enjoy the Hidden Jewels of Al Quds Promotion Program”, it was focused on increasing the competitive advantage of Al-Quds through online reservation system especially for one-day guaranteed departure excursions and other new products. In line with this purpose, a reservation system was created for the FIT (Free Independent Tourists) tourist segment providing with a guaranteed departure tour service and a guide on “Hidden Jewels in Al-Quds” was prepared.

In the last project, titled “Old City Bakeries: Food Tourism and Heritage”, it was aimed at renovating bakeries as well as developing capacities of bakery owners and/or workers on packaging and online marketing.

In order to achieve these purposes, the realized activities were a compliance assessment study for 25 bakeries, determining the main needs for increasing the capacity of the bakeries, a training program focusing on packaging and online marketing, purchasing equipment for facilitating and improving work performance as well as minor modifications of some of bakeries and video film reflecting bakeries’ history, architecture, food preparation methods etc.

Preparations regarding the third phase of the program is ongoing. The scope of the program was enlarged and new thematic priorities include tourism, entrepreneurship, creating job opportunities and empowerment of women and youth, e-trade and e-learning, microfinance and SME's involvement in Al-Quds Economy.

4. Other Ongoing Activities

Other important activities carried out under tourism cooperation can be summarized as follows:

- The 11th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) was held on June 27-29, 2022 in Baku/Azerbaijan. The ICTM approved the selection of Şanlıurfa (Türkiye) as the OIC City of Tourism for 2023, and Khiva (Uzbekistan) as the OIC City of Tourism for 2024. The session also welcomed the offer by the Uzbekistan to host the 12th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) in 2022 and Qatar to host the 13th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers (ICTM) in 2022.
- OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum provides a regular communication channel for the private sector representatives of the Member Countries. In this regard, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye, which serves as the Secretariat of the Forum, will organize virtually the 10th Meeting of the OIC/COMCEC Private Sector Tourism Forum on November 10, 2022, with the theme “The Prospects and Challenges for Gastronomy Tourism in OIC Countries.
