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NOTE ON

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**THE ISLAMIC CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT
OF TRADE**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. OIC TOURISM FAIR	1
1. History of the Islamic Tourism Fair:.....	1
2. Organization of the 3rd Islamic Tourism Fair:	3
II. TRAININGS	3
1. Webinar on the Digitalisation of Tourism Services in the OIC Countries (24-25 May 2023).....	3
2. Webinar on Gastronomic Tourism in OIC Countries (4-5 October 2023)	4
3. Webinar on strengthening ecotourism and conservation practices in OIC countries (November 29-30, 2023)	4
4. Holding of a “Webinar on Enhancing the Competitiveness of Halal Tourism in the OIC Member Countries”, 29 July 2024:	4
5. Ongoing Implementation of the Regional Project for Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa:.....	5
6. Activities for the benefit of Dakar, OIC City of Tourism 2025:.....	6
III. STUDIES.....	6

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant generator of foreign exchange, growth, and employment in OIC Countries. In 2019 they welcomed 259 million international tourists and generated 216 billion dollars of tourism receipts according to the latest SESRIC report on international tourism in OIC countries. As a result of the outbreak of the pandemic, the tourism sector has been heavily affected and tourism receipts have dropped to 78 billion dollars which corresponds to 70 million international tourist arrivals in 2020 due to restrictions and lockdowns imposed by the crisis.

Intra-OIC tourism trade reached 566 billion dollars generating a drop of 89 million tourists in 2020, i.e. a regression of 70%.

In order to reduce the negative effects of the pandemic on their economies, OIC Countries implemented various strategies and policies aiming at reinforcing the resiliency of the tourism sector. In this context, the 11th Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers was organized last June in Baku (Republic of Azerbaijan) to discuss the opportunities and challenges related to the sector and examine the ways and means to contribute to the recovery of the tourism sector in OIC countries.

In this regard, ICDT is planning to organize the 3rd Edition of the Islamic Tourism Fair in the second half of 2023, keeping in mind that the 1st Edition of this fair was organized in Istanbul, the Republic of Türkiye in 2005, and the 2nd in the State of Kuwait in 2019.

The present Concept Note aims at providing the member countries with all the necessary information relating to the organization of this fair.

I. OIC TOURISM FAIR

1. History of the Islamic Tourism Fair:

The organization of the OIC Tourism Fair by the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) is part of the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the OIC Summit Conferences, the Councils of Tourism Ministers, and the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.



All these resolutions highlight the importance of the tourism sector in the economic strategies of the OIC Countries. In this vein, it is of great interest for the Member States to participate in this Fair and contribute to the promotion of this vital sector for their economies.

a) Objectives of the Fair:

The Fair aims at strengthening cooperation among OIC countries in the tourism sector, promoting historical monuments and tourist sites of Member States, and encouraging investment in this sector. Besides, it constitutes an opportunity to exhibit the touristic offers as well as the reception infrastructures, thereby promoting the touristic destinations of each OIC country. Moreover, the fair contributes to depicting the authentic image of Islam, as a religion of peace and tolerance.

b) Products to be exhibited:

The products to be exhibited are commercial services related to tourism, hotels, transport in all its forms, travel agencies, equipment for hotels, and all kinds of activities relating to tourism.

c) Conditions and Terms of Participation:

The Tourism Fair will be open to the participation of all OIC Member States represented by their institutions operating in the field of tourism promotion as well as the various private and public stakeholders in the tourism sector (travel agencies, transport companies, hotels, vacation resorts, real estate companies, tourism service providers and craftsmen).

Furthermore, this event is open to the participation of the countries with an observer status within the OIC, the tourist operators belonging to the Muslim minorities in the non-member countries of the OIC, as well as the international tourism companies, through their subsidiaries established in the Member States.

The organizers will provide the participants with a set of incentives in the form of customs and non-customs facilitations for the admission of persons and goods, transport, freight, transit and customs clearance. Additionally, they will provide exhibition spaces that meet international standards and the necessary conditions to ensure the success of the fair.

As far as ICDT is concerned, the Centre will assist the hosting country in the marketing and promotion of the fair among the OIC countries. It will also organize sideline events and mobilize international experts for the organization of the aforesaid activities.

The first edition of the Islamic Tourism Fair was held from 24th to 26th November 2005, in Istanbul - Republic of Türkiye. It was a great success thanks to the participation rate of the Member States and the number of participating companies reached 350 companies, operating in the tourism area.

Besides, the Ministry of Trade and Industry of the State of Kuwait and ICDT in collaboration with "Kuwait International Fair Company" organized an Exceptional Edition of the Tourism, Handicrafts, and Interior Decoration Fair from 18th to 23rd December 2019.



The objective of this event which attracted the participation of more than 120 companies, is to strengthen cooperation among the OIC Member States in the tourism, handicrafts and decoration sectors, to promote historical monuments and tourist sites of Member States, and to encourage investments in this sector. Furthermore, the fair provided a platform for the handicraft sector players in OIC countries to seek business opportunities and establish partnerships among themselves.

2. Organization of the 3rd Islamic Tourism Fair:

The 3rd Tourism Fair of the OIC Member States was hosted by ICDT in partnership with NeXTfairs Ltd, with the strategic sponsorship of Qatar Tourism. The event was held from November 20th to 22nd, 2023, at the Doha Exhibition & Convention Center (DECC). This fair coincided with the Qatar Travel Mart (QTM 2023) and was held under the esteemed patronage of the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar. The theme of the fair was “OIC TOURISM FAIR: An exclusive platform promoting Muslim-friendly tourism where tradition and modernity converge.”

This fair aimed at strengthening cooperation among OIC Member States in the tourism sector, promoting historical monuments and tourist sites and encouraging investments in this sector. Moreover, this event has provided a platform for stakeholders to exchange views and share national experiences of public and private investors in the tourism sector, as well as an opportunity for economic operators to establish business opportunities and partnerships. This edition also focused on the promotion of the family tourism industry which represents 30% of the travel market in the world and served as a platform to promote non-traditional destinations in the OIC countries with high potential for ecotourism and cultural tourism.

On the side-lines of this fair, were organized the following events .

- Panel on “Gastronomy Tourism in OIC Member States ”;
- Panel on “ Health Tourism in OIC Member States ”;
- Panel on “ Muslim – Friendly Tourism “;
- QTM Conference ;
- Global Village ;
- Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony ;
- Hosted Buyer Program ;
- Media Familiarization Trip ;
- B2B business meetings between economic operators.

The opening ceremony recorded the participation of 60 countries. It was chaired by H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Hamad Bin Qassim Al-Abdullah Al-Thani, Minister of Commerce and Industry of the State of Qatar accompanied by H.E. Mr. Saad Al Kharji, Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Mrs. Latifa El Bouabdellaoui, ICDT’s Director General and their Excellencies the Ambassadors of the OIC Member States accredited in the State of Qatar.

II. TRAININGS

1. Webinar on the Digitalisation of Tourism Services in the OIC Countries (24-25 May 2023)

Within the framework of their joint programs TOURDEV and Tourism-CaB, ICDT and SESRIC organized a Webinar on " Digitalization of Tourism Services in OIC Countries ". It aimed at enhancing the capacity of Member States to develop effective policies and measures to attract more visitors to their destinations. By providing participants with valuable information on the latest trends and best

practices in this field, this training enabled countries to become familiar with the knowledge and skills needed to benefit from digital technologies and optimize their tourism offerings.

2. Webinar on Gastronomic Tourism in OIC Countries (4-5 October 2023)

Within the framework of their joint programs TOURDEV and Tourism-CaB, ICDT and SESRIC organized a training webinar on "Gastronomic Tourism in OIC Countries" on 4-5 October 2023, to build the capacity of Member States in this field.



The training enabled participants to discover and apply the tools of Gastronomic Tourism in order to accelerate the development of the sector. It also highlighted the essential role of Gastronomic Tourism in promoting sustainable tourism and in the economic empowerment of local communities, particularly women.

On this occasion, the Experts exchanged views with participating countries to assess their situation. They recommended organising more activities to develop this sector and also to use digital marketing to increase their visibility on a regional and global scale.

3. Webinar on strengthening ecotourism and conservation practices in OIC countries (November 29-30, 2023)

This training session organized with SESRIC enabled participants to build their capacity to develop a competitive ecotourism sector, through the presentation of essential tools, the obstacles hindering the development of the sector in OIC countries, the latest trends and best practices in this field. On this occasion, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye and the Turkish Tourism Promotion Agency presented their country's rich experience in ecotourism and best practices in the sector. The representative of the World Tourism Organization presented the key concepts of Ecotourism, as well as UNWTO initiatives in this field around the world.

4. Holding of a “Webinar on Enhancing the Competitiveness of Halal Tourism in the OIC Member Countries”, 29 July 2024:

In alignment with the resolutions of the 12th Session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers held in Khiva from 31 May to 2 June 2024, ICDT and SESRIC organized in collaboration with SMIIC a Training Webinar on “Enhancing the Competitiveness of Halal Tourism in the OIC Countries” on 29th July 2024.

The Webinar brought together international experts and government ministries and agencies to exchange ideas and share best practices, challenges and existing opportunities in Halal Tourism with a view to enhancing Member Countries competitiveness in this area.

On this occasion, Mrs. Kadiatou Diallo from ICDT presented the Centre's Efforts in promoting Muslim Friendly Tourism within the OIC Region and Mr. Mohamed EL Gaby from SESRIC delivered a presentation on the State of Halal Tourism in OIC Countries. On the other hand, Mr. Yasin ZÜLFİKAROĞLU from SMIIC shared with participants the OIC/SMIIC Standards in Halal Tourism.

During the session devoted to the national experiences of OIC Member States, Mrs. Marina MUHAMAD from the Islamic Tourism Center Malaysia and Mr. Médoune KANE from the Ministry of Tourism and Handcrafts of Senegal presented their experiences, challenges as well as existing opportunities in Halal tourism in their respective Countries.

At the end of the Webinar, Member Countries expressed their satisfaction on the quality of the training and requested to the Organizers to share with them the OIC standards in Halal Tourism to have a common understanding and better position themselves on this very important market.

5. Ongoing Implementation of the Regional Project for Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa:

ICDT and SESRIC organized on 28-29 May 2024 a virtual Training Workshop on Developing Sustainable Ecotourism in OIC West African Member Countries in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

The Workshop which aimed at developing Ecotourism within the West African Region, was attended by more than 50 Representatives of Guinea, Gambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone as members of the "Regional Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-border parks and protected areas in West Africa".

On this occasion, the UNWTO and the UNEP presented their strategies to develop Ecotourism throughout the World including West Africa, as well as the actions undertaken to protect the environment. Experts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Tourism promotion and development Agency of the Republic of Turkiye as well as the President of DISTED Malaysia also attended this event to share the best practices in the area of Ecotourism.

On the second day of the Workshop, countries presented the situations of the parks and protected areas as well as the current challenges in developing Ecotourism in West Africa which relate to the lack of dedicated infrastructures, competence and financial support.

At the end of the Workshop, countries expressed the need to benefit from more trainings on the conservation and marketing of parks and protected areas and on the funding methods and opportunities in the area of Ecotourism.

In 2025, ICDT plans to organize a training workshop on the digitalization and marketing of tourist services, aimed at enhancing the capacities of park managers in the countries involved in this project. The workshop will provide participants with the best practices in

the targeted area.

6. Activities for the benefit of Dakar, OIC City of Tourism 2025:

As part of Dakar's designation as the OIC Tourism City for 2025 by the 12th session of the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers held in Khiva - Uzbekistan in 2024, the ICDT and SESRIC organized, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts of the Republic of Senegal, a webinar on "Developing a Relevant Marketing Strategy for Senegal as a Tourism Destination" from May 6 to 7, 2025. This training, designed to support Senegal in its tourism policy and help it better position itself in the global tourism market, brought together the country's tourism authorities and operators, as well as representatives from the ICDT, SESRIC, the UNWTO Regional Office for Africa, and the following OIC countries: Morocco, Türkiye, Malaysia, and Uganda. Discussions focused on the tourism landscape and related policies in Senegal, the United Nations strategy for developing sustainable tourism in Africa, and specific case studies and best practices from OIC countries in this field.

Furthermore, at the invitation of SESRIC, the ICDT also participated in the virtual workshop "Promoting Gastronomic Tourism for Destination Senegal: Marketing & Branding", held on 8-9 July 2025. This event brought together 63 participants from public and private institutions engaged in gastronomic tourism in Senegal, as well as representatives of various international organizations and institutions, including the ICDT, COMCEC, SMIIC, UN Tourism, MOTAC, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye.

Organized within the framework of the commemoration of Dakar as the OIC City of Tourism for 2025, the workshop aimed to strengthen the capacities of professionals and experts active in Senegal's gastronomic tourism sector. It also sought to share successful experiences from other OIC Member States and to promote collaboration among tourism stakeholders in order to enhance public-private partnerships (PPPs).

On this occasion, the ICDT Expert delivered a presentation on "Strategies for the Development of Gastronomic Tourism in OIC Member States", with a particular focus on the case of Senegal. This contribution was highly appreciated by participants, as it highlighted both the potential of African countries – especially Senegal – in this field, and the strategies to be implemented to tap into this highly promising market.

III. STUDIES

In 2022, ICDT produced a "Study on Developing Sustainable Tourism in OIC Countries." Following that, in 2023, the Centre published a "Study on Unleashing Tourism Potential in OIC Countries through Health and Gastronomy Tourism." These studies aim to enable member countries to exploit the opportunities offered by these niche markets in an uncertain socio-economic context at the regional and international levels.