



## CONCEPT NOTE

### IMPROVING ISLAMIC TOURISM ECOSYSTEM IN OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES: DESTINATION AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

9-12 JULY, 2018

MALATYA, REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

#### 1. Background

In recent decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and growing sophistication, turning the industry into one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. Despite occasional setbacks due to insecurity and outbreak of epidemics, international tourist arrivals have proved resilient in many countries around the world. According to the UNWTO, the number of international tourist arrivals increased from 998 million in 2011 to 1,235 million in 2016, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 4.4 percent. The revenues generated by those tourists, i.e. international tourism receipts, in terms of current US dollar prices, increased from \$1,073 billion to \$1,220 billion in the same period, corresponding to an average annual growth rate of 2.6 per cent. In 2016, the world tourism revenues amounted to \$3.34 billion per day or \$988 per tourist arrival (SESRIC Tourism Report 2017).

The tourism sector has been of critical economic importance for many Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and developing countries as it is one of the most important sources of foreign exchange and an engine of economic growth that contributes to the socio-economic development of these countries. In addition to the economic benefit, the tourism sector has a number of other positive direct and indirect effects on the global economy, including, but not limited to, providing an impetus for trade, strengthening regional cooperation, boosting growth, job creation and entrepreneurship, notably in the service sector and for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs).

With a strong consumer base of over 1.6 billion, Muslims around the world are projected to almost double their spending on travel in the coming years, driving a boom in Islamic tourism that will make the sector worth US\$300 billion according to Halaltrip. For majority of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries, tourism is a natural-fit due to their rich and diverse set of natural, historical, cultural, and archaeological and architectural attractions. As a group, OIC countries possess a significant potential for the development of a sustainable international tourism sector. Yet, given the modest share of the OIC region in the world tourism market and the concentration of tourism activity in only a few OIC countries, apparently, a significant part of this potential remains untapped. This state of affairs manifests itself in the relatively modest shares of the OIC countries in the global international tourist arrivals and receipts, which were recorded at 14.9 per cent and 10.1 per cent in 2015 and 2016, respectively (SESRIC Tourism Report 2017).

As a sub-niche market of the international tourism, the Islamic Tourism or Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) sector has a great potential to sustain growth both in tourist arrivals and tourism receipts in OIC countries. Yet, OIC countries face a number of challenges that limit the development of this sub-niche market such as lack of proper infrastructure, fragmented standards, and weak destination and industry development strategies. In recognition of this challenges and the tremendous potentials of Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT) for social and economic development and transformation, SESRIC developed and implemented a project funded by the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) in 2017 titled “Training Program on the Development and Promotion of Muslim Friendly Tourism-2016-SESRIC-205” in order to raise the awareness of the OIC countries on MFT and established an opportunities to share best practices about the potentials and positive impacts of MFT.

In general, the tourism industry in the OIC countries requires a broad approach to reach its full potential, including the upgrading and expansion of the ecosystem along with the improvement of the destination and promotional management. As a continuation of the 2016-SESRIC-205 project and with a specific focus on Destination and Industry Development, SESRIC designed the project on “Improving Islamic Tourism Ecosystem in OIC Member Countries: Destination and Industry Development” and funded by the COMCEC through its Project Funding Programme which is a financing mechanism introduced in 2013 to enhance solidarity and

multilateral cooperation among OIC Member Countries as well as increasing institutional and human capacity in these countries.

## **2. Objectives of the Training Program**

In order to fully capitalise on the Islamic Tourism's economic potential, destinations need to devise and implement strategies with a view to identifying the potentials of destinations, promoting beauties of destinations, managing tourist flows, providing high quality services for tourists and maximizing the contribution of the sector to the socio-economic development of destinations. In this context, the overall objective of the training programme and study visit is to improve the Islamic Tourism Ecosystem in OIC Member Countries through strengthening the capacities of policymakers on destination and industry development aspects.

## **3. Expected Outcomes of the Training**

It is expected that training programme and the study visit will accomplish the following:

- Knowledge of market research and destination promotion improved
- Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation knowledge among participants enhanced
- Product development areas for MFT identified
- Participants consolidated their understanding on Tourism development and investment plan and strategy
- Participant's knowledge on marketing and promotion strengthened
- Sustainability of the previously funded project of SESRIC on MFT Tourism by COMCEC was ensured

## **4. Format and Structure**

The training programme will enable participants to engage in interactive discussions with stakeholders, experts and policymakers in the field of tourism during a course of four days as follows:

The first two days will be dedicated to training programme. The participants from relevant Tourism ministries will listen from renowned trainers about the basics of destination and industry development in Islamic tourism as well as they will share their national best practices as well as lessons learned. The lectures during the training programme will be delivered by the trainers from the Islamic Tourism Centre of Malaysia (ITC), one of the most advanced and

competent institutes in Islamic tourism research and education in the world. This will be preceded by a Davos-style panel discussion on “Destination and Industry Development in OIC Countries: Prospect and Challenges” that would enrich the knowledge of participants on the contemporary challenges and trends as well as prospective developments in Islamic tourism at the OIC level.

The last two day of the programme will be dedicated to site visits in the province of Malatya with a view to presenting to the participants a practical first-hand experience in developing a successful tourism destination and industry.

The programme will be implemented in **English**. Simultaneous translation into **Arabic** and **French** will be provided.

### **5. Participants of the Training**

Participants will be from selected OIC countries with high growth potentials<sup>5</sup> in Islamic Tourism sector. Each country will be represented by two trainees from the relevant national tourism authorities such as the Ministry of Tourism. Relevant international and Non-governmental organisations in Turkey, Destination Management Organizations (DMO) and local institutions will be invited to the programme to enrich the discussing by sharing their experience and best practices.

### **6. Date and Venue**

The entire programme including training and study visit will be held in Malatya, Republic of Turkey on 9-12 July 2018.