

First IORA Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Destination Management Mauritius, 03-04 May 2017

"Enhancing Member States capacities for sustainable tourism through the sharing of best practices"

Draft Concept Note

1. Background

With a share of about 9% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014, the tourism industry continues to experience rapid expansion and diversification becoming one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors worldwide. During the past 60 years, an increasing number of destinations have opened up in the different regions in the world and as a result, tourism is ranked high on the list of development priorities of the majority of IORA Member States. The UNWTO's long term forecast; "Tourism Towards 2030", predicts that global international tourist arrivals are expected to increase by 3.3% a year from 2010 to 2030 reaching 1.8 billion by 2030.

The UNWTO, in its *Tourism 2020 Vision: Volume 1 Africa*, states that the 22 destinations of the Indian Ocean Region grouping are forecast to receive 179 million inter-national tourist arrivals in the year 2020, thus recording an annual growth rate of 6.3 per cent over the period 1995-2020. Consequently, the Indian Ocean region is gaining in the market share of worldwide tourist arrivals and by 2020 one in every nine (or around 11 per cent) tourist arrivals would be from an Indian Ocean country.

Despite the positive aspects of tourism, the rapid growth of the industry has resulted in negative effects on the natural, socio-cultural and economic environment of destinations. The UNWTO highlighted that considerable attention needs to be given to this issue and that it is imperative for stakeholders of Member States to recognise the necessity of adopting best practices to achieve a *"tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"*¹.

This issue is even more relevant when considering the substantial dependency of the industry on the natural and cultural environment of the destination as tourism is produced and consumed in the destination's environment. The need to preserve the touristic assets to maintain the destination competitiveness has triggered the interest of stakeholders to adopt tourism best practices to push forward sustainable development. The management of tourism destinations is an important part of controlling the environmental and socio-economic impacts of tourism. Destination management may include land use planning, zoning environmental aspects, carrying capacity, and other regulations, guidelines and directives.

The role played by each stakeholder is important in ensuring that tourism becomes the engine of sustainable growth as evoked in the Rio+20 Outcome Document; "The Future we Want", where tourism as a cross-cutting industry is capable of making a significant contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely by having close linkages to other sectors and stimulating trade opportunities, jobs creation, poverty eradication, gender equality, as well as the protection and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of the destination².

¹ Definition by the United Nation World Tourism organisation (UNWTO), <http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5>

² The Rio +20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on 'Tourism for a Sustainable Future' held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20 June 2012

In addition, as the deadline for the UN Millennium Development Goals approaches, the first IORA workshop on Sustainable Tourism Destination in Mauritius will provide an ideal platform to reflect on tourism as a driving force for sustainable development. Member States will be given the opportunity to discuss best practices of the industry as it is important to recall that the long-term success and sustainability of a tourism destination is linked to the ability of the destination and its stakeholders to foster innovation in their approach to destination management. In this regard, this workshop aims at improving the performance of Member States in managing tourism destinations in line with international best practices and ensuring the competitiveness of the national tourism industry within a regional and global context.

Objectives:

- Promote the importance of sustainable tourism development in the destinations of the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) region;
- Enhance Member States' capacities for sustainable tourism through the sharing of best practices;
- Encourage sharing of knowledge and experience on sustainable tourism management in a destination;
- Encourage the development of capacity building programmes between Member States.

Expected Outcomes

- Increase awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism and understand its opportunities and challenges;
- Have a better understanding of current and emerging initiatives (policies/strategies/best practices) of sustainable tourism destination management;
- Member States to be in a position to apply the concepts discussed in their respective countries;
- Share useful experiences through interactive discussions on the identification of best tourism practices; and
- Make recommendations on capacity building of member states and identify a project proposal (to be discussed at Workshop) to be implemented by all member states.

Approach of the Workshop

The proposed event will constitute an interactive two-day workshop where Member States would be given an opportunity to discuss existing tourism issues and how best practices to deal with these issues are being applied. The workshop will be based on a participatory approach in order to enrich the discussion on the importance of sustainability.

The presentations and discussions would result in practical recommendations that IORA Ministers could consider at the next Council of Ministers' (COM) Meeting.

On the second day (afternoon), there will be a site visit to the Long Beach hotel.

- Target Beneficiaries

The workshop will bring together representatives of IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners with policy/regulatory responsibilities relevant to Sustainable Tourism Destination Management. Invitations will be forwarded to experts from Member States and Dialogue Partner States who would be able to combine their

experience, expertise and technical knowledge to consider IORA regional initiatives for sustainable tourism development.

Venue & Dates

The workshop is scheduled to take place on 03-04 May 2017 in Mauritius at le Meridien Hotel.