



United Nations

United Nations Symposium

**Mainstreaming Sector Policies into Integrated National
Sustainable Development Planning:**

**Enhancing Sustainable Tourism, Urbanization, Resource
Efficiency, Biodiversity and Environmental Protection**

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Dr. Jahangiri, First Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

Dr. Soltanifar, Vice-President and Head of Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO),

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations DESA,

Excellencies,

Ladies, gentlemen and distinguished guests.

I have two duties this morning.

The first is to join our hosts – the Islamic Republic of Iran – in welcoming you all to this important event.

The second is to share with you – very briefly – a perspective on behalf of the UN agencies working on the ground here in Iran on the subject of sustainable tourism.

I will not detain you with fact and figures. Simply put, the number of visitors to this geographically diverse and culturally-rich country with a history spanning over 7,000 years, is increasing.

And it is doing so dramatically.

Recent analysis by the Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization amply demonstrates this.

I am sure that we are all looking forward to Iran benefitting from full engagement with the international tourism industry – not only to benefit the country but also (and perhaps more importantly) to enable Iran's immense treasures to be shared – and enjoyed – with the citizens of the world.

The reasons to come to Iran are countless.

In my 27 years' working with the United Nations I have been privileged to travel and work in over 70 countries. Among these, Iran is easily one of the most enchanting.

- Landscape – be it deserts or mountains or wetlands.
- A rich biodiversity in its protected areas.
- A noble cultural and social heritage – with 17 sites inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. And another 51 submitted on the Tentative List.
- In addition, Iran has also a great potential for medical tourism which is rapidly becoming a worldwide, multibillion-dollar industry. This is a consequence of Iran's well-equipped and highly skilled medi-care sector. Care and treatment costs are also reasonable compared with many developed and even developing countries.

And all of this is before you meet the kind, welcoming and generous people of Iran.

So, the tourism potential is immense.

But when it comes, what will all this engagement with the international tourism industry look like? What do we need to be concerned about?

If Iran wishes to embrace tourism as a significant generator of income and jobs, it needs to plan well.

Such planning should ensure, firstly, that there is no adverse impact on the environment – especially considering the Iranian environment's current delicate carrying capacity. I am speaking not only about water use. I am also speaking about our footprint on the biodiversity of the Protected Areas.

In future, we will need to integrate climate change modelling predictions – which foresee a hotter, drier future for Iran – into our planning for sustainable tourism.

We need to ensure that the required infrastructure and telecommunications facilities are developed sufficiently to support a solid tourism industry.

Crucially, we need to ensure that the revenue which is by tourism generated should benefit the local communities. In this way, the citizens will see the benefits – directly and immediately – of the new visitors from both abroad and from within Iran itself.

This is how tourism can contribute to both rural – and urban – sustainable development in Iran.

So I leave you with a reflection which is one of promise waiting to be fulfilled.

Now is the time to plan – and plan well.

Let us plan to use development models which consume fewer resources – and less water.

Let us consider ecological and environmental carrying capacity of Iran in our investments.

Let us adopt participatory approaches for tourism which ensure that the revenue is utilized for local community development.

And – in developing the infrastructure for specific market segments – let us choose to retain what is best in Iran to attract visitors who will appreciate, and respect, the characteristics of all that is Iranian.

At this time of immense possibility, let us embrace a future income earner which can transform lives, as it did mine.

I wish, for us all, a successful symposium.

Kheily motashekeram.