



**United Nations Symposium
Mainstreaming Sector Policies into Integrated National
Sustainable Development Planning:
Enhancing Sustainable Tourism, Urbanization, Resource
Efficiency, Biodiversity and Environmental Protection**

Aide Mémoire

14-16 October 2014

**Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran**

**hosted by:
Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO)
and**

**co-organized by
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)**

in collaboration with

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran
And
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-Tehran Office**

Background

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in June 2012, emphasized in its outcome document “The Future We Want” §§ 130-131, that “*sustainable tourism, well managed and designed, can make significant contributions to sustainable development. It has the potential to contribute to a green and inclusive economy if creating decent jobs and generate trade opportunities and income. However, to enable such positive synergies, capacity must be built to promote environmental awareness, understanding of impacts and conditions for the conservation of biodiversity, flora and fauna, wildlife and ecosystems.*”

The Rio+20 outcome document also emphasized the importance of increasing the number of metropolitan regions, cities and towns that are implementing policies for sustainable urban planning and design in order to respond effectively to the expected growth of urban populations in the coming decades. *We recognize the important role of municipal governments in setting a vision for sustainable cities, from the initiation of city planning through to revitalization of older cities and neighbourhoods, including by adopting energy efficiency programmes in building management and developing sustainable, locally appropriate transport systems*(§136).

Urban development, tourism, resource efficiency, biodiversity conservation and environmental protection are all closely interlinked. Whereas a growing number of developing countries have embraced the concept of sustainable development in theory, in actual practice integrated planning and decision making is still more of an exception than the rule. Parallel and independent (or non-coordinated) sector planning still prevails in most countries. Municipal and urban planning authorities, governmental tourism development ministries and agencies, and environmental conservation and protection authorities most often pursue their development plans independent of each other. Also, in many cases, private sector participation and true multi stakeholder engagement remains inadequate and insufficient. Better coordination, cooperation and consultation processes are particularly needed at the local level.

The *United Nations Symposium on mainstreaming sector policies into integrated national and local-level development planning: Sustainable tourism, urbanisation, resource efficiency, biodiversity and environmental protection* is planned to be held in Tehran from 14 to 16 October 2014. The aim of the symposium is to promote a systematic integration of economic, social and environmental considerations into national and local level policy and decision-making. The Symposium will contribute to the implementation of Rio+20 decisions by advocating a more systemic inclusion of all concerned stakeholders into national and local planning and public policy decision making processes. It will demonstrate the advantages and benefits of integrated over sector planning and policy making in particular with regard to more sustainable development of tourism and city planning, taking into full account important public concerns such as resource efficiency, biodiversity and environmental protection.

Many developing countries have outstanding cultural heritage sites, unique scenic spots and other social, cultural, and natural assets as well as historic and religious sites, which offer great potential attractions for enhanced domestic and international tourism. However, at the same time many of them also face great challenges as they seek to encourage the necessary investment in tourism infrastructure, facilities and services. Most tourism takes place in and between urban areas. Tourism and tourism demand can make a significant contribution to the economic viability and commercial success of urban (re)development projects aimed at conservation of urban heritage sites, restoration and renovations of old towns and historic town centers.

In many countries planning and policy making on tourism has thus far still remained a separate and segregated process of isolated sectoral planning and strategy formulation. However, sustainable tourism should:

- a) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity;
- b) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance;
- c) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Planning and strategy development for local urban development and tourism needs to systematically include economic, socio-cultural and ecologic aspects, and aim at the following: a) Economic viability; b) Local prosperity; c) Employment quality; d) Social equity; e) Visitor fulfilment; f) Local public participation in decision making; g) Community wellbeing; h) Cultural richness; i) Physical integrity; j) Biological diversity; k) Resource efficiency; and l) Environmental conservation.

All policies and strategies must have sustainable development as their core concern. Sector strategies, including regional, national and local-level tourism strategies should be well coordinated and integrated with plans, policies and programmes of other departments and agencies. Similarly, local urban development plans should also meet all requirements published in sustainable development strategies. Many countries, including developing countries, face the challenge to gradually change unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Many urban and tourist lifestyles and consumption patterns are often unsustainable. Hence, it is important to mainstream principles of natural resource conservation and efficiency, conservation of biodiversity and environmental conservation into tourism and urban development programmes.

The proposed capacity building activity will help participating developing countries to improve the economic and social benefits of hosting domestic and incoming foreign tourists. The project will promote public-private partnerships as well as other stakeholder and community participation in the formulation and implementation of development projects. In the intermediate term, the project is also expected to facilitate poverty reduction efforts and contribute to the creation of new business and employment opportunities.

Objectives of the UN Symposium

The **specific objectives** of the *United Nations Symposium on Mainstreaming Sector Policies into Integrated national development planning: Sustainable Tourism, urbanization, resource efficiency, biodiversity and environmental protection* as a capacity building initiative include, inter alia, to:

- (i) discuss options, ways and means to promote sustainable tourism that is economically viable (for public and private investors), socially and economically beneficial (for employees and small-scale entrepreneurs), and environmentally benign (minimal environmental impacts, enhanced resource efficiency and biodiversity conservation);
- (ii) advocate and promote integrated policy decision making related to sustainable urbanization and tourism at all levels, including the various concerned government departments and agencies and public, private and community stakeholders;

- (iii) propose recommendations of good practice (for project developers, planner, and financiers), in terms of integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development;
- (iv) exchange information, review and analyse trends in global and regional tourism demand, analyse demand projections and compare alternative approaches to marketing strategies;
- (v) identify potential areas or projects for international cooperation and partnerships;
- (vi) document best practice examples for on-line publication on Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform / DESA webpage.

Participation:

Participation in the ad hoc Symposium is by invitation only. Invitations will be issued by the host organization(s) and/or UN DESA as the (co)organizer. Interested experts/participants and organizations interested to participate in the UN Symposium are requested to contact the organizers (listed here below).

Participation in the Symposium is free of charge, but participants are, in general, responsible for their own travel costs.

Some funding is expected to become available to support the participation of experts / resource persons from developing countries.

It is expected that a total of up to 180 persons may attend the UN Symposium, including

- a) Experts and senior representatives of OECD countries and their tourism planning and development agencies and organizations;
- b) Experts and senior representatives of developing countries and their tourism planning and development agencies and organizations;
- c) Senior representatives of leading international corporate sector entities (real estate development, hotel chains, tour operators, etc);
- d) Senior representatives of UN DESA and UN Programmes, Funds and Agencies);
- e) Representatives of national and international financial institutions (IFIs), including national and regional development banks and Islamic Development Bank;
- f) Representatives of national and local governments (such as municipality and City Council officials, private sectors, academia and others.

Organization

The *United Nations Symposium on Mainstreaming Sector Policies into Integrated National Sustainable Development Planning: Enhancing sustainable tourism, urbanization, resource efficiency, biodiversity, and environmental protection* will be co-hosted by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts & Tourism Organization of Iran (ICHTO) and the Tehran Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) during 14-16 October 2014. The UN Symposium will be co-organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (DESA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The co-organizers are inviting interested UN agencies, funds and programmes, including the United Nations World Tourism Organization (WTO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), among others, to also be represented and to contribute to the programme.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and other non-UN organizations may also be invited to attend as collaborating partners or exhibitors.

Tentative Agenda

13 October 2014 – Arrival of international Participants - Registration

Day 1 14 October 2014 Tuesday

Opening session

Opening remarks by host officials
Welcome address by co-organizers
Group photo

High-level Segment:

Keynote statements by First Vice-President of Islamic Republic of Iran

Statements by invited Ministers

Lunch break

Introduction to Technical Programme of the Symposium

Session 1: Models for integrated planning of tourism for sustainable development

2 co-moderators, 4 technical presentations, Q & A; and group discussion

Afternoon tea / coffee break

Session 1: continued

2 co-moderators, 4 technical presentations, Q & A; and group discussion

Evening social event

Day 2 15 October 2014 Wednesday

Special presentation Concepts, methods and examples of sustainable tourism lodges
invited guest speaker

Session 2: Perspectives for regional cooperation in sustainable tourism development
2 co-moderators, 3 technical presentations, Q & A, and group discussion

Special Presentation Compendium of Best Practice Profiles: Models for sustainable tourism
invited guest speaker

Morning tea/coffee break

Morning sessions in 3 parallel working groups

Parallel Session 3.1.: Promoting investments and public-private partnerships in tourism and hospitality

(Working Group Session with interpretation)

2 co-moderators, 4 technical presentations, Q & A and working group discussion

Parallel Session 3.2: Policies for integrated planning of tourism at national and local levels and conservation of cultural heritage
(Working Group Session – English only),
2 co-moderators, 4 technical presentations, Q & A, and working group discussion

Parallel Session 3.3: Promoting resource efficiency and environmental protection in tourism
(Working Group Session – English only)
2 Co-moderators, 4 technical presentations, Q & A, and working group discussion

Lunch break

Parallel Session 4.1: International financial institution investments in tourism and hospitality
(Working Group Session with interpretation)
2 co-moderators, 4 technical presentations, Q & A, and working group discussion

Parallel Session 4.2: Training of human resources and capacity development in tourism
(Working Group Session – English only)
2 co-moderators, 4 technical presentations, Q & A, and working group discussion

Parallel Session 4.3: National parks, conservation of biodiversity, and sustainable ecotourism
(Working Group Session – English only)
2 co-moderators, 5 technical presentations, Q & A, and Working Group Discussion

Afternoon tea / coffee break

Session 5: Concluding plenary session: Perspectives for international cooperation in sustainable tourism for development

Reports of parallel working groups, Q & A and group discussion

Summary of conclusions and recommendation

Concluding remarks

Day 3 16 October 2014 Thursday

Meetings with representatives of national media

Programme of site visits and bi-lateral consultations

Option A Site Visit programme (Tehran)

Option B Site Visit programme (Tehran)

17 October 2014 Friday – Return travel of international participants

A detailed provisional programme will be prepared step-by-step and will be circulated among confirmed partners and participants in due course.

Languages:

The United Nations Symposium will be conducted in English and Farsi, with simultaneous interpretation available in both languages.

Side events and workshops and site visits

Participants or organizations interested to display information or organize side events on their respective work and activities are requested to contact the organizers.

A site visit programme is planned to be organized for visiting participants and VIP guests.

Proceedings

The Meeting will be conducted in a “paper smart” manner. All presentations and other materials presented at the meeting will be made available to participants in electronic format. The electronic proceedings of the meeting will be published on the DESA Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform webpage: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org> .

Logistics

A separate circular for information of participants on travel, accommodation and logistics will be issued shortly.

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