

REGIONAL PROJECT ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN A NETWORK OF CROSS-BORDER PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS IN WEST AFRICA

Minutes of the progress briefing on the first phase of the feasibility study of the regional project on sustainable tourism development in a network of cross-border parks and protected areas in West Africa, held in Madrid, Spain, at the UNWTO Headquarters, on 6 February 2009

The Steering Committee of the Regional Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa, expanded to include the representatives of the States party to the project, met on 6 February 2009 in Madrid, Spain, at the invitation of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The list of participants is provided in Annex 1 of the present document.

The meeting was chaired by **Mr. Ousmane N'Diaye**, UNWTO Regional Representative for Africa, assisted by:

- **H.E. Nabika DIALLO**, Ambassador, Adviser to the Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC),
- **Mr. Allal RACHDI**, Director General of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), and
- **Mr. Mohamed SAKHO**, Regional Coordinator of the Project.

I. Following the adoption of the agenda of the meeting (see Annex 2) the participants took cognizance of the following:

1. The preliminary remarks of the UNWTO Regional Representative for Africa on the importance of the meeting, whose purpose, after the presentation of the results of the diagnostic assessment, was to reflect on the orientations to give to the study in order for it to meet the expectations of the Governments of the Member States and of the Development Partners involved in the Project ;
2. The communication of the Adviser to the Secretary-General of the OIC, who reaffirmed to the Member States the personal support of the Secretary-General of the OIC, H.E. Prof. Ekmeleddine IHSANOGLU, who has pledged to make this project a successful model of cooperation among the member states of the OIC;
3. The presentation by the Director General of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), who recalled the results achieved in the concrete realization of this project since the 1st meeting of the Steering Committee held in Casablanca in July 2006. Furthermore, he underlined the recent commitment of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) group to provide for the material and training needs of the unit in charge of the coordination of the project in terms of the feasibility study in progress;
4. The communication of the Regional Coordinator of the project, who conveyed to the participants the regrets of H.E. Dr. Léonie KOULIBALY, Minister of Tourism, Hotels and Handicrafts of the Republic of Guinea, for having been unable to fulfil her promise to participate in this important meeting. He underlined the participation,

commitment and availability of the new Guinean authorities, to take all measures, in conjunction with the Member States and the Development Partners, for the achievement of the objectives of the project. On behalf of the Member States, he thanked the UNWTO for the office and computer equipment it provided to the national focal points and to the Regional Coordination office, Lastly, he underlined the pressing need to provide budgetary support to the regional office, all the more given that the Guinean Government, despite a difficult economic and financial situation, has to date shouldered by itself the operating expenses of the aforementioned office.

5. The report of the research firm "Sécheresse Consultants" regarding phase 1 of the study pertaining to the diagnostic assessment.
6. The remarks, observations and suggestions made by the participants following this presentation.

Following a highly enriching debate, the meeting made the following observations and recommendations:

II. OBSERVATIONS

The meeting,

- 1) Recognizes the pertinence, current relevance and the complexity of the project, the professionalism and the pragmatism of the firm in conducting the study; all of which made it possible to arrive at concrete and realistic proposals, which enjoy broad agreement among the States party to the project;
- 2) Congratulates the research firm "Sécheresse Consultants" on the quality of the study and of the documents presented and engages it to continue the studies in progress until the effective accomplishment of the mission entrusted to it by the States party to the project;
- 3) Recalls that poverty reduction through the implementation of joint programmes and projects of a "unifying" nature is today broadly shared; it is the expression of the affirmed political will of the Member States to integrate the dimension of tourism into development strategies at the national, subregional and international levels;
- 4) Notes:
 - a. The absence in the document of an in-depth study of the institutional framework of tourism of the Member States in terms of the inclusion of matters relative to ecotourism, community-based tourism and solidarity tourism in national and regional strategies, with a view to creating employment, improving income and increasing the net receipts of the States.
 - b. The lack of consideration given in the document to airport infrastructure that are nearby or situated in the surrounding areas of the protected areas (such as Tambacounda and Simenti in Senegal, Labé and Saréboïdo in Guinea), as well as to programmes and projects concerning road, airport, water and energy infrastructure that are underway in the Member States and which would have a certain influence on the project in the short, medium and long term.
 - c. The absence in the document of the potential of the Parks and Protected Areas of Member States not covered by the study and the projects in progress, such as:

- The Protected Area of Gourma between Mali and Burkina Faso;
 - The Biosphere Reserve of Mount Nimba and of Ziama between Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia;
 - The UNESCO project on the inclusion of the Niokolo-Badiar Cross-Border Park, situated between Senegal and Guinea, in the World Heritage in Danger list;
 - The support project of the European Union for the Diawling Park between Senegal and Mauritania;
 - The coastal and marine management project for the Biodiversity of the Cogon/Korubal/Nunez Protected Areas between Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, financed by the World Environment Fund (WEF), to the amount of five million US dollars;
 - The Regional Programme for the Integrated Development of the Fouta Djallon Massif (RPID/FDM), in Guinea, jointly financed by the World Environment Fund (WEF), which is contributing 11 million US dollars and the African Union (3.15 million US dollars);
- d. The restriction of the scope of the survey on the inclusion of protected areas in itinerary offerings to just French tour operators; in order to market the product in the best possible conditions of profitability, it is absolutely necessary to expand the scope of the survey to include tour operators in Europe (British, Spanish, Italian, Belgian, Norwegian, Swedish, Luxembourg, Danish, etc.), Canada, the United States, Japan, China and the emerging markets of the Gulf countries (United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, etc.), which constitute potential markets for this type of product;
- e. The absence of synergy between the project and the ST-EP projects underway in the Member States;
- f. The weakness of the analysis of the Product-Market pair in the study of cross-border areas:
- ✓ Cogon/ Corubal / Nunez;
 - ✓ Kayanga / Geba / Koliba / Corubal;
 - ✓ Bafing / Falémé;
 - ✓ Niokolo / Badiar

This study should focus on the constraints to be overcome, the flagship products that can be commercialized in the short, medium and long term, and the potential markets.

- g. The non-consideration at the national and regional level of the organizational framework of the project, both in the phase of execution in the field and in the operating phase; this is a key element of the sustainability of the long-term management of the project.

III- RECOMMENDATIONS

After the observations, the participants made the following recommendations:

1. TO THE RESEARCH FIRM “SÉCHERESSE CONSULTANTS”

- Submit to the Member States the basic orientations that should serve as the basis for the preparation of the 3 (three) subregional technical meetings on Protected Areas, scheduled as follows:

1) **1st Meeting: Djoudj/Diawling Protected Area****Place:** Campement Keur Massène (Mauritania)**Date:** 9 March 2009**Countries concerned:** Mauritania, Senegal2) **2nd Meeting:** Protected Areas:

- Bafing/Falémé
- Cogon/Corubal/Nunez
- Gambie/Kayanga/Geba/Koliba/Corubal
- Niokolo/ Badiar
- Pinsely/Outamba-Kilimi

Place: To be determined after consultation by UNWTO with the Member States; Guinea has been requested to host this meeting.**Date:** 23-24 March 2009**Countries concerned:** Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone3) **3rd Meeting:** "W" Protected Area**Place:** "W" Protected Area (Hôtel de la Tapoa in Niger)**Date:** 27-28 March 2009**Countries concerned:** Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso

All the national focal points of the project are also invited to the meeting because of the successful involvement of the local communities in the management of this park and the experiences that they could gain from it in the future management of the project.

- Give priority to a sub-committee approach regarding the Protected Areas rather than a national approach, in light of the differences observed in the level of involvement of the communities, the planning and management of the Parks, as well as to specific innovations concerning the tourism products to be proposed;
- Place emphasis in terms of regional synergy on the domains that it would be of greatest interest to place under regional responsibility, such as:
 - ✓ The zoning of the parks;
 - ✓ Communication, promotion, marketing;
 - ✓ Capacity building (guide services, management personnel, event organization, environmental organization, accommodation, food services, leisure activities);
 - ✓ The classification of accommodation establishments, the application of standards for construction, operation and eco-labels for quality tourism offerings;
 - ✓ Regulation, legislation, for harmonizing the statuses, management modes, principles of development planning, operation and management, etc.
- Include hunting tourism, community-based tourism, solidarity tourism, mountain tourism, sport fishing, etc., in the study.

2) TO THE MEMBER STATES:

- Communicate, by 20 February 2009 at the latest, to the research firm, with copy to the UNWTO Regional Representative for Africa and to the Regional Coordinator of the Project, their remarks and suggestions so that these can be taken into account in the final document;
- Organize, in connection with the stakeholders and the media (print media, radio, television), seminars, conferences, awareness-raising workshops regarding the project, targeted at decision makers, administrations in charge of tourism and the environment, academic circles, operators and funding institutions;
- Participate on 15-19 April 2009, in the forum on tourism development in Islamic countries, to be held in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), at the invitation of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC);
- Proceed with the official delivery of the office and computer equipment to the national focal points and facilitate the operation of such equipment.

3) TO THE REGIONAL COORDINATOR:

Submit, with copy to the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), requests to the President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and to the Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, for technical, material and budgetary support to the regional coordination unit of the project.

IV The participants, having taken cognizance of the positive developments of the project:

- Thanked the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for providing supplementary office and computer equipment to the national focal points and to the regional coordination office of the project;
- Thanked the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for its commitment to provide for the material and training needs of the personnel of the regional coordination unit and to fund the execution of certain components of the project that meet their financing criteria upon the completion of the feasibility study underway;
- Expressed their deep gratitude to the Republic of Guinea and to the Regional Coordinator of the project for the positive results achieved in the reinforcement of the coordination and follow-up of the project;
- Noted with satisfaction the quality contribution of the ICDT and of SESRIC to the coordination and follow-up of the project at the OIC level, and expressed in this regard their deep gratitude to the Secretary-General of the OIC;
- Thanked, especially, the UNWTO Regional Representative for Africa and the UNWTO Deputy Secretary-General, for their generous hospitality, the excellent working conditions provided and their quality contributions to the success of the different stages of the project;
- Recommended the inclusion of Burkina Faso in the group of beneficiary countries of the project. This country shares the W Park with Benin and Niger, it hosts the headquarters of ECOPAS, and has been visited in a field mission by the team of the research firm;

- Recommended that the place and date of the next meeting be set by common agreement, after consultation among the parties concerned.

Done in Madrid, 6 February 2009.