

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE
"REGIONAL PROJECT ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN A
NETWORK OF CROSS BORDER PARKS
AND PROTECTED AREAS IN WEST AFRICA"**

7 - 8 February 2012 - Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco

The Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Regional Project on "Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa" was held on 7th and 8th February 2012 in Casablanca (Kingdom of Morocco) in order to consider the ways and means of implementing the Project and its extension to other West African States.

This meeting that aimed at the establishing of a new strategy for revitalizing the project has gathered the stakeholders responsible for its implementation namely, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Project Regional Coordination represented by Her Excellency Mrs Baldé Hadja Mariama BAH, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea.

The meeting also recorded the participation of the Representatives of Burkina Faso, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Regional Office of the Islamic Development Bank Group (IDB) in Rabat represented by its Regional Director, Mr. El Abdehrrahman GLAOUI.

(The list of participants is attached in Annex 1).

I/ OPENING SESSION:

- After the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, Her Excellency Mrs. Baldé Hadja Mariama BAH, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea took the floor to thank His Excellency Prof. Ekmeleddin IHSANOGLU, Secretary General of OIC and H.E Taleb RIFAI, Secretary General of UNWTO for their exemplary effort and unwavering support since the launching of this project in 2005.

Her Excellency also emphasized in her speech the importance of the concretization of commitments made by participants at the Donors Conference held in Dakar (Republic of Senegal) in May 2011 whose aim was to mobilize the financial resources necessary for the implementation of the Project. Her Excellency has also proposed to provide to this project an efficient follow up structure based on a new strategy for revitalizing and implementing the Project and a specific Activity Program.

Finally, Mrs. Minister expressed the wish to actively join in this project, the technical and financial partners namely, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) Commission, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the IDB Group.

- Taking the floor, Dr. El Hassane HZAINI, Director General of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), expressed his appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, His Excellency Prof. Ekmeleddin IHSANOGLU, Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Government of the

Republic of Guinea, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the STEP Foundation for their valuable efforts and contributions to the implementation of this project.

He also stressed in his speech the importance that His Excellency the Secretary General of the OIC gives to this Project, which is part of his priorities, like for the railway Dakar-Port Sudan Project, the Cotton industry Project or even the Trade Preferential System among the OIC Member States.

Then, the Director General of ICDT proposed the establishment of a new operational strategy to convince the donors to become more involved in the project, followed by a roadmap outlining the various steps and activities to be carried out by the stakeholders of the Project.

Finally, the Director General of ICDT invited the Committee to consider the request of other Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission and at the same time to ensure the continuity of this project. In this context, he informed the meeting that His Excellency Prof. Ekmeleddin IHSANOGLU, the OIC Secretary General will start direct contacts with the President of the ECOWAS in order to drum up support for ECOWAS participation in the project as proposed. Besides, he invited the recipient countries to incorporate it in their development plan and budgets.

- Mr. Ousmane N'Diaye, Regional Director of the UNWTO Program for Africa, took the floor, to express on behalf of HE the Secretary General of the UNWTO, Mr. Taleb RIFAI his deepest thanks to Dr. El Hassane HZAINI, Director General of ICDT and to Her Excellency Mrs. Baldé Hadja Mariama BAH, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea - Project Coordinator Country - for their efforts aimed at implementing this Project. He also stressed in his speech the importance of defining jointly appropriate orientations to follow up the recommendations of the Dakar Conference, namely, raising funds with the help of partners that have shown on this occasion their interests to achieve this project.

- Finally Mr. Abderrahman EL GLAOUI, Regional Director of the IDB Group in Rabat took the floor to inform participants of the availability of the IDB to extend financial support to the themes related to poverty reduction within Member States. He also stressed the importance that the IDB Group gives to know-how transfer and exchange of experience and strengthening links (reverse linkage) for the benefit of the Member States of the Project.

II / PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING:

After the opening speeches, the Members of the Steering Committee examined the following items:

- Presentation of the follow up of the recommendations of Dakar Donors Conference by the stakeholders of the Project (Regional Coordinator, Focal Points, UNWTO / STEP Foundation, UNCTAD and ICDT);
- Issues related to the enlargement of the Project to Ghana, Liberia, Togo, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire;
- Organization under the auspices of the IDB and ICDT of a Donors Conference open to the exclusive participation of Arab and Islamic Financial Institutions;

- Organization under the aegis of the UNWTO and ECOWAS of a Donors Conference open exclusively to Private Sector Participation (Donors, Investors and Private Donors);
- Participation and submission of the Regional Project to the Pan African Conference on “Managing Sustainable Tourism in African National Parks and Protected Areas “, scheduled for 2012 in Arusha (Tanzania);
- Development and Adoption of a Forward Programme of activities;
- Summary of the discussions and the recommendations of the Steering Committee of the Project.

Mr. Mohammed SAKHO, the Regional Project Coordinator took the floor tackling the progress achieved in the follow up of the Donors Conference’s recommendations held in Dakar (Republic of Senegal) in May 2011.

He also highlighted the intent expressed on this occasion, by the technical and financial partners to get involved in financing the Project themes while focusing on their remarks related to the policies and procedures to be followed by the recipient states of this Project. He said that in this respect, only the Republic of Guinea has so far included this project in its National Development Plan and submitted specific funding applications.

He further informed the Committee of the outcomes of the informal meeting of the Recipient States of the Project with the Representative of the ECOWAS Commission held in Gyeongju (Republic of Korea) on the sidelines of the 19th General Assembly of the UNWTO.

He finally proposed among others, the following actions to revitalize the Project:

- To build on the “success stories” of the Parks and Protected Areas of the Eastern and Southern African Countries;
- To consider the participation of the private sector and technical partners (ECOWAS, WAEMU, and UNCTAD) in the financing and management of Parks and Protected Areas of West Africa;
- To develop a forward program of activities covering the 2012-2013 period.

III/ CLOSING SESSION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Before the closing ceremony of the meeting, the Committee adopted this report and the recommendations and the forward program of activities 2012/2013 annexed thereto and invited Her Excellency the Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea, Chairwoman of the Steering meeting to kindly submit the report of this meeting and annexes to her counterparts in order to collect their opinions before the final approval of this document and preferably before 29th February 2012.

- At the end of the meeting, Her Excellency the Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea conveyed her deepest thanks to His Excellency Prof. Ekmeleddin IHSANOGLU, the OIC Secretary General for the important message he addressed to participants and for his strong commitment to ensure in synergy with the Secretariat of the ECOWAS Commission and other institutions and organisations for cooperation and assistance development, the actions pleading the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Project and to support the Regional

Coordination Unit. Her Excellency the Minister has finally congratulated the Director General of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), Dr. El Hassane HZAINÉ and all the ICDT's staff for the efforts they made to ensure the success of the meeting.

Then, Dr. El Hassane HZAINÉ took the floor to extend his deep appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and to Her Excellency Mrs. Baldé Hadja Mariama BAH, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea for the high quality of her contribution to the implementation of this project and for her sustained effort in monitoring and coordinating the project and urged her to continue this mission until the effective implementation of the project

Finally, the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania took the floor on behalf of all participants, kindly requesting the Director General of ICDT to convey to His Majesty King Mohammed the VIth, May God Glorify HIM, a motion of thanks and gratitude.

At the end of the meeting, the Committee reiterated its deep appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and to the Moroccan people for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to participants, to Her Excellency Mrs. Baldé Hadja Mariama BAH, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea and the Director General and staff of ICDT.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon its proceedings, the Committee:

1. Reaffirms the need for the recipient countries to prioritize the project in their development plans and provide for an allocation of internal resources for the launching of activities identified in their national territory;
2. In order to move from the study phase to the operational phase, the Committee decides to adopt the following approach:
 - a) Preparation by the UNWTO of a typical file of project presentations;
 - b) Call for proposals from potential project owners (tourism departments, ministries in charge of park management, park managers, NGOs, private operators ...);
 - c) Presentation of projects within the steering committee for submission to donors.

Proposes in a first phase a selection of projects from the following priority themes: poverty reduction, private sector investment facilitation, public sector infrastructure requirement, biodiversity issues and product development.

3. Emphasizes the importance of transferring know-how and exchange of experience and strengthening links (reverse linkage) for the benefit of Members of the project;
4. Invites Recipient States to urgently formulate requests intended to bilateral and multilateral donors for the mobilization of additional funds besides the national effort;
5. Recommends to recipient countries to build the capacity of National Focal Points (NFPs) in order to implement this project;
6. Recommends to recipient countries to explore ways and means for a greater involvement of the private sector in the management of parks and protected areas. In

this regard, it would be appropriate to organise a training workshop on “the Managing Method of Parks and Protected Areas” in collaboration with other 5organization international institutions;

7. Decides the 5organization of the Steering Committee meetings (NFPs, Regional Coordinator, Technical and Financial Partners) twice a year;
8. Recommends to the Ministries in charge of tourism to involve closely the Ministries Responsible for the management of parks and protected areas in the proceedings and actions of the Steering Committee;
9. Decides the accession of the following States: Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo which have expressed the wish to join this initiative as members of the Steering Committee. As such, they benefit from the second phase of the initiative on which a feasibility study will be conducted.

The agenda of the Steering Committee will include two parts devoted on the one hand, to the progress of the ongoing project and to the feasibility study of the project in the newly admitted countries on the other;

10. Decides that the functions of the Chairman of the Steering Committee be ensured alternately every two years by the Ministers of Tourism of the Recipient States. With respect to the 2012-2014 periods, these functions will be ensured by the Supervising Minister in charge of Tourism of the Republic of Guinea;
11. Proposes a Managerial Capacity Building Project:
 - a) Through the involvement of training institutions including the Islamic Research and Training Institute IRTI (IDB Group), ICDT, SESRIC and UNCTAD (Program Train For Trade) in human resource training programs identified by the project at national and regional levels;
 - b) Through the support of technical and financial partners to cover the costs of training and practical training sessions identified by the Steering Committee.
12. Invites Recipient States to participate in the following meetings:
 - a) A meeting of the Steering Committee in conjunction with the Pan-African conference on Sustainable Tourism Management in Parks and Protected Areas in Africa scheduled for October 2012 in Arusha (Republic of Tanzania);
 - b) An Information and awareness-raising Meeting on the sidelines of the 8th Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers to be held in Khartoum (Republic of Sudan) in November 2012;
 - c) A meeting of the Steering Committee on the sidelines of the 20th General Assembly of the UNWTO scheduled to be held in August 2013 in Victoria Falls / Levingston in Zimbabwe and in Zambia;
13. Decides to organize a Donors Conference open to the participation of Arab and Islamic Financial Institutions and Private Sector in collaboration with the OIC, the UNWTO, the ECOWAS and WEAMU;
14. Decides to conduct an high-level awareness-raising and executive marketing program involving the OIC, the UNWTO and the Project Coordinator at the level of Donors and financial institutions like the IDB Group, the ADB Group and World

Bank;

15. Suggests the participation of the Regional Coordinator of the Project Committee to the meetings of the Sessional Committee and the Ministerial Session of the COMCEC;
16. Recommends to the ECOWAS Commission to take necessary measures for research funding and implementation of the feasibility study project in five other countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo), which will join the regional project in the second phase;
17. Invites the ECOWAS and WAEMU Commissions to formalize their wish to become members of the Steering Committee in order to confer to the project its true regional dimension.

Done in Casablanca
on 8th February 2012