



**REPORT ON**

**REPORTS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE  
OF THE REGIONAL PROJECT OF “SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT  
IN A NETWORK OF CROSS-BORDER PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS IN  
WEST AFRICA”**

**PRESENTED BY**

**THE ISLAMIC CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE**

**TO THE**

**33<sup>rd</sup> SESSION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC AND  
COMMERCIAL CO-OPERATION OF THE OIC (COMCEC)**

**Istanbul – Republic of Turkey  
20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017**

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## **REPORTS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL PROJECT OF “SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN A NETWORK OF CROSS-BORDER PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS IN WEST AFRICA”**

In compliance with the decision of H.E the OIC Secretary General, ICDT ensures, since 2006, the follow up of the implementation of the project on “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas”. This project includes ten OIC Member States (Benin, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone).

### **✚ Meetings held within the framework of the Project implementation:**

- **Meeting of the Committee of the Regional Project of “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa”:** Casablanca, 10-11 July 2006.

A meeting of the Project Committee was held on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2006 in Casablanca (Kingdom of Morocco) at the headquarters of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT).

This Committee is composed of the Regional Representative of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) for Africa, the Regional Coordinator of the Project, Mr. Mohamed Sakho and SESRIC.

The aim of this meeting was to:

- Present the Activity Programme approved on the sidelines of the 44<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNWTO Committee for Africa held in Bamako (Mali) 8<sup>th</sup> May 2006;
- To discuss the support modalities to the mobilisation of needed resources for the working out of the feasibility study;
- To discuss the coordination mechanisms for the implementation of this project.

The outcomes of the meeting were as follows:

- Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between contracting parties;
- The setting up of a Follow up Permanent Committee (ICDT, SESRIC, Regional Coordinator and the UNWTO);
- Adoption of the draft terms of References of the Feasibility Study of the Project and submission of funding application of the project to IDB;
- Drawing up of a programme of Planned Activities;
- Contribution of the UNWTO for an amount of US\$ 50,000 within the framework of the financing of the feasibility study of the project whose total budget amounts to US\$ 425,000.

- **Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Regional Project of “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Parks and Cross-Border Protected Areas in West Africa”:** Baku, Azerbaijan, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

In compliance with the recommendations of the First Meeting of the Committee on the Regional Project of **“Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa”** held in Casablanca from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006, ICDT has invited the contracting parties to the project to a 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the said Committee extended to 9 Member Countries, the Representatives of the OIC General Secretariat and the IDB’s Representative, which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2006 in Gulustan Palace on the sidelines of the 5<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers held at the same place from 9<sup>th</sup> to

12<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

Upon deliberations, the meeting recommended among other the following:

- Approves the Reports of the Regional Coordinator and ICDT and the terms of reference of the Feasibility Study of the Project with four components as presented for its financing;
- Recommends the sending within the shortest possible time of a Ministerial Delegation of Member States accompanied by the Representatives of the contracting parties to IDB to raise its awareness to the importance of this project and make it grant a substantial financial contribution to the concerned study;
- Kindly requests H.E the OIC Secretary General to get involved in this initiative;
- Requests the Republic of Guinea to prepare this mission in coordination with the different contracting parties and to agree within the shortest possible time on the most convenient date to carry it out.

- **Meeting of the Committee on the Regional Project of “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa”**: Casablanca, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for the strengthening of Economic and Commercial Cooperation, 9 OIC Member States and the UNWTO: Benin, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Sierra-Leone have initiated a project on “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas”.

To that effect, the Steering Committee held a meeting in Casablanca on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

It is worth recalling that the Steering Committee was held successively in Dakar (March 2005), Bamako (May 2006), Casablanca (July 2006), Baku (September 2006), Accra (October 2007), Carthagène De Indias (November (2007).

The aim of this meeting was to take stock of the progress achieved in the implementation of the project and to update the Programme of planned activities for the year 2008/2009.

This meeting was attended by:

- The Republic of Guinea;
- The Islamic Republic of Mauritania;
- The Republic of Mali;
- The Republic of Senegal;
- The Regional Coordinator of the Project;
- The OIC General Secretariat;
- The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO);
- The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC);

- **Meeting of the Steering Committee of the “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Parks and Cross Border Protected Areas in West Africa”**: Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

On the sidelines of the 6<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers, the Follow up Committee of the Regional Project of Sustainable Tourism Development in a Cross-Border Network and Protected Areas in West Africa held its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Meridian Hotel, Damascus (Syria).

This meeting was chaired by Mr. Nabika DIALLO, Counsellor to the OIC General Secretary, assisted by the Representatives of the ICDT, the UNWTO and the General Coordinator. During this meeting, which was attended by the representatives of the project Member States that participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> ICTM, the report of the meeting was approved and a resolution on this

issue was submitted and adopted by the Conference.

The meeting commended above all the work accomplished by the Follow up Committee and the implementation of the Activity Programme 2008/2009 in compliance with the calendar that was prepared. It also approved the final choice of the Consultancy Company in charge of working out the feasibility study and requested Member States, which have not done so to set up a national coordination cell.

An awareness raising approach was made at the level of The IDB Group in order to involve it in the proceedings of the Follow up Committee and in the financing of the project during its execution phase.

- **Meeting of the Steering Committee of the “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Parks and Cross Border Protected Areas in West Africa”**: Madrid, 6-7 February 2009.

The Director General of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), Mr. Allal RACHDI, participated in the meeting on the “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa”, Madrid 6-7 February 2009 at the headquarters of the World Tourism Organisation in Madrid, Kingdom of Spain.

This meeting focused on the consideration of the results of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of the Feasibility Study prepared by the Consulting Company.

During this meeting, ICDT which ensures the coordination of the project at the level of the OIC reiterated the support of the OIC to this project and informed participants of the steps taken by the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank Group to ensure the implementation of this project.

- **Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Regional Project of “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Parks and Cross-Border Protected Areas in West Africa”**: Casablanca, 9-10 July 2009.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for the strengthening of Economic and Commercial Cooperation, 9 OIC Member States and the UNWTO: Benin, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Sierra-Leone have initiated a project on “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas”.

To that effect, the Steering Committee held a meeting in Casablanca on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July 2009. It is worth recalling that the Steering Committee was held successively in Dakar (March 2005), Bamako (May 2006), Casablanca (July 2006), Baku (September 2006), Accra (October 2007), Carthagène De Indias (November (2007), Casablanca (24<sup>th</sup> March 2008) and Madrid on (6<sup>th</sup> February 2009).

This meeting was attended by:

- Burkina Faso;
- The Republic of the Gambia;
- The Republic of Guinea;
- The Republic of Mali;
- The Republic of Niger;
- The Regional Coordinator of the Project;
- The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO);
- The Research Firm “Secheresse Consultants”

The steering committee approved the strategic orientations proposed by the Research Firm “SecheresseConsultants” provided that the latter takes into account the recommendations, observations and suggestions formulated during the meeting for the working out of the final

strategy of the project.

- **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”**: Astana- Kazakhstan, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009.

On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 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” met in Astana (Republic of Kazakhstan) to examine the remaining activities of the project. The Republics of Benin, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Mauritania and Burkina Faso were represented during this meeting in addition to the Ministers of Benin and Niger.

This meeting was held on the sidelines of the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) which on this occasion adopted a resolution on the project. (For details on this resolution, please refer to the following document in annex).

- **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”**: Madrid, 15-16 December 2009.

The follow up committee on the “Regional Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Borderparks and Protected Areas in West Africa”: met in Madrid on 15-16 December 2009 at the headquarters of the UNWTO in Madrid for the adoption of the feasibility study of the Project and approval of the projects files and the costs related to them, within the framework of phase 3: Plan of actions of the feasibility study on the Regional Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border parks and Protected Areas in West Africa.

- **Donors Conference for the Funding of the "Regional Project for Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa”**: Dakar - Republic of Senegal, 27-28 May 2011.

In order to mobilize the funds needed to finance **the Regional Project for Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa**, the Steering Committee of the concerned project organized under the High Patronage of His Excellency Maître Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal and Current Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a Conference of Donors at Meridien President Hotel in Dakar, Republic of Senegal, on 27 and 28 May, 2011.

This conference was preceded by the holding of a coordination meeting of the Steering Committee in the presence of focal points and managers of parks and protected areas on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2011.

This meeting was attended by:

Representatives of the recipient States of the project namely: the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, the Republic of Guinea, the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, Republic of Mali, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Republic of Niger, the Republic of Senegal and the Republic of Sierra Leone;

It is worth noting in this regard that the Delegations of Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone were represented by their Supervising Ministries.

The Delegation of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) led by His Excellency the Secretary General Mr. Taleb RIFAI;

- The OIC delegation led by Mr. CheikhOumar SOW, Director General of Economic Affairs and Representative of His Excellency EkmeleddinIhsanoglu, Secretary General of OIC;

- The Delegation of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) led by Mr. Houcine RAHMOUNI, Adviser to the Director General;
- The Delegation of the Republic of Guinea, Regional Coordinator of the Project, led by HE Elhadji OUSMANE BAH, Minister of State in charge of Public Works and Transports representing H.E the President of the Republic of Guinea, Professor Alpha CONDE. It included the Minister of Hotel Trade, Tourism and Handicrafts and the Delegated Minister for Environment;
- Mrs. Dho YOUNG-SHIM, Representative of KOICA and the STEP Foundation;
- Mr. Abdel Wahab CHERIF, Representative of the Regional Office of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Dakar;
- Mr. SavasAlpay, Director General of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC);
- Representatives of the following Organizations and Institutions: the Islamic Development Bank Group (IDB)/African Development Bank (ADB)/French Cooperation Programme/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/Aga Khan Foundation STEP-KOICA/Foundation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE:**

The Donors' Conference for the Regional Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa, convened in Dakar, Senegal, on 27 and 28 May 2011,

Having taken cognizance of the preliminary study that describes the condition of the sites, defines the strategic axes and proposes an action plan,

Having taken cognizance of the Portfolio of Funding Opportunities,

Having heard the introductory presentations of the project, the statements of potential funding entities and the explanations of the representatives of the governments and the parks involved,

- Lauds the quality and exhaustiveness of the preliminary study as well as the relevance of the Portfolio of Funding Opportunities;
- Expresses its unanimous support for a project whose potential is extremely rich and promising in terms of sustainable tourism development, biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction, job creation and infrastructure development;
- Notes that this project holds a prominent place in the sub-regional economic integration process;
- Has taken note of the interest and proposals listed in the report annexed to the present recommendations on the part of the principal development partners (ADB, IDB, UNDP, Coopération française) and of the interested institutions (OIC, WAEMU, UNESCO);
- Invites other development partners to join this undertaking;
- Wishes this project to move forward to an operational implementation phase;
- Recommends the governance of the project to associate, around the tourism ministries and in a form to be determined, the technical ministries that are most closely concerned (in particular, those responsible for environment, transport, education, culture, handicrafts), promoters of similar initiatives, the interested funding entities and the private sector;
- Wishes the ten countries concerned to rapidly undertake a reflection regarding the place that should be accorded to the private sector in terms of investment and the management of the parks and/or some of their functions (accommodation, reception, visits, etc...), so as to develop public-private partnerships, for example, on a concession basis;
- Wishes the governments and the managers of the parks and protected areas concerned,

as well as the representatives of the local communities to specify the modalities whereby the local populations are to be associated in the implementation of the project;

- Requests the governments to rapidly define cross-border management structures for each park and protected areas;
  - Requests the ten governments concerned to include this project among the priorities of the development programmes they present to bilateral and multilateral funding entities;
  - Requests the UNWTO, as executing agency of the project and in consultation with the ICDT, to carry out the necessary contacts with the AfDB, the IDB, Coopération française, WAEMU and the OIC in order to determine their respective commitments in the implementation of the project.
- **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":** Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, 7 - 8 February 2012.

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 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### **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 9organization international institutions;
7. Decides the organization 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.
  10. 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;
  11. 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;
  12. 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.
  13. 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the UNWTO scheduled to be held in August 2013 in Victoria Falls / Levingston in Zimbabwe and in Zambia;
    - d) 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;
    - e) 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;
    - f) 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;
    - g) 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;
    - h) 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.

**- First Meeting of the Technical Committee, Tourism, Transport and Communication of ECOWAS:** Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

With a view to reviving and boosting tourism in the West African Region, the first meeting of the Technical Committee, Tourism, Transport and Communication of ECOWAS States was held from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> April 2012 in Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

This meeting was attended by the representatives of the ECOWAS Committee and the following countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo and Senegal.

This meeting was also attended by some experts as resource person of whom, Mr. Mohamed SAKHO, Regional Coordinator of the "Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa", who on this occasion reported on the latest developments of this project.

Given its relevance and its socioeconomic impacts, the Committee underscored the importance of the adhesion of all ECOWAS Member States to this project and also recommended that ECOWAS should henceforth become the official implementation body of the project. In this regard, the Committee added that the implementation terms and conditions of this recommendation by ECOWAS must be determined in consultation with the stakeholders (UNWTO, OIC Member States and UNCTAD).

**- Meeting of the Steering Committee held in the sidelines of the 1<sup>st</sup> Pan-African Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development in African National Parks** organised in Arusha, Tanzania, from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

Within the framework of the implementation of the "**Regional Project on Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa**", the Project Steering Committee met on October 17, 2012 on the sidelines of the First Pan-African Conference on Sustainable Tourism in African National Parks held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

This meeting was attended by the Project Regional Coordination represented by HE Mrs. Balde Hadja Mariama Bah, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea as well as representatives from six states / Stakeholders in the project (Benin, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso). The Delegation of the Republic of Mali was also led by HE Mr. Ousmane Ag Rhissa, Minister of Tourism and Handicraft.

The meeting also recorded the participation of representatives of two states of West Africa willing to join the Project (Nigeria and Togo), the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

It should be noted that the four other states / Project Stakeholders namely Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone have not participated in this meeting.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING:**

After fruitful discussions, participants recommended the following:

**❖ Under the review and approval of priority projects submitted for consideration to the Steering Committee by States / Project Stakeholders:**

- Registration of the Project by the ECOWAS in the agenda items of both the meeting of Statutory Ministers and the Conference of Heads of States;
- The establishment of a framework for dialogue between ECOWAS and WAEMU for a better coordination of their activities;
- The joint organization by the ECOWAS and WEAMU of a meeting of Ministers in charge

of Tourism and Environment focused solely on the Project in question;

- The need for Member States to seize the opportunities of tourism related events to be organized at national level in a bid to invite the Secretary-General of the UNWTO on the one hand, to address to the Heads of States and Governments an open letter within the framework of global awareness-raising campaign "Golden Book" of the importance of travel and tourism and to make a plea in favour of the Project in question;
- The formalization at the level of ECOWAS of a permanent consultative framework involving WAEMU, which will address issues related to the development and promotion of Tourism at sub-regional level;
- The need for Member States to seize the opportunity of the holding of the 8<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers of the OIC to advocate the Project at the level of Member States and Institutions attending this event;
- The preparation by the States / Stakeholders to the Project, with the assistance of the WAEMU of project sheets falling within the framework of the **"Support Programme Parks Agreement"** concerning the following parks: W, Arly and Pendjari located in the territory of Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger.

❖ ***Under the assessment of the implementation of the schedule of activities 2012/2013:***

- The need for States to ensure the participation of their national focal points in the various meetings of the Steering Committee of the Project;
- ICDDT's Assistance to initiate steps for the visit of the Secretaries General of the OIC and the WTO to IDB's President;
- The effective involvement of the WTO, ICDDT, ECOWAS, WAEMU and the state / Project Stakeholders in mobilizing funds to finance the Project;
- The working out with the assistance of the ECOWAS of a strategy to raise funds needed to finance the study on Parks and Protected Areas of the other States of West Africa (Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo) desiring to join the project in its second phase;
- The working out by the Regional Coordination of the terms of reference of the Training Workshop on the "Methods of Sustainable Management of Parks and Protected Areas" in collaboration with ECOWAS, WAEMU and UNWTO;
- Registration of the Project by the States / Stakeholders as a priority in development programs submitted to bilateral and multilateral donors.

❖ ***Under the implementation modalities of the recommendations of the Conference of Tourism Ministers of the ECOWAS Member States:***

Within the framework of the Plan of Action for the implementation of the recommendations of the Meeting of Tourism Ministers held in Banjul on 21 and 22 June 2012, the Members of the Steering Committee, requested:

- ECOWAS to rely on the expertise of the WTO for the implementation of the Project;
- ECOWAS to work in harmony with the WAEMU for the fulfillment of tasks undertaken with UNWTO like for example the issues related to the development of tourism statistics, the classification standards of accommodation facilities and training in Tourism professions;
- ECOWAS and UEMOA to prepare a standard contract dossier of the concession of tourism activities in Parks and Protected Areas (accommodation and leasehold) taking into account the environmental management plans with the assistance of the UNWTO.

At the end of the workshop, the participants thanked the Tanzanian Government for kindly hosting this meeting and the Republic of Guinea, ICDDT, UNWTO and the OIC for efforts in coordinating the project.

**- 54<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa:** Tunis, 24 -26 April 2013.

Upon the invitation of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Director General of ICDT, Dr. El Hassane HZAINÉ, participated in the 54<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa held in Tunis from 24 to 26 April 2013. On the Sidelines of the meeting, Dr. HZAINÉ held a meeting with the Ministers of Tourism of Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia and Mauritania within the framework of the implementation of the Project. On this occasion, participants stressed, inter alia, the importance of raising funds needed to finance the project. In this regard, it was recommended that the IDB Group examines the possibility of using the Islamic Solidarity Fund and the SPDA to finance part of the project which is essential in the fight against poverty in the Member Countries of West Africa.

**- Meeting of the Steering Committee on the sidelines of the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Tourism Ministers of the OIC:** Banjul, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

The Project stakeholders organized a meeting of the Steering Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013 on the sidelines of the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Tourism Ministers of the OIC held Banjul on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013 under the chairmanship of H.E Mr. Loucény Camara, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Republic of Guinea - Regional Project Coordinator. On this occasion, H.E the Minister informed the participants of his intention to begin a tour in the sub-region concerned countries in order to incite his colleagues to contribute effectively to the Project. He also stated his willingness to take the opportunity of the holding the 40<sup>th</sup> Islamic Council of Foreign Ministers in Conakry in December 2013 to raise the awareness of these financial institutions of which the IDB Group. Finally, he proposed the creation of a cross-border structure which will be provided with material and financial means.

After the meeting, the committee made the following recommendations:

- ✓ To appoint a focal point for the country, for a renewable term of three years, given the fact that institutional change is a real problem for regular monitoring of the project at the level of Member State and affects the proper functioning of the Steering Committee at regional level;
- ✓ To provide the Regional Coordination Unit of the Project with material, technical and financial means to enable it to effectively fulfill its mission and ensure a good flow of information;
- ✓ To submit funding requests ranging between US\$ 100,000 and US\$ 250,000 as part of the new strategy of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC);
- ✓ To encourage the accession of new members to the new International Organisation of STEP Foundation as Founding Members States;
- ✓ To recommend the rotating Chairmanship of the coordination of the Steering Committee and determine the duration of the mandate;
- ✓ To organize regular visits of the Chairman of the Steering Committee in the Member States for their effective involvement in the monitoring of the project's activities;
- ✓ To organize on an annual basis, the meeting of Tourism Ministers of the concerned countries;
- ✓ To mandate the Chairman of the Steering Committee, namely the Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea, for advocacy with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers scheduled to be Conakry from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013 in compliance with resolution E-3j40, adopted by the 36<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs of the OIC, held in Jeddah from 30<sup>th</sup> June to 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013;
- ✓ To invite all stakeholders (Chairman of the Steering Committee, Regional Coordination

Unit, Member States, OIC, WTO, ICDT, SESRC, WAEMU, ECOWAS) to implement the provisions relating to the project, approved by the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Tourism Ministers of the OIC;

- ✓ To reiterate the recommendation of the Donors Conference held in Dakar in May 2011, on the involvement of the private sector in the management of Parks and cross-border Protected Areas in West Africa;
- ✓ To reiterate the recommendations of the Steering Committee meetings held respectively in Casablanca (Morocco) and Arusha (Tanzania) on the submission by Member States of their national segments of identified projects in the Regional Project of Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa, adopted at the Donors Conference. In this regard, the meeting suggests to member states to seek the expertise of the IDB for the submission of their projects in compliance with the standards and procedures of this financial institution.

**- Meeting of the Steering Committee on "Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa", Casablanca, 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014.**

The Regional Project Steering Committee on "Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa" was held

on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014 in Casablanca (Morocco) in order to examine the implementation of the project and future actions in accordance with the attached agenda.

This meeting, which was chaired by His Excellency Moussa CONDE, Minister of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea - Chairman of the Steering Committee brought together representatives of the following countries: Benin, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. The meeting was also attended by the Representatives of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and the Regional Office of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Rabat.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE:**

The Steering Committee of the Project:

- ❖ Very concerned about the impacts of Ebola hemorrhagic fever in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, appeals to all the countries of the sub region and the international community for active solidarity with the peoples and governments of these countries;
- ❖ Recommends to hold in Conakry before the end of the first half of 2015 a meeting of ministers in charge of tourism in the countries concerned expanded to national focal points of the project, the implementation of the Project and on common actions to be undertaken in order the preparation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> conference of donors;
- ❖ Welcomes the offer of ICDT to organize in 2015 a Training of sustainable tourism managers in Parks and Protected Areas and project development Training in collaboration with UNWTO and the COMCEC;
- ❖ Approves the priorities set up in 2015 in accordance with the attached work program;
- ❖ Recommends that all beneficiary countries of the Project to achieve the Regional Coordination and ICDT national projects segments according to the types of projects in Annex sheets and before 31 January 2015;
- ❖ Thanks the Republic of Guinea for the efforts made in the Project implementation and welcomes the steps taken, the search for financing of the Project and the Regional Coordination Unit;
- ❖ Recommends a joint mission with the OIC Secretary General and the President of the IDB Group, the Director General of ICDT and the President of the Steering Committee for

the research funding of projects relating to national segments and Unity regional Coordination in the second half of 2015;

- ❖ Decides the reappointment of the Republic of Guinea for the presidency of the steering committee for the period 2015-2016;
- ❖ Urges the President of the steering committee to conduct a fact-finding mission and outreach in member countries of the project by March 31, 2015;
- ❖ Commends member countries (Benin, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) for the presentation of their national segments of projects and recommends harmonization in accordance with the type of project sheets provided in the Annex;
- ❖ Recommends to Burkina Faso, Gambia and Sierra Leone communicate their national projects segments before the end of January 2015 regional coordination and ICDT in accordance with the type of project sheets annexed;
- ❖ Recommends the holding of a meeting of the steering committee, on the sidelines of the General Assembly of WTO, scheduled for Colombia in 2015 and the 9<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers to assess the progress of the project and the preparations for the second conference of donors;
- ❖ Takes note of the terms of reference relating to the Regional Project Coordination Unit and the estimated budget and recommends its bid for funding to the IDB;
- ❖ Recommends the selection of projects for submission to donors in accordance with the following criteria:
  - ♦ Registration of projects as a priority in national plans and programs;
  - ♦ Focus on strategic areas, particularly those relating to the fight against poverty and the preservation of biodiversity;
  - ♦ Promotion of public-private partnership;
  - ♦ Project Registration involving more than one country;
  - ♦ Respect for project submission forms for better harmonization.
- ❖ Thanks the Secretaries-General of the UNWTO and the OIC for their efforts within the framework of the completion of the feasibility study, the organization of the First Donors Conference of in Dakar in May 2011 and the urges them to continue their support to the effective implementation of the project.

**- Meeting of the Steering Committee on "Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa", Casablanca, 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016:**

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 the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at the headquarters of the ICDT in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, to examine the issues on the attached agenda.

This meeting which was chaired by His Excellency Thierno Ousmane Diallo, Minister of State for Hospitality, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Republic of Guinea, Chairman of the Steering Committee brought together the Representatives of the following Countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Also took part in the meeting the Representatives of the Ministry of Tourism of the Kingdom of Morocco, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and the Regional Office of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Rabat as well as Mr. Ousmane Ndiaye, Mr. Rémy POLIWA, Mr. Mohamed H'Midouche and ICDT Experts.

It is worth noting that this meeting was preceded by a Training Workshop on the Setting up of Tourism Projects, organized for the benefit of the focal points of the beneficiary Countries in order to familiarize them with the methodologies and procedures of the Arab, African and international Financial Institutions.

## **I/ OPENING SESSION:**

The opening session was marked by three speeches:

-Dr. El Hassane HZAINE, Director General of the ICDT, began by warmly welcoming His Excellency Thierno Ousmane Diallo, the Countries Delegations and all the present Institutions. Then, he stressed the importance of this Project for the OIC which has listed it as a priority in its Programme for the implementation of “Framework for Development and Cooperation in the Domain of Tourism between OIC Member States” and entrusted in 2006 the ICDT and the SESRIC to ensure its follow up. He also expressed his gratitude to all the stakeholders of the Project, particularly the Republic of Guinea, which ensures the regional coordination of the Project, the Republic of Korea through the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the STEP Foundation, the SESRIC and Mr. Ousmane Ndiaye who continues to serve this Project as a Consultant. Finally, Dr. HZAINE hoped that this meeting constitutes a milestone in the implementation of this initiative with a view to making it as an exemplary cooperation model in the West African Region and the other OIC Member Countries.

- H.E Ambassador Musa KULAKLIKAYA, Director General of the SESRIC, welcomed the cooperation between SESRIC and ICDT in the implementation of this Project. He also recommended the necessity of developing new approaches to reduce the harm of the ecosystem destruction in the concerned Countries. Finally, he reiterated the support of the SESRIC to the beneficiary Countries for the introduction of specific measures aiming at revitalizing the Project.

- The Minister of State of Hospitality, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Republic of Guinea (Chairman of the Steering Committee): H.E Thierno Ousmane Diallo, has in his opening speech, thanked the OIC through the Directors General of the ICDT and the SESRIC for their support in organizing this meeting. Then, H.E reiterated the support of the Guinean Government to this Project for which his Country ensures the coordination since its initiation in 2005. Finally, H.E invited the participants to undertake the necessary discussions in order to revitalize the Project.

## **II/ PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING:**

After the opening ceremony, Members of the Steering Committee reviewed the different points of the agenda of the meeting in accordance with the following:

- ***Recent Developments of the Project:***

- Mr. Mohamed Sakho – the Project Regional Coordinator first thanked the ICDT and the SESRIC for taking the initiative to organize the Training Workshop on the Setting up of Tourism Projects as well as the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Project Steering Committee. Then, he informed the participants of the continuing efforts deployed by the Republic of Guinea within the framework of the implementation of the Project. Finally, he invited the Member Countries to ensure the involvement of all the actors concerned by this Project at the level of their national units, including the Departments of Environment, Water and Fisheries and Handicrafts with a view to coordinating actions aiming at implementing this Project.

- Ms. Kadiatou Diallo from the ICDT, recalled the decisive stages of the Project, namely the validation of the Project feasibility study in 2009, which was funded by the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the holding in May 2011 in Dakar of the 1<sup>st</sup> Donors Conference and the organization by the ICDT in December 2014 in Casablanca of the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Project Steering Committee during which a program of activities, that comprises the organization of two Training Workshops including the one on the Setting up of Tourism Projects and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donors Conference was adopted.

The representative of ICDT then informed the Committee of its participation in the Islamic Conference of Tourism Ministers of the OIC Member States, held from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015 in Niger, during which the OIC Secretary General, His Excellency Iyad Amin MADANI has in his opening address invited the Ministers of Tourism and the private sector to support tourism projects initiated by the OIC Member States including this Project, in reason of its positive impact on the improvement of tourism infrastructures, the fight against poverty, especially in the rural communities.

- ***Issues related to the elaboration of cross-border bankable projects forms***

The ICDT Consultants, Mr. Ousmane Ndiaye and Mr. Rémy POLIWA, informed the Committee members of the results of examination of the Countries' projects forms presented at the end of the Training Workshop on the Setting up of Tourism Projects by the participating Countries focal points. Within the framework of the preparations of the second Donors Conference in 2017, the Consultants have suggested the formulation of bankable projects on the Protected Areas of Niokolo-Badiar, Djoudj-Diawling, Park W, Bafing-Falémé and River Basins. In this regard, the Committee requested Mr. Ndiaye and Mr. Poliwa to develop by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 the related Terms of Reference.

- ***Presentation of the Results of the 1<sup>st</sup> Donors Conference and the preparations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference scheduled to be held in 2017:***

Mr. Amadou Cire SALL from the ICDT delivered at the beginning a presentation about the proceedings and the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Donors Conference held in Dakar in May 2011. At the end of the presentation, the Director General of the ICDT emphasized the fact that lessons must be learned from this Conference which has not achieved the expected results, in order to ensure the success of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donors Conference scheduled in 2017.

In her turn, Ms. Diallo presented the distribution table of tasks elaborated by the ICDT as part of the preparations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donors Conference. The representative of ICDT also informed the participants that the Minister of Tourism of the Islamic Republic of Gambia proposed during the Ministerial Conference held in Niger in December 2015 the candidacy of his Country to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donors Conference.

Then, the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania took the floor to present the candidacy of his Country to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donors Conference in 2017.

Finally, the Committee requested that this candidacy as well as that of the Islamic Republic of Gambia to be mentioned in the report of the meeting, keeping in mind that in case of withdrawal of these Countries the Conference will be organized by the Republic of Guinea, Regional Coordinator of the Project.

- ***Creation of Regional Coordination Unit of the Project:***

Regarding the creation of the Regional Coordination Unit, the Committee took note of the presentation by the Project Regional Coordinator and hoped that efforts are focused as before on the technical and operational issues to allow the effective organization of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donors Conference. In the immediate future, the Committee asked the Regional Coordination to formulate queries from the IDB and other Donors for material, technical and financial support to ensure the effective functioning of the Regional Coordination Unit.

### **III/ ADOPTION OF THE REPORT, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING OF THE MEETING:**

Prior to the meeting's closing session, the Committee adopted the meeting's recommendations attached in annex and requested the ICDT to kindly finalize the report of the meeting as well as the program of activities for the year 2016 and to forward all the documentation to the concerned Countries and Institutions, once approved by the



stakeholders in the Project.

Dr. El Hassane Hazine then addressed his sincere thanks to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and His Excellency Thierno Ousmane Diallo, Minister of State for Hospitality, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Republic of Guinea for quality coordination of the Project and urged him to continue this mission until the effective implementation of the Project.

**MOTION OF THANKS:**

At the end of the meeting, the Project Steering Committee expressed its deep appreciation to His Majesty the King Mohammed VI, King of Morocco for the generous care and attention He grants the Centre and thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for its continued support to the ICDT and the facilities granted for the good proceeding of the meeting.

The Committee reiterates its profound gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and to the Moroccan people for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to the participants, to His Excellency Iyad Amin Madani - Secretary General of the OIC, to His Excellency Thierno Ousmane Diallo – Minister of State for Hospitality, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Republic of Guinea, to the Director General of the ICDT Dr. El Hassane Hazine and to the Director General of SESRIC for their efforts in ensuring the success of the Meeting.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE:**

*The Steering Committee during its meeting dated 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016, held at the headquarters of the ICDT in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco recommends the acceleration of the implementation of the Regional Project on Cross-Border Protected Areas in West Africa and the strengthening of operational capacities of the Regional Coordination Unit;*

*Having been informed of the communication on the presentation of projects forms by the Representatives of the beneficiary Countries during the Training Workshop on the Setting up of Tourism Projects organized on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at the ICDT headquarters;*

*Noting that the majority of the projects have a national focus and that the cross-border approach is not enough underscored;*

*Recognizing that the projects forms can serve as a working basis for the elaboration of bankable cross-border projects.*

**THE STEERING COMMITTEE:**

1. Recommends the elaboration of terms of references, preferably before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016, for the formulation of bankable projects on the protected areas of (a) Niokolo- Badiar (b) Djoudj-Diawling (c) Park W (d) Bafing- Falémé (e) River Basins, in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015 -2030);
2. Welcomes with satisfaction the proposal of the ICDT and the SESRIC to prepare a publication containing the national and cross-border bankable projects related to the concerned Parks and Protected Areas;
3. Recommends the holding in Conakry in Republic of Guinea in October 2016 of a meeting of Ministers of Tourism of the beneficiary Countries in order to examine for approval the bankable projects of above mentioned Parks and Protected Areas;
4. Recommends the submission of a funding request to the IDB Group and UNDP to strengthen the operational capacities of the Regional Coordination Unit and Focal Points;
5. Welcomes with satisfaction the joint initiative of the ICDT and the SESRIC to propose to the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to meet in Madrid the

Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization together with the President of the Steering Committee ;

6. Welcomes with satisfaction the proposal of the participants to organize in May or June 2016 a visit of the President of the Steering Committee and the concerned Tourism Ministers of beneficiary Countries, together with the Directors General of the ICDT and the SESRIC, to the President of the Islamic Development Bank Group in Jeddah to raise awareness on mobilizing his institution to finance this Project.
7. Urges the beneficiary Countries of the Project which have not yet done so, to join the International Organization STEP and attend the signing ceremony of the constitutive act of the organization, to be held in Seoul the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2016;
8. Urges the beneficiary Countries of the Project to take part in the 58<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CAF to be held in Abidjan from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016;
9. Takes into consideration with satisfaction and commends the readiness the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism for its willingness to make available to the Project an exhibition area on the occasion of the COP 22 scheduled to be held in Marrakech from 7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> November 2016;
10. Welcomes the candidacy of the Islamic Republic of Gambia, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Republic of Guinea to host the next Donors Conference in 2017 and encourages other Countries to propose their candidacy.

#### **PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 2016**

<b>ACTIVITES</b>	<b>PERIOD</b>
Participation of the beneficiary Countries of the Project at the signing Ceremony of the constituting act of the International Organization STEP scheduled in Seoul	28 March 2016
Participation of the beneficiary Countries of the Project to the 58 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the CAF in Abidjan	19 – 21 April 2016
Visit of the President of the Steering Committee, the Ministers of Tourism of the beneficiary Countries of the Project and Directors General of the ICDT and the SESRIC to the President of the IDB Group in Jeddah to raise awareness on financing this Project	May or June 2016
Organization of a meeting of the Ministers of Tourism of the beneficiary Countries of the Project in Conakry	October 2016
Promotion of the Project through an exhibition booth during the COP 22 to be held in Marrakech	7 – 18 November 2016

## **LATEST DEVELOPMENTS:**

In accordance with the recommendations of the last Steering Committee meeting held in Casablanca in February 2016, the Experts dedicated to the Project elaborated and transmitted to the ICDT the Terms of Reference of the Mission in charge of the elaboration of cross-border bankable projects.

It is worth recalling at this point that during the 58<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa held in Abidjan from 19 to 21 April 2016, the Director General of the ICDT held discussions with the delegation of the UNWTO, composed of Mr. Carlos Vogeler - Director and Executive Secretary in charge of Relations with the Members and Mrs. Elcia Grancourt - Director of the Regional Program of the UNWTO for Africa. On this occasion, the Director General of the ICDT raised the issue related to the financing of the Mission in charge of the elaboration of cross-border bankable projects. In this regard, the delegates requested ICDT to transmit official letters to the UNWTO and STEP Organization requesting them to contribute to the financing of the aforesaid Mission. As concerns the contribution of the OIC Institutions, the Director General of ICDT stated that the Centre and SESRIC are ready to contribute up to 30,000 USD out of the 100,000 USD needed for the Mission if the rest of the amount is secured.

Besides, ICDT seized the opportunity of its participation in the South-South Expo held in Dubai in October 2016 and at the COP 22 held in Marrakech last November to promote the Project and raise awareness on the necessity to find the necessary funding to conduct the above mentioned Mission, which constitutes an essential step to prepare with success the holding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Donors Conference scheduled next year.

In June 2017, the Regional Coordinator informed ICDT that the Project was listed as a priority in the National Investment Plan of the Republic of Guinea.

Furthermore, ICDT in collaboration with SESRIC, is working with its partners to implement the Project, in particular through the organization of activities aiming at strengthening the capacities of the touristic staff in charge of the management of concerned parks and protected areas on the one hand and on the other, of the local communities living around. In this regard, the Center agreed to organize in collaboration with the SESRIC a "Workshop on the Management of Parks and Protected Areas".

Discussions between ICDT and the Guinean Authorities in charge of the regional coordination of the Project are underway with a view to holding the next meeting of the Project Steering Committee in March 2018.