

ALMATY MANIFESTO

Background

The United Nations proclaimed 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. UNESCO recognizes the tremendous potential of tourism to eliminate poverty, support local community development and foster mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue through cross-cultural exchange. The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development as well as the Sustainable Development agenda 2030 provides opportunities to strengthen the positive dynamic between tourism and heritage in all of its forms. Tourism can play a vital role in the preservation and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage and can be a vehicle for sustainable development by engaging local communities and promoting local activity that preserves and presents integrated heritage throughout the tourism supply chain.

However, if not planned or managed effectively, tourism can be socially, culturally and economically disruptive, harming fragile environments, local communities and cultural and natural heritage. It is important to shift the mindset from location and ethnicity – specific heritage to the notion of shared heritage that recognizes cultural exchanges and influences which are reflected in the different cultures and civilizations that have crossed the different regions of the Silk Roads. It is clear that there are significant opportunities for destinations along the Silk Road heritage corridors to join efforts to build transnational tourism initiatives that promote effective collaboration under the Silk Road brand.

Aim

The overall aim of the Central Asian Silk Roads Sub-regional meeting “Reinforcement of sub-regional management coordination and knowledge: Sustainable Tourism and development initiatives”, 24 May 2017, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, was to facilitate the management and development of sustainable tourism along the Silk Roads through a balanced participation of all stakeholders with the goal of increasing awareness and capacity to protect the properties and their Outstanding Universal Value as well as safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

The objectives of the meeting include:

1. Strengthening coordination and improve collaboration amongst relevant stakeholders in Central Asia,
2. Identifying opportunities and challenges for collaborative tourism development along the Silk Roads
3. Identifying solutions and ways for future sustainable tourism development using a collaborative approach

Main Outcomes

The Central Asian sub-regional meeting participants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan including experts, representatives and officers in the field of heritage management, sustainable tourism, national parks and National Commissions for UNESCO, support the idea of sustainable tourism for development along the Silk Roads and agreed on the following:

1. Call on national government to strengthen legislation that would preserve and safeguard heritage and facilitate cross-border heritage tourism.

2. Recognize the UNESCO Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscapes as a framework to integrate policies and practices of conservation of the built environment in to the wider goals of urban development in respect of the inherited values and traditions of different cultural contexts.
3. Guarantee a balanced approach between safeguarding, conservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage and to ensure that visitors do not degrade or damage this heritage but significantly contribute to this heritage conservation and development to the benefit of the local communities.
4. Recognize the need for wide awareness raising and capacity-building amongst administrative local bodies at all levels and in all sectors.
5. Bring all documents pertaining to each Central Asian World Heritage properties and heritage in all its forms up to the current standards and ensure that they are archived appropriately and easily accessible.
6. Recognize the needs for wide awareness raising amongst population, especially young people, about this common heritage.
7. Strengthen new opportunities for State, public and private sector partnerships as well as inter-organization agencies coordination in particular to promote heritage sites as part of the Silk Roads Heritage corridors. Study existing synergies opportunities for development on establishing action plan for reinforcing existing and new initiatives.
8. Develop tourism and visitor management guidelines for Central Asian World Heritage properties and heritage in all its forms along the Silk Roads Heritage Corridors, covering all areas of management and including a Silk Road handbook for tourist guides, in an effort to provide a consistently high-quality visitor experience.
9. Design a marketing, branding and promotional strategy to establish an attractive and professional brand for the Silk Roads Heritage Corridors and provide comprehensive information for visitors via online and communication mediums as well as brochures and publications.
10. Strengthen coordination and cooperation among the countries of Central Asia, as well as other Silk Roads countries on the promotion of the Silk Roads heritage tourism using the existing platforms of UNESCO and UNWTO.

Participants of the Central Asian sub-regional meeting expressed their gratitude to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the UNESCO Office in Almaty and the UNDP Office in Kazakhstan, for organizing the event, as well as to the international resource persons from UNESCO, UNWTO, Xi'an Silk Road Culture Tourism Research Association (China) and Deakin University (Australia) for facilitating the meeting. Moreover, participants were extremely appreciative for the financial contribution for the meeting from the UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust for the Central Asian Silk Roads project.

24 May 2017
Almaty
Kazakhstan