

# **Training Webinar on Managing & Marketing Protected Areas**

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**Opening Statement by**

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

**Honourable Minister, Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

السَّلَامُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

**I am pleased to welcome you all to the opening of the “Training Webinar on Managing & Marketing Protected Areas”, which we have the honour to co-organize it with the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) within the framework of the project on “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Park and Protected Areas in West Africa”, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea.**

**At the outset, I would like to express my deep thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Alpha SOUMAH, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Handicraft of the Republic of Guinea for his presence and joining us today in the opening of our webinar.**

**I would also like to extend my special thanks to Her Excellency Mrs. **لطيفة Latifa البوعبدلاوي EL BOUABDELLAOUI, Director General of ICDT, and her team for their cooperation with us as usual, particularly for mobilizing competent international experts to provide the experience during this training webinar.****

**I am confident that this training webinar will add value to and enhance the knowledge and experience of the participated experts and managers of protected areas in OIC MCs from West Africa. Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to thank the expert team, from Malaysia, Bangladesh and Türkiye, who will provide the training during these two days.**

## **Dear Participants,**

**International tourism is one of the main economic activities, which play a vital role in socio-economic development in many OIC MCs. Tourism activities constitute an important source of foreign exchange earnings, economic growth, and employment. In 2019, just before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the OIC MCs hosted 259 million international tourists who generated 216 billion \$ as tourism receipts. In the same year, the tourism sector accounted for 8.1% of the OIC MCs' total GDP and 7.5% of all jobs.**

**However, as elsewhere in the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the tourism sector hard in OIC countries during the last two years. The strict containment measures put in place by almost all the countries around the world, such as curfews, lockdowns, border closures, and cancellation of international flights, resulted in significant losses in terms of both tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. In 2020, for example, OIC countries hosted only 70 million international tourists and generated only 78 billion \$ in tourism receipts.**



**Dear Participants,**

**During these difficult times, many countries around the globe paid special attention to alternative tourism activities and niche tourism markets such as ecotourism and nature tourism as alternatives to sustain and revive the tourism sector.**

**In the domain of ecotourism, tourism activities in protected areas provide a unique way of fostering visitors' connection with the nature and promotion of conservation of protected areas. If appropriately managed, tourism activities in protected areas could create significant economic benefits for surrounding communities and help create greater support for conservation of these areas.**

**It is worth mentioning here that ‘sustainability’ and ‘conservation’ of protected areas remained a challenge in managing protected areas in many developing countries, including OIC MCs. Protected areas are often facing various managerial challenges, such as overcrowding, over visiting and pollution.**

**Furthermore, in the majority of our MCs, the tourism potential of protected areas and natural parks remained untapped, mainly due to underdeveloped infrastructure, lack of tourism managing and marketing strategies, and limited availability of well-trained human capital.**

**Dear Participants,**

**Recognizing the importance of enhancing the technical capacities of the human resource in our MCs, we, at SESRIC, pay a special attention to training and capacity building activities in various socio-economic fields and sectors, including the domain of tourism.**

**In this regard, and within the framework of SESRIC Tourism Capacity Building Programme (Tourism-CaB), we organise training courses, study visits, webinars and workshops on various tourism-related aspects with a view to enhancing the technical human capacities and facilitating the transfer and sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices among our MCs in this important domain.**

**I would like to mention here that, within the framework of the Regional Project on “Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Park and Protected Areas in West Africa”, we have jointly organized with ICDT in November 2019 at our Headquarters in Ankara a Training Workshop for the Managers of West African Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas.**

**Since then, we have been actively supporting the national tourism authorities of the West African OIC countries by regularly inviting their managers and experts to attend and benefit from our training and capacity building activities in the field of tourism.**

**In the mandated area of research, SESRIC has been regularly since the year 2000 preparing the technical background report on the state of tourism in our MCs, which is titled “International Tourism in the OIC Countries: Prospects and Challenges”.**



**This report serves as one of the main technical documents for the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Tourism (ICTM). The 2022 edition of this report will be submitted to the upcoming 11<sup>th</sup> ICTM, which is scheduled to be held in Azerbaijan during this year.**

**In the mandated area of statistics, we have regularly keeping and updating the category of tourism in our comprehensive database, which called the OIC-Stat Database. Currently, this category includes 12 tourism-related statistical indicators.**

**Also, within the framework of SESRIC Statistical Capacity Building Programme (StatCaB), we contribute to the efforts of the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of our MCs towards enhancing their technical statistical capacities in the domain of tourism. Since 2007, SESRIC has organised 20 tourism statistical training courses, 4 workshops, 1 study visit, and 1 webinar related to tourism statistics.**

**Dear Participants,**

**Before concluding, I would like to assure you that within the framework of its three mandated areas of statistics, research, and training, SESRIC will continue to support and contribute to the efforts of our MCs towards developing a sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.**

**In this regard, I believe that this training webinar will contribute and add value to the knowledge and experience of the participants to better managing and marketing tourism activities in protected areas in their countries and thus stimulate intra-OIC cooperation in this important domain.**

**I wish you all the success and thank you for your kind attention.**

**والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته**