



ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU TOURISME
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL DEL TURISMO
ВСЕМИРНАЯ ТУРИСТСКАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ
منظمة السياحة العالمية



OMA/Conf.BEST/Report

FINAL REPORT

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (BEST)

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
5-8 February 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| The Built Environment in the Context of Tourism | 3 |
| Conference Proceedings | 4 |
| Debate and Recommendations | 9 |
| Conclusion | 10 |
| Annex I: Muscat Declaration on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism | 12 |
| Annex II: Programme of the Conference | 15 |
| Annex III: List of Participants | 20 |

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (BEST)

INTRODUCTION

Tourism trends have considerably evolved in the last two decades. One of the main changes is the gradual but increasing shift from “beach destinations” to destinations offering cultural discoveries. Today, the tourism industry proposes an ever wider range of destinations and there are few spots left in the world which are out of the reach of tourism. Moreover, the growing awareness for culture has set a tourism trend driven by a widespread desire to discover new places and different cultures. As such, the tourism industry is putting more and more emphasis on the uniqueness of the experience provided by each destination.

The built environment contributes greatly to the fulfilment of this current tourism trend because it is at the very heart of the identity of a community or of a country. Indeed, the built environment is the reflection of a lifestyle, of a social organisation, of artistic practices, and of the architectural adaptation to climatic, geographical, cultural and religious factors.

It is in this context that the international conference on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman from 5 to 8 February 2005 under the patronage of His Highness Seyyed Haitham bin Tarek Al-Saeed, Minister of Heritage and Culture, and under the chairmanship of Her Excellency Dr. Rajha Abdel Ameer Ali, Minister of Tourism. The conference was a joint initiative of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the World Tourism Organization, with support from UNESCO.

The conference gathered actors from the tourism industry, international architects and urban planners, government officials involved in tourism, regional and urban development, as well as heritage and culture specialists from around the world.

In his opening address, Mr. Francesco Frangialli, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organisation pointed out that “architecture and tourism are closely interrelated” and emphasized the fact that “architecture can shape and enhance the image of a tourist destination or destroy it altogether. Similarly, tourism, if developed in a responsible, balanced, participatory and sustainable manner, can become a driving force for environmental protection, heritage conservation and cultural pride.”

The Secretary-General pointed out that during the past decade, attention was mostly given to the natural element; the built environment received less consideration within the framework of tourism policies. In this sense, the importance of this conference should be underlined as it addresses for the first time the various roles of the built environment within the tourism sector.

Her Excellency Dr. Rajha Abdel Ameer Ali, welcomed her distinguished guests during the inaugural ceremony of the Conference. She underlined the attention given by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed for the tourism sector, enshrined recently in the establishment of a fully-fledged Ministry for Tourism, confirming the directives of

His Majesty to diversify the sources of revenue for the national economy and to encourage all non-oil related sectors.

The Sultanate of Oman has a diverse and rich tourism product ranging from natural, to historical to cultural. The Sultanate is focused on quality rather than quantity and attempts to develop unique tourism products, with the private sector as a strategic partner, that contribute positively to the national economy, that create employment for Omani, and that is based on the overarching principles of sustainable development.

Promotional activities not only focus on advertising the Sultanate of Oman but also address some of the distorted images on the Arab and Islamic world, as the Sultanate is an integral part of this world, occupied with its concerns and involved in its aspirations. The Government is working to facilitate entry procedures into the Sultanate and to encourage foreign investors. The importance of this conference, Her Excellency said, is founded on the fact that it represents the Ministry's vision and philosophy in the coming phase.

To conclude, Her Excellency thanked His Highness Seyyed Haitham bin Tareq Al Saeed for his patronage of this event and thanked the World Tourism Organization and UNESCO for their cooperation in organising the conference, giving it an international dimension.

His Royal Highness, Prince Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Secretary-General and Member of the Board of the Supreme Commission for Tourism, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia conveyed his gratitude for being invited to inaugurate the first international conference hosted by the Sultanate of Oman.

He then stressed the importance of built environments in the sustainability of the tourism sector. Indeed, respect for the built environment contributes to the coherence of the original milieu and to the understanding of the functions, symbols and organisation specific to the site. Since sustainability is also about the proper use of an environment, he pointed out the importance of good practice in planning with a systematic view on sustainability principles and long-term vision.

His Royal Highness then exposed the development of sustainable tourism policies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He emphasized the ambition of the general strategy to achieve high degree of complementarity between tourism, the built environment and cultural heritage. Moreover, he highlighted the promotion of the diversity of the built environment and through the protection of cultural heritage and the revival and promotion of traditional crafts and industries.

Objectives of the conference

The conference on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism aimed at:

- Examining case-studies of tourism projects all over the world, ranging in scale from eco-lodges to regional master plans for mass tourism, that have successfully incorporated principles of sustainability in all elements of their physical and architectural design;

- Identifying principles, guidelines and specific criteria that can be applied to the design of resorts, hotels and other tourism infrastructure in order to guarantee the authenticity of the tourism offer and its long-term sustainability, as well as to maintain the distinctive character of cities, vernacular architecture, and local communities;
- Highlighting examples of best architectural and design practices where respect for the principles of sustainability and cultural diversity have led to commercial success for the private sector;
- Finding ways to encourage national and local governments to undertake the required political, legislative changes and administrative systems with a view to ensure the realisation of the above principles in all tourism development programmes and projects;
- Identifying good social practice that enable the participation and empowerment of local communities in any tourism project;
- Identifying good environmental practice that contribute to the preservation of a site and that can be integrated in the built environment;
- Pushing, through dissemination of best practice and debates, the idea that good architecture contributes to the betterment of the welfare of the local population and the experience of the tourists.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF TOURISM

The built environment is defined as the buildings, structures, and ancillaries comprising an inter-related man-made area, often architectural in character. In the context of tourism, the built environment may take a variety of forms, namely heritage buildings – ranging from individual historical buildings to historical neighbourhoods, monuments, archaeological and historical sites or ensembles – as well as modern architectural elements, buildings and settings. The qualification “modern” refers here to a recently built element. This element, whatever its nature, may embody a variety of architectural styles, including the re-interpretation of vernacular architecture.

It is important to specify that the built environment does not exist in urban settings exclusively, for any man-made construction can be spoken of as a built environment. The context, whether urban or rural, has no impact on the definition of the concept. At the same time, the built environment cannot be understood in isolation of its context. Because of the very fact that it is man-made, it reflects human interaction with its milieu. As such, the built environment is the result of natural constraints and resources, socio-cultural imperatives, economic and functional needs, and technological possibilities.

Moreover, it is the identity of a community that is reflected by the built environment. Respect for the sense of place, traditions, and cultures are paramount for the wellbeing of the populations and the sustainability of tourism and of its quality. The sense of place has to do with the use of specific materials found locally, with the adjustments of architecture to societal customs and needs as well as to the environment. It is by respecting these aspects that one can ensure the specificity and uniqueness of the tourism offer.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

The conference was structured in four distinct thematic sessions, each focusing on a different type of built environment and its uses in the tourism sector. The four themes were:

- **Session 1** Heritage and Adaptive Re-use for Tourism Purposes
- **Session 2** Design and Construction of Modern Tourism Facilities
- **Session 3** Eco-lodges and the Environment
- **Session 4** Urban and Local Regeneration through Sustainable Tourism

International speakers presented case-studies from around the world, thus enabling to explore the relationship between the built environments and sustainable tourism.

A concluding debate on the theme of Sustainability, Cultural Diversity and Destination Image was held to synthesize what had been said during the conference. It contributed substantially to the Muscat Declaration on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism, approved at the Conference and attached to this report.

The presentations and discussions on built environments are summarised in the following sections.

The Conference programme is appended as Annex II.

1. Heritage and Adaptive Re-use for Tourism Purposes

The objective of Session 1 was to show that, although heritage sites or buildings call for protection because of their intrinsic as well as cultural or historical values, heritage can also have a dynamic value, in the sense that it actively contributes to the local and national economy, mainly through tourism.

While protection schemes often take heritage out of reach of the public or “museify” it, the adaptation and re-use of heritage provide an alternative trend worth examining for two significant reasons. One reason is that the adaptation and re-use of heritage can generate revenues and employment for people and for society. The second reason is that the re-use of heritage, by recreating the functionality of the built environment, can be as efficient in maintaining and protecting heritage and in valorising it in the eyes of tourists and the local community.

In this session, the four distinguished speakers presented case-studies of heritage adaptation within tourism projects in Spain, Portugal, India and Jordan. Each speaker described the restoration processes and guidelines adopted for the chosen heritage site. They insisted on their commitment to a faithful restoration respectful of the local history and culture, emphasising that the sense of place is key to the success of the project because it enables tourists to experience a site through the built environment. As Architect Leen Fakhoury puts it: “the old is kept alive” in order to provide visitors with the real experience, in this case that of a Jordanian village.

One of the major themes discussed was the importance of having a well-thought master plan that comprises the architectural and restoration aspect as well as the

economic one which aims at creating a profitable enterprise. While the work on the built environment should address issues such as the re-interpretation of space and its uses and the understanding of the local culture, the economic analysis should tackle the overall management of the project, budgeting issues, the modalities of involvement of the local community, property issues, etc. Both these aspects are crucial in developing a sustainable tourism offer whereby all stakeholders benefit from the project.

The involvement of the local community was also widely discussed. Participation processes differed according to the project described. In the case of a private initiative, such as the Casa Morisca in Granada, Spain, Architect Carlos Sanchez relied on the know-how of local craftsmen to reproduce elements of the house according to specific techniques or crafts. In the case of the Malabar House in India or Taybet Zaman in Jordan, the local population was involved in the management of the projects. Effectively, the staff was recruited locally and was provided training in the field on hotel management and services. In the former case, the management system was conceived in such a way to accommodate personal wishes and professional advancement of the staff.

Unfortunately, no project can have solely positive effects and there are sometimes unintended negative impacts on the environment, despite all the preventive measures taken. Examples of negative effects were the rise of real-estate prices around the project site, the uncontrolled growth threatening the identity of the site and the sense of place, or the attraction of low quality traders because of the affluence of tourists.

Finally, the speakers underlined out the importance of having a national conservation body that would protect heritage but also valorise it, through re-use or other means.

2. Design and Construction of Modern Tourism Facilities

Two or three decades ago, large scale modern tourism facilities were perceived as a source of important revenues and several countries embarked in this unlimited massification of tourism supply. However, with the experience of the last few years in many destinations, this approach to tourism development is more and more perceived with suspicion. The reason for this is the fear, in some cases well-founded, that the construction of a resort may disrupt the socio-cultural and ecological balance of a place because of its sheer size and because of the great numbers of tourists it may suddenly attract. This would inevitably lead to the progressive decrease of the quality of the tourism offer. In the case of particular historic buildings, the introduction of modern components can compromise the architectural integrity of a building or a site.

It was vital to address such fears and suspicions within the framework of this conference and this for two reasons. First, mass tourism through large scale projects constitute the core of the tourism industry. Second, it is important to explore ways of making the whole of the tourism industry more sustainable, rather than merely concentrating on small scale projects that already fulfil sustainability principles and criteria.

In this respect, Session 2 purposely showed that there are examples of successful introduction of modern tourism facilities and large scale resorts. It also presented a wide variety of modern projects, in terms of their scale and of their use of modern facilities. As a result, interesting ideas were put forward concerning the sustainability of modern tourism facilities.

To start with, it was demonstrated that modern architecture and the respect for the built environment and the sense of place are not antagonistic. Added modern components can blend successfully with traditional built environments. This was well argued in the case of the rural inns in Romania, described by Pr. Dan Dimancescu. Indeed, modern facilities contribute in developing the tourism offer by proposing state-of-the-art accommodation in terms of comfort whilst capitalising on and valorising the traditional setting.

On a larger scale, resorts can develop and propose new or alternative tourist products and simultaneously respect the environment. In concrete terms, these resorts commit themselves to environmental standards and are developed according to a proper urban infrastructure respectful of the landscape and, in the case of Sotogrande in Spain, of the seaside.

Because they cover large areas and offer a wide range of activities, tourism resorts may go beyond the tourism framework. When these resorts attract permanent residents, the latter, in turn, become a community such as the one currently living in Al Gouna, Egypt. According to its creator, Al Gouna has outsized the scale of a resort and is starting to have the profile of a small town with schools, banks, hospitals, etc. This urges the question of where to draw the line between a resort and a town and the extent of a private company's jurisdiction over a territory and its development.

The question of architectural reinterpretation was discussed through the case-study of the Chedi Hotel in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. It demonstrated that local vernacular architecture can be studied and reinterpreted through contemporary lenses to design a high quality tourist project. In this sense, the Chedi Hotel blends perfectly in the landscape and respects the traditional architectural patterns of the Sultanate of Oman. It provides a good example of how to innovate by integrating local architecture with modern schemes without threatening the existing traditional built environment.

3. Eco-lodges and the Environment

In his introduction of Session 3, Architect Ammar Khammash specified that the concept of eco-lodges is a very subtle one because it is a tourism experience that is in between the human and the natural. In other terms, it is a human effort to adapt to nature and experience it rather than the opposite. With this optic in mind, landscape should be perceived as something building up for years through the interaction of its different elements.

Eco-lodges are indeed somewhat apart in the tourism sector because they are human constructions that strive to valorise nature and to provide a tourism experience that attempts to be the least disruptive to nature.

Drawing from their rich experience, the four distinguished speakers highlighted common perspectives about eco-lodges and about the relationship between the built and the natural environments.

To begin with, they all stressed the imperative of being humble vis-à-vis nature. Tourism projects should not try to compete with the natural environment but rather strive to blend harmoniously with it. The speakers provided examples of best practices from around the world and, more importantly, in very different natural settings ranging from the desert to the jungle.

Central to the concept of eco-lodges is the local community, a key element of the landscape. As Dr. Mounir Neamatalla said, hotels do not live in isolation of the surrounding communities. This is even more relevant in the case of eco-lodges as they are typically located in or around protected areas, which are in turn neighbour to human settlements. Consequently, the success of the project depends greatly on the partnership eco-lodges establish with the local population, whether the latter is simply proposed employment in the lodge or becomes owner of the project, like in the case of Al-Jord Eco-lodge in Lebanon.

As such, the involvement and inclusion of the population needs to be thought of at each phase of the project, naturally in consultation with the local population. As the speakers pointed out, not only is this crucial for the success of the project, it is also enriching and rewarding. There is indeed a lot to be learnt from the local communities in terms of using natural resources for building purposes and of adapting the architecture to geographical and climatic constraints. These traditional techniques ultimately enable to eliminate the need for high-consumption energy technologies such as air conditioning or even electricity in the case of the Adrère Amellal Oasis in Egypt. Combined with waste management systems and environmentally friendly technologies, the reliance on traditional architecture significantly reduces the impact on the natural environment and thus serves sustainable tourism.

Since no human intervention, whatever its nature, can have zero impact upon its environment, it is vital to monitor thoroughly what has been accomplished. Corporation Conservation Africa provides a good example of best practice by doing, for each of its eco-lodges, a rigorous audit of the impacts and a social audit of the impacts of tourism projects on communities. The purpose of this auditing is to assess both the environmental and social effects of the intervention. Ultimately, the monitoring results should inform the subsequent planning phases and, if need be, lead to major or minor modifications.

Finally, eco-lodges should work on interpreting the natural environment and raising awareness both for tourists and local communities. Understanding better nature through a lodge built in harmony with its environment and through unique experiences of nature – whether the savannah, the oasis, the mountain or the jungle – contribute to the conservation of the natural environment and to sustainable tourism.

4. Urban and Local Regeneration through Sustainable Tourism

Urban and local regeneration is more than the physical rehabilitation and transformation of one or many buildings. Rather, it is a process that brings a long lasting conservation of the built environment. More specifically, regeneration aims at harnessing the economy of a given place through the appropriate transformation of the built environment and the creation of activities in this environment. Similarly, it aims at enhancing the social well-being of the population using the space to be recovered.

The process of urban and local regeneration can start through one or a few independent isolated projects which, especially if successful, may trigger a wave of regeneration efforts in a city. This is well illustrated by the city of Alexandria, Egypt, where the establishment of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina brought a wind of change and a sudden dynamism to regenerate many sites, contemporary or older, of historical importance to the city.

In other cases, namely that of the historic centre of Mexico City or that of Koge in Denmark, urban regeneration is a fully-fledged multisectoral operation covering, in the former case, a large surface of the historic area, and in the latter, the whole of the city.

Mr. Ahmed Al-Mukhaini urged professionals to grant more attention to processes and to see beyond the set goal as a finalised and static product. The reason for this is that processes are ongoing and involve the interactions of many dynamics. Processes indeed fashion results, even when the regeneration part has been accomplished. There are two implications to this.

First of all, regeneration schemes, depending on the socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts, are more successful when the local population is informed and/or actively involved in the process. Qualifying regeneration as a socio-economic process means that this process involves much more than the mere physical enhancement of the built environment. A renewed built environment is not enough for it to become a place of investment and to generate activities and revenues. In fact, urban or local regeneration will only work if it is planned and executed for the people. In this sense, the starting point of the rehabilitation of the historic centre of Mexico City is to attract new residents and to maintain current ones. Furthermore, this project is a good example of a multisectoral intervention not only including the renovation of buildings but also the safety of the area, the creation of specialised corridors, the establishment of a micro-credit system to help the population in its efforts to renovate or rehabilitate its dwellings or create small businesses, training and health care programmes for the residents, among others.

Second, addressing the economic and social complexities of regeneration is certainly a first step. However, at the macro-level, regeneration efforts should be conceived within the overall framework of tourism policy in order for it to bear fruits and be sustainable. Dr. Samir Abdulac exposed a good example of this interweaving of levels through the case of “Parc Naturel Régional du Perche” in France. Effectively, this region is in full regeneration of its image, through the maintenance of its built environment and implementation of architectural and environmental principles and guidelines. Within these, it is simultaneously developing an array of new activities in order to develop its tourist offer. Renovation schemes and modern projects should be

done with the full respect of the original architecture and its vernacular components and the respect of the sense of place.

Similarly, the city of Koge, a former important harbour city of Denmark, has been able to turn its drowning economy into a flourishing one by developing its cultural life, namely through the newly created Museum of Sketches, by cleaning the atmosphere from pollution and by correcting its built environment. The result is a unique small town atmosphere in which tourists seem eager to stay.

DEBATE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Together with the sixteen case-studies presented during the conference, the debate on the theme of Sustainability, Cultural Diversity and Destination Image enabled to reframe the concept of the built environment within the framework of tourism policies and sustainability requirements.

The debate was chaired by Mr. Jean-Paul L'Allier, Mayor of the City of Quebec, Canada, and gathered a high dignitary of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, a conservation expert, two professors of anthropology specialised in tourism, and two international architects. This combination of professions resulted in a fruitful confrontation of points of view and concerns. In particular, it enabled to extract important recommendations concerning the role and uses of the built environment for the sustainability of the tourism industry.

The most important issues raised during this conference could be synthesized through the following points:

- **Long-term vision:** Having a perspective beyond immediate goals is indeed a sine qua non condition for sustainability. Concretely, it requires further measures in order to be seriously applied. Examples of such measures are: adequate institutional and legal protection mechanisms, guidelines for restoration, re-use and the introduction of modern components in historical sites, taking into account and protecting all the relevant elements of the social, economic and natural environments, quality control tools to ensure that tourism is respectful of its environment, elaborating and achieving realistic and continuous planning stages, integrating the tourism sector in overall planning processes.
- **Comprehensive master plans and policies:** At the individual level, tourism projects should be defined both in concrete construction terms but also in economic terms in order to ensure quality as well as profitability. At higher level, it is crucial to devise comprehensive tourism policies that address economic, social and cultural aspects. These multisectoral policies are energy and time consuming but are undoubtedly more rewarding because more sustainable in every aspect.
- **National policies:** As Professor Jafar Jafari reminded, tourism is one industry among others. Consequently, it should never be de-contextualised from national policies. Rather, it should be an integral part of it. Because the tourism sector is a growing industry, it should contribute to the national economy.

- **Asset identification, protection, and pride:** Before rushing in the development of the tourism sector, it is essential to proceed by identifying the asset of a given territory. Hence, the questions to ask are: what to develop and how to develop it? As Mayor Jean-Paul L'Allier remarked, it is important to identify what people are proud of and what they are willing to share with others. This implies that in the same way heritage or nature should be protected, the people should be protected from the over-development of the tourism potential.
- **Authenticity:** There are still some countries where there are no regulations about the conservation of heritage and no protection body. That is why an important recommendation of this conference is to create such bodies as autonomous entities with the authority and competence to preserve, manage and promote national heritage, the built environment and the sense of place. Needless to say, this body should work hand in hand with the already existing institutions concerned with tourism, culture and the environment.
- **Eco-principles:** These principles are about the respect of both the natural and the built environments and the local communities, their lifestyle and their cultures. It is also about learning from the others. While small scale resorts voluntarily embody those principles, many speakers stressed their relevance for large scale resorts and urged the latter to adopt them too.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Although widely advocated, monitoring is not yet widely practiced. It is relevant in the context of built environments for sustainable tourism in three important respects. First, it is paramount to audit both the social and environmental impacts of the projects. Second, it is equally important to audit the internal consumption, needs and potential wastes of the projects. It helps to improve the management in order to make it more optimal. Last but not least, regularly evaluate the satisfaction of customers or visitors because they constitute the main source of revenue for the project, and indeed, for the whole tourism industry.
Monitoring should be done regularly over the years, even when the project is finalised. Because the built environment is subject to many dynamics, it is bound to evolve. It thus requires human, social or architectural adaptations as well as a constant eye on its state of preservation.
- **Education:** Regulations and laws are not enough to protect heritage, be it cultural, built or natural. Moreover, they are often seen as restrictions by the population and by businesses. This is why the importance and greater efficiency of education is emphasised to valorise heritage among the people and the tourists. Perceived positively and with pride, heritage benefits from a better and wider protection.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Eugenio Yunis, Chief of Sustainable Development of Tourism at the WTO, closed the conference by noting the excellent collection of case-studies and their great variety. Despite the fact that there is no typical project or typical strategies for successful tourism, he reminded that the WTO has already devised and published different sets of rules, guidelines and policies to promote the sustainability of tourism, including indicators to monitor performance. Consequently, it is the gap between the theory and the practice that needs to be addressed. Such gap can only be

compensated by the strong will of national authorities to apply the sustainability principles in all the elements of the national tourism policy.

In this sense, it is worth saluting His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed's directives to diversify the sources of revenue for the national economy of the Sultanate of Oman and his encouragement to develop the tourism sector, based on the overarching principles of sustainable development.

To conclude the conference, Mr. Amr Abdel-Ghaffar, Regional Representative for the Middle East at the WTO, conveyed his satisfaction for enlarging the WTO's database through the conference's numerous presentations. Further, he encouraged tourism professionals worldwide to put into action the recommendations resulting from the conference and to rely upon the technical assistance provided by the WTO and its affiliate experts.

ANNEX I

MUSCAT DECLARATION ON BUILT ENVIRONMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The participants gathered on the occasion of the conference on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism in Muscat, Oman from 5 to 8 February 2005, upon the invitation of the World Tourism Organization, the Sultanate of Oman and UNESCO, concluded and endorsed the following declaration.

DECLARATION

We, the participants in the international conference on Built Environments for Sustainable Tourism (BEST), convened in the city of Muscat, from 5 to 8 February 2005, by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, jointly with the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognising, acknowledging, and aware of the:

- growing economic importance of tourism, its forecast global growth, geographical spread into newer destinations, and role in the overall development process;
- numerous implications of tourism to societies, especially with respect to the socio-cultural fabrics of host societies and to their built and natural environments;
- key role local and regional authorities increasingly play in the development, marketing and management of tourism within their areas of jurisdiction;
- importance of sensitive architectural adaptation and of respect for sense of place for the sustainability of tourism;
- significant impact tourism can have upon the built environment, both positive and negative;
- responsibilities of both governments and the private sector have in ensuring such impacts are positive;
- positive role that tourism can potentially play in the preservation and conservation of natural and cultural heritage;
- principles enshrined in the WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, especially those in Article 3, "Tourism, a factor of sustainable development", 4, "Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and a contributor to its enhancement" and 5, "Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities";
- ideals of sustainable development encompassing economic viability, social and cultural advancement, and environmental protection that are applicable to all forms of tourism

Hereby agree to call upon central and local governments, tourism authorities and the tourism private sector to:

At the strategic level

1. Promote the use of strategic tourism planning procedures for ensuring sustainable tourism development for the built environment;

2. Adopt policies and strategies relating to the development of tourism infrastructure that ensure a better urban environment for both residents and tourists;
3. Implement planning processes that are transparent, equitable, and democratic.
4. Align within tourism development plans and projects the requirements of development objectives, the needs of local communities, and respect for the environment;
5. Ensure that the tourism built environment reflects and respects cultural diversity;
6. Promote and disseminate awareness of best practice in the sphere of the built environment amongst policy makers, developers, employers, employees, and tourists;
7. Provide information and guidance that allow visitors and residents to interpret the distinctive built environments of individual destinations;
8. Monitor the impact of tourism on the built environment utilizing indicators by the World Tourism Organization in relation to economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability;
9. Promote and establish partnerships among tourism stakeholders, public and private, in order to ensure an orderly and sustainable development of tourism infrastructures that respect local cultures and economies;
10. Encourage further research by universities and academic institutions for the advancement of the principles, guidelines and recommended best practices enshrined in this Declaration;

On Adaptive Re-use of Heritage for Tourism Purposes

11. Ensure legislative and regulatory frameworks safeguard and enhance the natural, cultural and built heritage through wherever appropriate encouraging sensitive adaptation of heritage sites to reinforce destination image and generate resources for conservation;
12. Promote constructive dialogue between respectively those authorities responsible for heritage conservation and tourism development;
13. Build on the successful experiences available around the World to foster the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings, monuments and ensembles for tourism purposes in a way that protects, enhances and respects the values carried by this heritage;
14. Ensure in doing so that sustainability of the heritage and of its new functions are properly addressed, avoiding thus the transformation of this heritage into objects of visit with limited economic impact on its surroundings;

On Design and Construction of Modern Tourism Facilities

15. Provide appropriate incentives to ensure that the principles of sustainability are central to large scale as well as small scale tourism development;
16. Develop guidelines for the implementation of the principles of sustainability within both large scale and small scale developments;
17. Promote the use of quality and adapted modern architecture and infrastructure in the development of tourism facilities in a way respectful of the built or natural environment reinforcing positive destination image;
18. Provide due respect to the local traditions of construction and attempt to integrate in the process the local materials, expertise, know-how, traditional designs and human resources at all levels.

On Eco-lodges and the Environment

19. Ensure the highest respectful integration possible of the tourism facilities in the landscape to minimize its impact, while respecting the natural and biological components of its environment;
20. Make use of sustainable construction techniques, renewable sources of energy and local materials;

On Urban and Local Regeneration

21. Integrate the requirements and opportunities offered by the tourism sector within a multi faceted economic development plans, thus ensuring a sustainable development and regeneration process;
22. Create distinctive cultural icons, properly integrated in the urban or local fabric, either through imaginative re-use of historic monuments or the creation of modern facilities;
23. Involve the tourism sector in the overall regeneration of built ensembles, including renovation of the infrastructure;
24. Devise general policies and guidelines that cover regional, urban or local ensembles to properly integrate tourism in the life of these ensembles and to provide specific guidelines for architectural and urban works.

Vote of Thanks

The participants,

Having concluded, their proceedings in the best possible conditions of efficiency and comfort and having been able to witness at first hand the Sultanate's traditional hospitality and achievements in the field of tourism, request H.E. the Minister of Tourism, Dr. Rajha Abdul Ameer Ali to convey to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said a message of gratitude to the Government and people of Oman.

Muscat, 8 February 2005

ANNEX II



Ministry of Tourism
Sultanate of Oman

ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU TOURISME
WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL DEL TURISMO
ВСЕМИРНАЯ ТУРИСТСКАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ
منظمة السياحة العالمية



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUILT ENVIRONMENTS
FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (BEST)**

**Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
5 – 8 February 2005**

Programme

Saturday, 5 February 2005

| Time | Topic | Speakers |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:00 - 13:00 | Registration and document distribution | |
| 19:00 - 20:30 | Official Inauguration | H.E. Dr. Rajha Abdul Ameer ALI Minister of Tourism Sultanate of Oman |
| | | Mr. Francesco FRANGIALLI WTO Secretary-General |
| | | Mr. Hamad AL-HAMMAMI UNESCO Representative Gulf Arab States |
| | Key note address Built Environment: Sustainability cultural diversity and destination image | H.R.H. Prince Sultan Bin Salman Bin Abdul Aziz AL-SAUD Secretary-General and Member of the Board of The Supreme Commission for Tourism Kingdom of Saudi Arabia |
| 20:30 - 22:00 | Dinner & Opening of the Exhibition | |

Sunday, 6 February 200509:00 – 10:00 *Setting the scene*

Presentation of the Rationale of the Conference

Dr. Heba A. AZIZ
Advisor for Research and Development
Ministry of Tourism
Sultanate of Oman

Introduction to the proceedings

Mr. Eugenio YUNIS
Chief, Sustainable Development of
Tourism Department
World Tourism Organization

Lead Contribution

Dr. Suha OZKAN
Secretary-General
The Aga Khan Award for Architecture

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee break

10:30 – 13:00 **Session I: Heritage and Adaptive Re-use for Tourism Purposes: Case Studies****Moderator:**
Mr. Hassan Mohammad ALI
Advisor
Ministry of Heritage
Sultanate of Oman

The Casa Morisca Hotel, Granada,

Mr. Carlos SANCHEZ
Architect
Spain

The Pousadas, Portugal

Mr. Hugo SARTORI
Representative of the Pousadas
Portugal

The Malabar House, India

Mr. Joerg DRECHSEL
Designer, Director
Malabar House
India

Taybet Zaman, Jordan

Mrs. Leen FAKHOURY
Architect, Instructor
University of Jordan
Jordan**Discussion**

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 - 16:00 **Session II: Design and Construction of Modern Tourism Facilities****Moderator:**
H.E. Sultan AL-HARTHI
Secretary-General
Tender Board,
Sultanate of Oman

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| “High End” Rural Inn Development in Bran and Sibiu, Romania | Professor Dan DIMANCESCU President BtF-Bran, srl Romania |
| Sotogrande Resort, Spain | Mr. Ramón DÁVILA President PROMOTUR Residential and Sports Tourism Association of Andalusia Spain |
| Al Gouna Resort, Egypt | Mr. Samih SAWIRIS Chairman Orascom Hotels & Development Egypt |
| Chedhi Hotel, Muscat | Mr. Jean-Michel GATHY Principal Denniston International Architects and Planners Malaysia |

Discussion

16:00 - 16:30 Coffee break

Monday, 7 February 2005

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 08:00 – 18.00 | The Sultanate of Oman A Tour of Architectural Heritage | Mr. Ahmed AL-MUKHAINI Expert Commentator and Tour Leader |
| | Free evening | |

Tuesday, 8 February 2005

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 08:30 - 10:30 | Session III: Eco-lodges & the Environment | Moderator: Mr. Ammar KHAMMASH Architect Ammar Khammash Architects Jordan |
| | Adrère Amellal: a Journey through Siwa, Egypt | Dr. Mounir NEAMATALLA President Environmental Quality International Egypt |
| | Al-Jord Eco-Lodges Project, Lebanon | Mr. Joseph HAIMARI Advisor Ministry of Tourism Lebanon |

Conservation Corporation Africa: An African Success Story
Mr. Les CARLISLE
Group Conservation Manager
Conservation Corporation Africa
South Africa

Sustainable Architecture for Eco-lodges
Mr. Hitesh MEHTA
Architect
ED Stone & Associates
USA

Discussion

10:30 - 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 - 13:00 **Session IV: Urban & Local
Regeneration through Sustainable
Tourism**

Moderator:
Ahmed Ali M. Al-MUKHAINI
Secretary
Historical Association of Oman
Director of information & research
Majlis A'shura
Sultanate of Oman

Urban Ensemble: Revitalisation of
Historic Centres for Sustainable
Tourism, Mexico

Mr. Adrián PANDAL
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Fundación del Centro Histórico de México
Mexico

The case of Koge, Denmark

Mr. Freddy AVNBY
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Tourism and comprehensive territorial
policy: the case of Perche, France

Dr. Samir ABDULAC
Director
Centre d'urbanisme et d'environnement de
l'Eure-et-Loir
France

The impact of the new library and
modern hotels in Alexandria, Egypt

Dr. Mohamad Fouad AWAD
Architect, President of the Alexandria
Preservation Trust
Egypt

Discussion

13:00 - 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 **Session V: Debate on Sustainability,
Cultural Diversity and Destination
Image**

Moderator:
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Mayor of Québec City
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17:30 - 18:30 **Conclusion and recommendations**

Mr. Eugenio YUNIS
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 World Tourism Organization

Declaration

H.E. Mohsin AL-BALUSHI
 Undersecretary for Tourism
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Closing remarks

Mr. Amr ABDEL-GHAFFAR
 Regional Representative for the Middle
 East
 Coordinator of the General Programme of
 Work
 World Tourism Organization

20:30 Dinner

ANNEX III

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUILT ENVIRONMENTS
FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (BEST)CONFÉRENCE INTERNATIONALE
SUR LE CADRE ARCHITECTURAL DU TOURISME DURABLEمؤتمر دولي:
رؤى معمارية لسياحة مستدامة

Muscat/Sultanate of Oman/ Mascate (sultanat d'Oman)
February/février 2005
مسقط – سلطنة عمان، فبراير/شباط 2005

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