

24-25 November 2015
Istanbul-Turkey



Report of the WORKSHOP on
“EXPLORING TOURISM
POTENTIAL of AL QUDS AL
SHERIF CITY”



Statistical, Economic and Social
Research and Training Centre for
Islamic Countries (SESRIC)

A. BACKGROUND

1. The workshop on “Exploring Tourism Potential of Al Quds Al Sherif City” was held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey on 24 and 25 November 2015.
2. The main objectives of the workshop were:
 - Exploring and introducing the potential of Tourism in Al Quds Al Sherif City and designing strategies to exploit them;
 - Examining and discussing the challenges and obstacles as well as the prospects for enhancing the development of tourism in Al Quds Al Sherif City;
 - Exchanging and sharing knowledge, experiences and best practices in the tourism sector that can be applied to Al Quds Al Sherif City;
 - Exploring feasible and implementable ways and means for collaboration among government entities, OIC institutions and the private sector to support the development of tourism sector in Al Quds Al Sherif City.
3. In the side-line of the workshop, SESRIC organized a roundtable meeting with the title “Tourism in Al-Quds Al Sherif: Challenges and Opportunities” on 23 November 2015 at the same venue in Istanbul, Turkey with the participation of delegates from Turkish governmental institutions, private sector as well as non-governmental organisations . The aim of the meeting was to discuss points related to Turkish experience on the quantity and quality of the tours organised to Al-Quds and addressing the challenges through sharing experiences and proposals to resolve the problems.

B. ORGANIZATION

1. Attendance

The workshop was attended by representatives of the following institutions of OIC Member Countries, OIC and international institutions as well as academia:

- Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, State of Palestine
- Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- Ministry of Awkaf, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey
- Ministry of Tourism, Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), Malaysia
- Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey
- Jordan Tourism Board
- Royal Hashemite Court, Jordan
- Holy Land Incoming Tour Association, Palestine
- Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA)
- Bethlehem University, Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism, Palestine
- Arab Hotel Association, Palestine
- Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran

- Jerusalem Tourism Cluster, Palestine
- Department of Islamic Archaeology of the Haram Al Sharif
- Arab Tourist Guides Union, Palestine
- OIC General Secretariat
- Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group
- Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)
- Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT)
- Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)
- Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA)
- League of Arab States

C. OPENING SESSION

Recitation from the Holy Quran

Welcoming remarks

- H.E. Amb. Musa Kulaklıkaya, Director General of Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)
- H.E. Ms. Rula Ma'ayah, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine delivered by H.E. Amb. Faed Mustafa, Ambassador of State of Palestine in Turkey

Opening statements

- H.E. Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani, Secretary General of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) delivered by H.E. Amb. Hameed A. Opeloyeru, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
- H.E. Mr. Vehbi Dinçerler, Turkey's Special Coordinator for Palestine and Former Minister of National Education, Republic of Turkey
- H.E. Amb. Mustafa Sarnıç, Consul General, Turkish General Consulate in Jerusalem
- H.E. Mr. Nayef Al Fayez, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan
- H.E. Prof. Mehmet Görmez, President of Religious Affairs of Turkey

D. WORKING SESSIONS

SESSION 1:

Tourism in Al Quds Al Sherif City: Current State, Prospects and Challenges

Purpose: To develop preliminary analysis of different aspects related to tourism and its development in Al Quds Al Sherif City covering following themes:

- Tourism related sectors (attractions and activities, infrastructures, tourism services, hospitality and transportation)
- Safety and security (crime rates, terrorism, food safety, health issues and natural disaster)
- Legal issues and constrains (rules and regulations concerning travellers and tourists as well as tourism development)

The first session started with the keynote presentation of **Mr. Fadi Kattan, Tourism Expert at Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine**, titled “Tourism in Al-Quds Al-Sherif: Current State, Prospects and Challenges” to provide the audience overall picture of tourism industry in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City as being the Palestine’s tourism industry centre. He gave a situational analysis of the tourism industry by focusing on the threats to public resilience as well as constraints and challenges such as limitation by occupation of potential source markets, lack of media and promotion, inadequate number of small guest houses and necessity to train the guides to cater specifically for source markets languages and requirements. Mr. Kattan highlighted the importance of Muslim travel to Al-Quds Al-Sherif from all over the world through linkages with Umrah and Haj in conjunction with the Jordan itinerary, with a potential to develop Halal-travel.

Afterwards, the first discussant of the session **Dr. Abed Al Razzaq Issam Arabiyat, General Manager of Jordan Tourism Board**, delivered a comprehensive presentation with the title “Islamic Religious Tourism in Jordan” through informing the audience about the developments in the tourism sector such as waived taxes at international airport in Amman and possibilities to see religious sites in Jordan as being the gate to Al-Quds for travellers from the Islamic world.

The second discussant **Dr. Wasfi Kailani, Jerusalem Affairs Manager, OHM/Political Affairs Directorate, Royal Hashemite Court of Jordan**, concentrated on the role of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in facilitating the travel to Al-Quds by recalling the fatwas encouraging the Muslim people to visit Al-Quds al Al-Sherif.

The third discussant **Mr. Sami Abu-Dayyeh, Chairman of the Board, Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association (HLITA) of Palestine**, enlightened the participants about the needs for improvement in the hotel services, transportation and tour guides operating in the Al-Quds tourism sector.

The fourth and last discussant of the session **Mr. Musa Biçkiöglu, Al Quds Tour Organizer from Turkey**, raised the issue of the low rate of Muslim tourists to Al-Quds as well as the inadequate capacity to host large number of tourists.

Together with the feedback of participants, the moderator of the session **Amb. Hameed A. Opeloyeru, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, OIC General Secretariat**, summarized the outcomes of the session and extended his comments on the importance of Al-Quds Al-Sherif as a mutual concern of Islamic World. He added that through collaboration of the institutes regarding the tourism in Al-Quds, the capacity of the tourism industry can be enhanced and the duplication of efforts can be avoided. In this context, the idea of promoting joint tourism projects could be improved through concrete proposals by the countries and their specialized institutions and unions in the field of tourism.

SESSION 2:

Tourism and Heritage Preservation in Al Quds Al Sherif City

Purpose: To evaluate the current situation of Islamic heritage in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City with respect to Israel’s attempts to destroy the city’s Islamic sites, deterioration, maintenance and

urban development and to highlight the impacts of tourism development on heritage preservation in this City.

Dr. Yousef Al Natsheh, Director of Awqaf Administration, Al Aqsa Mosque, Jordan, started the session by presenting the thousands years of historical background of Al-Quds Al-Sherif as being the capital of several empires having some similarities with Istanbul. The continuous support from the Islamic World especially from Jordan and Turkey cannot be ignored in the preservation of cultural and Islamic heritage. Although the situation is not pessimistic, Dr. Natsheh informed the audience that Israel has demolished some districts of Al-Quds through illegitimate excavations. Israel is against all Islamic or Arabic/Turkish art in the city.

As being first discussant **Mr. Mohammad Azzam Al Khatib Al Tamimi, Director of al Awqaf al Quds, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Ministry of Awqaf of Jordan**, introduced first the Ministry of Awqaf by giving the details of its organisational structure. He recalled the agreement signed between the governments of Palestine and Jordan which helped to protect the holy sites and monuments in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City.

Mr. Jihad Yassin, Archaeology Expert, Ministry of Tourism of Palestine, second discussant of the session, urged the audience that the Israeli occupation forces are trying to change the history through their archaeologists with manipulations. On the other hand, Mr. Yassin stated that the oral culture and tradition should also be preserved in line with the heritage preservation.

The third discussant of the session **Ms. Begum Soysal, Culture and Tourism Specialist, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey**, informed the participants on the Coordination & Guidance Board of Monuments Abroad established in Turkey to facilitate the cooperation and development projects abroad related to the cultural heritage. In this regard, Turkey is now conducting two case studies; Islamic Museum and Mawlawi House in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City. She indicated that the ownership, accessibility and public presentation are the key issues for the maintenance and professional care.

The last discussant of the session **Mr. Kürşad Mahmat, Expert, Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), Turkey**, briefed the audience about the renovation projects of TIKA such as Muslim Cemetery wall, residential houses and shops in Al-Quds in cooperation with Welfare Association in Palestine. He emphasized the difficulty in comparing the tourism industry with the Israeli side due to lack of capacity and services.

Dr. Shadia Touqan, International Expert in Architectural Preservation and Revitalisation of Historic Cities and UNESCO Consultant, Jordan was moderator of the session. She stated that since 10 years UNESCO and no other its subdivisions implement projects in Al-Quds Al Sherif. Dr. Touqan recalled that the visits of heads and senior officials of Islamic Countries, such as Turkey, Kuwait and OIC GS, are very important to show the solidarity with the Palestinians. After receiving additional proposals by the participants and wrap up by the moderator the session has been completed

SESSION 3:

Tourism policy, planning and capacity building in Al- Quds Al Sherif City

Dr. Mohammad Younis, Expert at the directorate of Culture and Communication, Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), was the moderator of third Technical Session of this workshop, which was on “Tourism policy, planning and capacity building in Al- Quds Al-Sherif City”. The purpose of this session was to develop views on the policy making, planning and capacity building for the development of tourism in Al Quds Al Sherif City with emphasis on following themes:

- Key players in sustainable tourism planning and management
- Community based tourism development
- Education and training

In this session, **Dr. Rami Isaac, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism, Bethlehem University in Palestine** made the keynote presentation on “Tourism Policy, Planning and Capacity Building in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City”. He highlighted there is a lack of a clear national tourism development strategy and urban planning in Palestine however according to him the key players in sustainable tourism planning and managements in Al-Quds are Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine (MoTA), Arab Hotel Association (AHA), Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association (HLITOA), Arab Restaurant Association, Arab Tourist Guides Union (ATGU), The Jerusalem Tourism Cluster, souvenir shop owners, artisans, artists, craftspeople and residents. After that he explained about the concepts of Forecasting and Backcasting, Vision and Visioning and Community Based Tourism. The importance of Education and Training and working with the local communities was another aspect he highlighted. At the end he has some recommendations for the way forward for a well-organized and democratic tourism governance, having a comprehensive tourism awareness program through National Civil Society Network, expanding the tourism experience beyond the pilgrimage and visiting the Old City and improving the hospitality.

Prof. Hamid Zargham Boroujeni from Tourism Management Department, Allameh Tabataba'i University of Iran, as the first discussion of this session had some suggestions for developing tourism in Al Quds City with some highlights on cultural heritage tourism, sustainability, stakeholders' participation, product development and marketing, Investment, competition and careful planning to reduce uncertainty.

Dr. Fatih Kurt, Head of Training Department in General Directorate of Hajj and Umrah Services, Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey as the second discussant stated there is an increasing demand from the Turkish citizens in recent years however, Lack of capacity is one of the main issues that we face in our joint Umrah organizations. In addition, there is a need for the information on accommodation investment possibilities such as construction of a hotel.

Mr. Anan Ghaith, Executive Director for the Jerusalem Tourism Cluster in Palestine made a brief presentation on the activities of Jerusalem Tourism Cluster (JTC) as a non-profit network that works among the various economic, cultural, religious, educational, and vocational sectors that are related directly or indirectly to tourism in Jerusalem. He stated together with the AHA and HLITOA, JTC is in the field of destination management through its application, printed materials and web site. Moreover, Community Based Tourism is a crucial tool for the Palestinians that live in Al-Quds Al-Sherif as main owners and residents.

Ms. Maedeh Bon, Tourism Expert from SESRIC elaborated on three main tourism potentials of Al-Quds City for development, which are religious tourism, heritage tourism and cultural tourism and with emphasise on tangible and intangible attractions available in this city. Moreover, she highlighted the political conflict is currently going on in this city as a big obstacle for any type of development. Eventually she recommended a “Multidimensional Tourism Planning and Management Approach” in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City with a sustainable context where crisis management planning is also included.

SESSION 4: Marketing, Promotion and Competitive Positioning of Al Quds Al Sherif City in the Domain of Tourism

Dr. Mokhtar Warida, Assistant Director General of Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) was the moderator of the fourth technical session of this workshop with the purpose of analyzing the tourism market trend in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City with respect to existing visitor market, potential visitor market and the strategies for competitive positioning.

The keynote presenter of this session was *Ms. Yuhaini Binti Yusoff, Director of Industry Development in Islamic Tourism Center of Ministry of Tourism of Malaysia*. First of all she had an overview on global tourism market and Muslim market and also Muslim travellers. Afterward she introduced segmentation of market and products both in Malaysia and Al-Quds Al-Sherif City. The next part in her presentation was an overview on tourism industry and Islamic tourism in Malaysia, tabbing to event marketing, advertising, public and media relations, social media and websites and a good variety of Muslim friendly facilities and attraction. According to Thomson Reuters, Malaysia is the leading country with the best Islamic economy ecosystem for Halal Travel in their 2014 and 2015 report.

Mr. Adem Ceylan, Vice President of Marketing & Sales for Middle East & Cyprus in Turkish Airlines as the first discussant of this session mentioned about the price which has been lowered by threefold to 129 USD including taxes. He stated that NGOs can be good sources to increase the number of tourists. He emphasized on press members visit to Al-Quds for the purpose of media coverage as a key player in tourism marketing. He also added cooperation among the countries, which is also beneficial to improve the air connectivity and travel facilitation, and regarding Joint Umrah&Hajj travels, the capacity of Amman Airport and Airlines as a hub to transfer the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia could be developed.

Mr. Raed Saadeh, Board Member of Arab Hotel Association in Palestine was the next discussant. He had a presentation on promoting Al-Quds as a Palestinian tourism destination. He named the main threats and challenges and emphasized on a strategy for repositioning and creating quality visitor experiences. According to him for this city diversifying, creating and producing uniqueness is necessary and enhancing sectors should be supported. Partnership and networking in all levels and sector is another important matter and dissemination through different media tools should be considered. The need for governance of tourism and building Jerusalem tourism brands were the other highlighted facts he mentioned.

Mr. Samir Bahbah, Chairman of the Board of Arab Tourists Guides Union in Palestine was the last discussant of this session who made an explanation about the current situation of Palestinian tour guides and the difficulties they face regarding the Israeli occupation and

restrictions. He emphasized on increasing the language courses that Islamic World/Countries speak for the Palestinian guides. According to him there are 5000 tourist guides in the sector and 4000 of them are from Israeli side. The Israeli tourist guides are changing the truth.

Further information and the documentations related to this workshop are available in the link below:

<http://www.sesrtcic.org/event-detail.php?id=1278>

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

Expressing their appreciation to Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC) and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine for their efforts in co-organising the Workshop on “Exploring Tourism Potential Of Al-Quds Al-Sherif City”, with the participation of delegations related to Al-Quds Al-Sherif affairs, Religion and Awqaf, Heritage and Tourism in ministerial and senior officials level from Palestine, Jordan, Malaysia and Turkey along with international academicians and experts, representatives from Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and its relevant institutions, private sector and NGOs, the participants have agreed on the following recommendations:

1. ***Bearing in mind*** the resolutions on the Cause of Palestine and the City of Al-Quds Al-Sherif adopted by the relevant sessions of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC and United Nations resolutions along with the international consensus on the need to end Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory that has been occupied since 1967,
 - a. ***supported*** the struggle of the State of Palestine and its insistence that Jerusalem should be its capital, with full Palestinian sovereignty over the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,
 - b. ***reaffirmed*** that Al-Aqsa Mosque is a synonym of Al-Haram Al-Sherif, which is 144 acres over and below the ground and it is a Muslim Holy site exclusively indivisible, not sharable and non-negotiable,
 - c. ***reiterated*** that ‘status-quo’ of Jerusalem and its Holy Sites is that of pre-1967 Israeli Occupation and any Israeli change or attempt to change this status-quo is illegal and rejected by law and should be stopped by the international community,
 - d. ***appreciated*** ‘His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein’s Custodianship of the Jerusalem Holy Sites’, which protects and defends Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sherif by diplomatic, legal, executive and other measures, in accordance with the custodianship agreement signed on 29 March 2013 with Palestine State President H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas and in accordance with international law and the UN resolutions,
2. ***Thanking*** all stakeholders in Private Sector, Government, International and National Organizations, Academicians, NGOs and independent persons who had contribution in the development of Tourism and Heritage Preservation of AlQuds Al-Sherif City
 - a. ***encouraged*** the visits of heads and senior officials of OIC Member Countries to Al-Quds Al-Sherif in order to strengthen the solidarity with Palestinians, and ***urged*** Muslim population around the world especially which has no visa problem to enter Palestine such as European residents to visit Al-Quds Al-Sherif in accordance with the *fatwas* arrived by

the Muslim scholars and jurists affirming that Muslims' religious visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif is favoured and desired (*Mandoob* and *Mustahab*),

b. supported that visiting Al-Quds Al-Sherif shall be preferably through Jordan, as part of the Haj and Umrah package, and the visit should serve the economy and welfare of Palestinians,

3. Having examined the keynote presentation and discussions related to the Tourism and Heritage Preservation in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City,

a. called upon the United Nations to shoulder without delay its responsibility to put an end to the threat posed by the accelerating pace of Judaization measures, in particular those threats against freedom to worship at Islamic and Christian holy sites and the excavation projects that are altering the pre-1967 status-quo and historic character of the Old City of Jerusalem,

b. urged the relevant tourism authorities to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of Palestinians in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City and to improve basic accessibility and public representation requirements for Islamic Monuments,

c. requested the heritage preservation institutions and agencies to improve the conditions for the residents and basic conservation principles, to identify necessary actions needed including short, medium and long term in a holistic way so as to respect the architectural and symbolic values of the monuments,

d. establish partnership agreements among NGOs and different related sectors in OIC Member Countries for protection of Islamic Heritage in Al-Quds Al-Sherif

4. Fully aware of the increasing role of tourism policy, planning and capacity building in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City,

a. urged OIC Member States to reduce the procedures and take necessary precautions including waiving taxes at the airports to promote travels to Palestine and to enhance the accessibility of Al-Quds Al-Sherif,

b. emphasized the importance to be given to youth by promoting vocational education and training to feed the industry as well as to stop migration,

c. requested SESRIC and relevant tourism authorities and associations to organize capacity building programmes for the heritage conservation and tourism workforce of Palestine,

d. Invited SESRIC, IRCICA and IDB to follow the documentation of the land deeds belonging to Palestinian people in Al Quds and other Palestinian territories, which have been digitalised by Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) in 2005 with a view to translating and analysing them to be used as an evidence of the right of the Palestinian people for their properties and lands in these areas.

e. appreciated the offer by Arab Tour Guides Union to train tour guides in the city, and **requested** the relevant institutions to offer necessary language courses that Islamic World/Countries speak,

- f. **welcomed** the proposal of Arab Hotel Association to cooperate with relevant agencies in member countries to enhance the accommodation facilities, and **urged** the tour operators from OIC Member countries to support Muslim Hotels,
5. **Mindful of** the importance of marketing, promotion and competitive positioning of Al-Quds Al-Sherif City in the domain of tourism the participants called upon the OIC and its Member States to:
- a. **support** by relevant OIC institutions the Jordanian Jerusalem Awqaf through adopting and financing programs that help in receiving pilgrims and worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif,
 - b. **maintain** the efforts of research on identifying the trends in tourism specific to Al-Quds by preparing academic research and sector analysis reports and documentation of historic buildings and monuments aiming at protecting the Muslim and Christian heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem,
 - c. **raise** funds through the Islamic Development Bank or other governmental sources in order to support investment on infrastructure and other projects which facilitate visits to Al-Quds and possible Haj and Umrah linkages preferably through Jordan,
 - d. **design** exclusive Haj and Umrah packages which includes Al-Quds Al-Sherif tours in collaboration with Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey and all those other countries offering Haj and Umrah scheme to increase the number of Muslim visitors in this city as pilgrims.
 - e. **supported** the idea of conducting a survey of priorities and expectations of tourists visiting Al-Quds and other parts of Palestine; to adopt and circulate the definition of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the guide to Al-Aqsa published by the Jerusalem Awqaf in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority to all Muslim countries and international forums,
 - f. **acknowledged** the success of community-based tourism in Al-Quds as a main income generator for the Palestinians reside in the City, as producers of cultural and traditional handicrafts by local producer groups,
 - g. **fully aware** of the increasing role of the media and information and communication technologies (ICT) considered as an effective tool for promotion of tourism, **requested** Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine to prepare special campaigns on Al-Quds which attract the tourists before choosing their destinations with the valuable support of Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) of Malaysia,
 - h. **urged** the academia, media institutions, policy and research institutes worldwide to be aware that the Judaization narrative of the city of Jerusalem and Palestine is infiltrating their curricula and media, and to hold fast to the Muslim and Christian narrative of Jerusalem,
 - i. **acknowledged** the low crime rates in Al-Quds Al-Sherif, especially within the Palestinian side of the city, in capitalization of the City as a safe and enjoyable destination,
6. **Requests** SESRIC to prepare a long-term strategic programme of action for sustainable community-based tourism development in Al-Quds Al-Sherif City in collaboration with OIC

member countries and relevant international and NGO institutions with a view to strengthening and enhancing cooperation and collaboration among member countries on tourism development in Al-Quds Al-Sharif City at both OIC and international level.

7. ***Thanked*** the Republic of Turkey for their continuous support to Palestine and the Jerusalem cause.
8. ***Recommended*** that SESRIC and Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine to form a committee to follow up the abovementioned recommendations,
9. ***Requested*** SESRIC and OIC Institutions to organize further meetings related to the developments in the tourism industry of Al-Quds Al-Sherif



STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING
CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES – SESRIC (OIC ANKARA CENTRE)

Kudüs Cad. No: 9 Diplomatik Site, 06450 ORAN- Ankara, Turkey
Tel. (90-312) 4686172-76, Fax. (90-312) 467345
E-mail: ocankara@sesric.org, Home Page: www.sesric.org