

Strategy for  
**The Development of Cultural Tourism  
in the Islamic World**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## Introduction

Being fully conscious of the role of tourism in the international arena, and the position it has established for itself over the last decades as an integral industry, a boost to human and economic development and a sine qua non of equal civilizational communication among peoples, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) undertook to prepare a comprehensive strategy, with as an ultimate objective to improve the tourism sector. Capitalizing on Member States' joint initiatives in promoting cultural tourism, ISESCO will strive to integrate them into developmental and cultural plans to help redefine their cultural and civilizational landscape.

Not only does the Draft Strategy build on the fine record of achievement made by the Islamic countries in this field, seeking to make optimal use of their immense range of historical and cultural potentials, but it is also inspired by a ground approach to the internationally recognized components of cultural tourism. The Strategy also draws on the resolutions and recommendations of specialized Islamic conferences, in addition to the goals set in the OIC Ten-Year Plan of Action, and the recommendations formulated by the committees of the various regional workshops conducted and supervised by ISESCO in relation to the mechanisms necessary for the promotion of cultural tourism.

Being aware of the organizational obstacles opposed to this or any other such important Strategy aiming to promote the cultural tourism sector from a participatory perspective, while bearing in mind the nascent involvement of stakeholders and specialists in this issue, and the intersection and multiplicity of its components, ISESCO sought to base its Draft Strategy on a well-defined methodology consisting in establishing the main areas of action, defining the objectives sought and the necessary implementation and updating tools. The core objective is to contribute to the promotion of cultural tourism on national, regional and Islamic levels, and raise it to higher standards, in keeping with the remarkable achievements made in this field at the international level, especially since cultural tourism has become second only to oil industry in the world economy. The number of world tourists reached 924 million in 2008. This number is expected to reach 1.6 billion by 2020. Specialized studies have proved the sector's ability to contribute greatly and effectively to the prosperity and growth of several national economies, and to the increased openness of the world economy. As illustrated on the website of the World Tourism Organization, this sector accounts for 10% of the world income and provides 200 million job opportunities.

Henceforth, the main thrust of this strategy will be to look for a common ground on which to develop action plans for Member States to strengthen their constructive and effective presence at the international level. The Strategy is characterized by the variety of its itineraries, with the intersection of cultural, social and civilizational aspects, in keeping with the nature of this field which is indeed an ideal space for the interaction of all cultures and identities. This is all the more true as we live in an era marked by big regional blocks, with the ongoing development of tourist, in their individual, family and collective forms, whether those aimed at discovering other civilizations or those conducted within the framework of international and regional conferences and meetings dealing with economic, scientific, cultural and artistic issues. Amid this current progress of cultural tourism, with all the impact globalization has on this sector, the Member States are more than ever concerned with the developments taking place in this field at the international level. Keeping pace with such world achievements is sure to help those countries enrich their experiences and accumulate further expertise and know-how, thus enabling them to raise their contribution to the level of international competitiveness, which has become the acid test for quality of any regional product.

#### *- Methodology*

The methodology adopted to explain the Draft Strategy for cultural tourism will first consist in avoiding any sheer theoretical discourse which might veer from the sought-after goals. Achieving effective outcome stipulates that we have a practical, objective understanding of the key components of the issue at hand. Ours will be a practicable, adaptable methodology. The main focus will be on:

- a- Stressing the cultural component of tourism**, removing the other components which are not included in the strategy, and which are usually characterized by the inclination to achieve tangible gains through magnetizing an arbitrary tourism lacking any civilizational or social perspective.
- b- Underlying the fundamental bases** for structuring the various domains of action of cultural tourism, thus making of it a marketable product, regionally and internationally. Focusing on these bases is what can help in the implementation and updating of this strategy, instead of going into the details of the specificities of each of the Muslim world's countries. These are usually approached with different methodologies aimed first and foremost at dealing directly with smaller echelons derived from the general layout of the Strategy, characterized by the intersections and complications of its various components according to their fields, specialties and mechanisms.
- c- Bringing all Member States to bear in the development of a joint action plan** towards making the cultural tourism sector one of the main priorities of economic and social development envisaged by Islamic States. This is based upon their highly various and multiple cultural heritage, enabling them to enter into an equal international competition, fulfilling all the recognized conditions in the promotion and marketing of the tourism product.

**d- Field approach to the reality of cultural tourism**, aiming at apprehending the whole reality of cultural tourism, its constant and changing elements, within an open Islamic perspective, taking into consideration the principle of cultural and civilizational interaction between the peoples of the Islamic World and other peoples, through adopting a participatory policy with international organizations specialized in the sectors of culture and tourism, such as UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization. The objective is to spread the culture of peace and strengthen bonds of brotherhood and coexistence, thus providing practical conditions for mutual support towards achieving a sustainable development that would contribute to overcome the aspects of social misery hitting developing countries because of the exclusion they are subject to.

**e- Benefitting from basic references related to cultural tourism:** It is obvious that the focus of the Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World will be on a number of reference material issued by regional and international relevant institutions, organizations and conferences: namely,

- ◆ The OIC Ten-Year Action Plan;
- ◆ The recommendations and resolutions of the Islamic Conference of the Ministers of Tourism in its 1st session (Isfahan, October 2000), 2nd session (Kuala Lumpur, October 2001), 3rd session (Riyadh, October 2003), 4th session (Dakar, March 2005), 5th session (Baku, September 2006) and 6th session (Damascus, July 2008);
- ◆ The Framework of Development and Cooperation for Tourism between the OIC Member States;
- ◆ The recommendations and resolutions of the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Culture in its 4th session (Algiers, December 2004), and 5th session (Tripoli, November 2007);
- ◆ ISESCO Programme of Islamic Culture Capitals and the Programme of Arab Culture Capitals;
- ◆ The Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World;
- ◆ The Strategy for Cultural Takaful to Serve Muslim Developmental and Civilizational Causes;
- ◆ The Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity;
- ◆ The Forum of the Silk Road Tourist Operators of the Organization of Islamic Conference (Baku, April 2008);
- ◆ ISESCO medium-term and three-year action plans;
- ◆ ISESCO Programme of Islamic Heritage Days;
- ◆ The OIC Conference on Religious and Health Tourism: Organization of Spiritual and Physical Recreation (Nakhchivan, Republic of Azerbaijan, May 2008);

- ◆ The Participatory Regional Initiatives for the Development of Cultural Tourism:
  - The Project of Sustainable Tourism Development in a Network of Cross-Border Parks and Protected Areas in West Africa Involving Nine Member States.
  - The Experience of Central-African States in Preserving the Environmental System of the Congo Basin.
  - The initiative of His Highness Prince Salman bin Sultan in the transcription and study of the Islamic architectural heritage.

**f- Adopting a practical and forward-looking vision for the cultural tourism sector:** the aim is to build on the achievements of Islamic countries in this area, while positively interacting with world tourism developments and making optimal use of creative civilizational values originating from other countries' experiences. Instead of dwelling on past glories, which only amplifies the feeling of distress and frustration, we need to objectively handle the present with an optimistic vision of the future. We have to endeavour to explore every possible avenue to promote our cultural identity and specificities, while opening onto other nations.

It is against this backdrop that the present Strategy intends to move, following an open, practical methodology structured around four main chapters:

## CHAPTER I

This first chapter defines the notion of cultural tourism through its four components (the tourist, the exhibitor, the cultural tourism product and the population). The chapter illustrates this notion in the Islamic culture, with respect to pilgrimage in Islam and the scientific journeys of Muslim scholars. Both kinds of trips are considered as original examples of a cultural tourism that is open to new different civilizational and social horizons.

## CHAPTER II

It deals with the goals and objectives of promoting cultural tourism in the Islamic world, with due attention paid to the cultural fabric and historical wealth of the Muslim world countries. There is the need to present the true of image of the Muslim world, while redressing prejudices, restoring confidence in the rich, diverse nature of the Muslim identity, stressing the right of developing countries to bring into light their heritage and the genius of their peoples, and building on the Islamic heritage to promote dialogue and coexistence among human civilizations. Also investigated in this chapter is the necessity to sensitize relevant authorities to the importance of capitalizing on this sector to achieve sustainable development and counter the ill-effects of globalization. It is essential in this sense to see cultural tourism as a civilizational alternative to commonplace tourism, hence the need to enlist those parties having a significant role in the formulation of their countries' public opinion to make use of cultural tourism to modernize social life.

### CHAPTER III

This chapter deals with the main areas of action of cultural tourism, including:

- 1- **Religious tourism**, as a field of spiritual communication and a major boost to the economy, with a review of some typical experiences in the field;
- 2- **Historical tourism**, through tackling its components, civilizational dimensions and the specificity of its attendants, as well as giving examples of the main patrimonial Islamic cities;
- 3- **Ecotourism**, as an aspect of cultural tourism, a religious value in Islam and a field of development countering the vicious trends of globalization;
- 4- **Health tourism**, mentioning its fields and its international and Islamic dimensions;
- 5- **Conference tourism**, its different fields and its added value;
- 6- **Festival tourism**, as an attraction to the different tourist categories, highlighting the Strategy's orientation in this regard (the need to establish a common Islamic organizational framework for arts and cultural festivals compliant with our open specificity).
- 7- **Exhibition tourism**, the promotion of which requires building a new platform for universal Islamic exhibitions, based on clear action plans and on modern mechanisms, most of which have been specifically examined.
- 8- **Tourism of ancient religious and trade routes**, specifying its civilizational and social connotations and presenting its most sublime example: the African pilgrimage route, the typical framework for embodying cultural tourism in the Islamic world, in addition to silk roads, mentioning ancient trade routes in the Arabian Peninsula.
- 9- **The tourism of archaeological sites**, as a hoard of historical facts, unveiling which secrets contributes to reviewing a lot of information concerning the itinerary of human civilization, stating the ways to maintain and protect them.

### CHAPTER IV

It deals with the means to translate into action the Strategy, on the basis of a participatory action programme covering the main axes dealing with the key issues related to the promotion of the cultural tourism sector nationally and regionally. All Member States are called on to contribute to the development and implementation of those themes on the basis of practical measures covering the following fields:

- a- Urban development;
- b- Historical heritage;
- c- Media;
- d- Human resources;
- e- Investment.

## CHAPTER I: CONCEPTS

### 1. Defining cultural tourism

Cultural tourism aims to introduce local and foreign tourists to the tangible and intangible heritage of a people, with their track record of cultural and civilizational achievement, thus making it a marketable product, just like any other industrial or commercial product. The objective is not only to allow for economic and social development, but also to foster civilizational communication at the regional and international levels. The underlying motivation is to allow tourists to learn about the cultural, tangible heritage of the host country, which is manifest in its historical buildings, ancient schools, museums and libraries, historical military gateways, fences, castles and forts. There is also the intangible heritage, which encompasses oral tradition, popular arts, design, cuisine, as well as religious and artistic events. But, the notion of cultural tourism is not limited to historical heritage. It also includes such modern cultural components as multidisciplinary conferences, scientific seminars, cultural meetings, and professional and industrial fora, in addition to various events related to the cultural touristic activity.

Therefore, we can say that the definition of the cultural tourism sector is derived from a reference that is distinguished by the plurality and diversity of spaces and fields, as well as by the increasing mobility resulting from the complementarities and interaction of these spaces and fields. The definitions of tourism vary according to its aims, which on the whole take into account the following four basic elements:

#### a. The cultural tourist

Being from the same or another country, a cultural tourist is an individual interested in the cultural tourist attraction of a receptive structure. An individual's consumption habits may vary according to their social background, and to their touristic and cultural choices underlying their visit. A cultural tourist may be interested in visiting historical monuments, in attending arts festivals, in staying in therapeutic sites, in participating in commercial fora, cultural, economic or scientific conferences, or in other various touristic cultural destinations.

The relationship of the tourist with the host country is determined by their political, civilizational and social background, which usually ranges somewhere between compassion, esteem and respect, on the one hand, and anxiety, carefulness and denial, on the other. A cultural tourist visit is therefore an opportunity to reformulate the judgments which happen to correspond to, or clash with, the tourist's previous stands, based on their direct contact with the receptive site and the population.

#### b. The exhibitor

It is the host country, which displays its cultural tourism product to the foreign or local tourist. The host country is supposed to have all the conditions for a State offer. It should be a tourist attraction, following its patrimonial, historical and civilizational reputation, or exceptional characteristics in terms of cultural tourism, in addition to the convenience of its cultural tourism product with the tourist's interests and expectations. It should also provide the basic infrastructure and services related to cultural tourism.

### **c. The cultural tourism product**

It refers to the bulk of cultural tourism incentives attracting both the local and foreign tourist, as a tangible and intangible incarnation of the civilizational heritage of the exhibiting country and a central factor of tourist attraction. Those incentives will be the subject of the section dedicated to defining the fields of cultural tourism. This section will go into details illustrating the main products adopted for the promotion of the sector, such as:

- Archaeological sites and historical buildings, natural reserves, and therapeutic sites;
- Various workmanship products on display in museums, arts festivals, as well as exhibitions of traditional and modern crafts;
- Peoples' traditions and customs, an equally interesting tourism product. Tourists can live them in details by staying in the old houses located in ancient cities, enjoying original music, popular dances and traditional dress, and tasting the food, which has become in recent decades one of the most important elements contributing to the enrichment of tourist attractions.

If the majority of cultural tourism products have become defined by specialists in the sector, there are many others which are not officially registered in the list of offers in circulation at the global level. They deserve being marketed and given due attention. Muslim peoples' craftsmanship is highly appreciated around the world for its delicacy and emotional power. A lot of handicraft products which might seem to be simple and normal in the eyes of their makers, or for local tourists, may be of particular interest and admiration for foreign tourists, who go deep into their secrets of beauty. The Strategy seeks to rehabilitate all handicrafts expressive of the creative skills of Muslim peoples, with as an ultimate purpose to make a tourism product out of such works, through modern presentation and marketing techniques.

### **d. The population**

The population existing in tourist attraction sites is the most important of the four components of cultural tourism, particularly in recent decades, as it has become subject of special attention from experts in the sector. A good number of studies and reports have confirmed that the success or failure of the experience of cultural tourism depends to a great extent on the positive or negative attitude which the population has to its cultural heritage as well as to foreign tourists, who come to their country, tempted by the desire to identify and communicate with this heritage. The tourism projects of States that do not pay enough attention to the direct effect of the population's behaviour are bound to fail, since the human factor is the pole around which evolve all kinds of projects. A population that does not have, or cannot provide, the social and cultural conditions suitable for the good reception of tourists will never be capable of engaging in any kind of dialogue, either with its cultural identity or with any segment of local or foreign tourists, unlike a population which enjoys an objective integration in the social and cultural life of the host country, and which has all the necessary conditions for open and fruitful communication with itself and with the other.

If the tourist visiting an archaeological site is confronted with repulsion from the population, he/she cannot communicate with the patrimonial components of that site, because the life of the site is derived from its social surrounding and the human relations built in it and shaping it. The rupture which the tourist happens to have with the immediate surrounding of the historical site amounts to a rupture of the historical monument with the tourist. This conclusion calls upon the authorities in charge of the sector to care for the population in the same way they care for the site, particularly with regard to its spiritual values, social customs and religious rituals. It is hard to persuade the population to be open to and interact with visitors who ignore its social structure, and the specificity of its milieu.

## **2. The concept of cultural tourism as an integral part of the Muslim culture**

### **a. Tourism: a response to the call of Islam for civilizational communication**

The passion of cultural tourism among Muslims finds its origin in a firm belief in the principle of acquaintance, as a basic condition for solidarity and communication. Almighty Allah says: **“We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you”** (Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13), and **“Mankind was but one nation, but differed”** (Surah Yunus, verse 9). The concept of acquaintance refers to the relationship that may bring together individuals, groups and peoples, regardless of the multiplicity and diversity of their geographical, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The proclivity for knowing about one another is intrinsic in the human nature. It reflects the natural desire of an individual for breaking out of isolation and reclusion, thus opening onto other people. Islam is one of the heavenly religions that call most for this openness, whereby the religion of Islam has spread all over the world. This openness implies enriching the understanding, exchanging advice, and exploring, jointly and constructively, new horizons that would benefit all conscientious, well-intentioned people. It goes without saying that such prospects are determined in the light of the specificity of the relationship resulting from human acquaintance. They can have a religious, social, cultural, commercial, and other dimensions. In the light of the two holy verses above, we find that Islam did identify the advantage of acquaintance between the peoples at the highest levels of human relations to be consolidated, as it already contains a strong and clear orientation based on interdependence and cooperation, banishing all reasons for rejection and discord and all forms of dispute leading to wars, division, and other clashes. Almighty Allah says: **“Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts”** (Surah Al-Hajj, verse 46). This is the greatest proof of the celebration by our true religion of the concept of travel, to strengthen the will for constructive work. In this holy verse, “to hear” means to listen to the other. This listening means the willingness to enter in dialogue and the ability to communicate constructively.

Scientific data provided by modern theories dealing with issues of communication confirm the vital need for openness to others. This need is so important that it

determines the behaviours of individuals and the destinies of peoples, in relation to themselves and to others, regionally and internationally, regardless of their geographical, ethnic or religious backgrounds.

If the natural continuity of the universe depends upon the continuity of elaborate and balanced communication among all its components, the same thing goes for the continuity of a life of dignity for individuals and groups. The aim of a decent life is to qualify for a presence within history, and not outside it. This qualification requires convenient social, economic and cultural conditions. Communication is, in all its diverse and multiple dimensions, the most suitable means for any constructive dialogue, whereby competencies and capabilities are developed to raise the cultural and civilizational practice to the level required. However, the lack of dialogue leads to the confinement of individuals and groups, thus preventing them from exploring and developing their capabilities and qualifications. With the advancement of mass media in all their sophisticated models, especially audiovisual outlets (the Internet and satellite channels), distances and borders separating peoples and communities have diminished, turning the world into a small village where the world's population interacts with the small and big events taking place in it, whether they have to do with cultural or universal civilizational achievements, with wars or natural disasters, or with ethnic cleansing; all of which often used to go unnoticed. However, the question to be asked, under the absolute power held by modern and sophisticated means of communication, is to what extent can the media be credible in broadcasting speeches and reports on the reality and history of peoples and nations?

There is no doubt that this question derives its authority from the possibility of the absence of innocence in any media speech, because it is subject to non-objective oriented considerations, resulting in the distortion of the true image of a certain people or a certain civilization.

In this respect comes the need for communication that can be achieved only through the chances of direct contact among people, within the framework of cultural tourism, which, in recent decades, began to attract the attention of travel agencies, civil society associations, and international and governmental organizations.

## **b. Spiritual journey**

As mentioned above, tourism is a long cultural tradition, deeply rooted in the historical memory of Islam. It is equivalent to the journey in the ancient Arab and Islamic literature, as a cultural and civilizational component of the Muslim personality, distinguished by its permanent tendency towards openness to the other, and building all communication bonds with their, spiritually, culturally and economically. In this context, we can say that the obligation of Hajj (pilgrimage) to the holy site of Ka'ba, is the optimal and advanced model for the spiritual journey that was, and will remain, a dream for every Muslim who is loyal to the true teachings of Islam. Ancient literary works contain an immense breadth of lessons and noble human and religious values of the pilgrim convoys, which have established, over several centuries, exemplary traditions passed on from generation to generation. From all over the world, the pilgrims travel to the Sacred House of Allah, despite all the hardships and dangers on their way, in response to the words

of Almighty Allah: **“And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways, that they may witness the benefits (provided) for them, and celebrate the name of Allah, through the Days appointed, over the cattle which He has provided for them (for sacrifice): then eat ye thereof and feed the distressed ones. Then let them complete the rites prescribed for them, perform their vows, and (again) circumambulate the Ancient House”** (Surah Al-Hajj, verses 26-29). In addition to its lofty aim (i.e. to observe the obligation of Hajj), this journey contributes effectively to the consolidation of the social, cultural and economic ties of fraternity between Muslim peoples regardless of their races and origins, along with its enhancement of the spirit of unity and solidarity. In spite of modern developments, in terms of transportation means to visit the holy sites, they still preserve their essence and inherent goal of fidelity to the spirit of the Islamic faith. Furthermore, cultural tourism has become, owing to such developments, more present in tourism plans at the level of the Islamic world. This increased the movement of tourism worldwide.

### c. Scientific journey

There is no doubt that the scientific knowledge accumulated by the Islamic civilization, particularly in sociology, geography and cartography, is due to the passion of its educated and enlightened elites for travel and cultural and intellectual tourism. There were many a Muslim scholar who contributed greatly to the Islamic and human civilization. Their precious works have served over centuries as basic references in knowing about nations and peoples. In this context, suffice it to mention some prominent figures in the field of cultural tourism, such as al-Khawarizmi; Ibn Fadlan; al-Mas’udi, author of *Muruj adh-dhahab (Meadows of Gold)*; and Ibn Hawqal, author of *Surat al-Ardh (The Face of the Earth)*, which was the outcome of thirty-two continuous travels around the Islamic world; al-Sharif al-Idrissi, author of *Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtiraq al-afaq (The Delight of Him Who Desires to Journey through the Climates)*, in addition to Yaqut al-Hamwi and al-Bayrouni. A tribute must be paid to renowned Muslim traveler and philosopher Ibn Battuta, whose journey lasted 25 years, spent between Morocco and China. Last, but not least, there is the great sociologist Ibn Khaldun, author of *Diwan al-Mubtada’ wa l-khabar fi Ayyam al-Arab wa l-Ajam wa l-Barbar (Book of Evidence, Record of Beginnings and Events from the Days of the Arabs, Persians and Berbers and their Powerful Contemporaries)*.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the works of such great scholars have gained world acclaim. They provided solid groundwork on which were based researchers from the East to the West, to establish the most important schools in the world specialized in anthropology, geography and sociology.

We can say that the Muslim world has much to its credit. Islam has always been there unchanging, open to dialogue among people from diverse cultures and civilizations. By so doing, Islam has been able to attract peoples and tribes from different parts of the planet, and provide all that which is best and necessary for humanity: in scientific, intellectual and artistic fields. Islam has thus contributed effectively, and in a participatory manner, to dispel the darkness of ignorance, and explore promising civilizational prospects.

The key role which the scientific journey used to play long ago, especially in the Islamic milieu, in order to accumulate and enrich the intellectual and cultural expertise, is the same role which has been undertaken by the official cultural missions throughout the ages, and among the various peoples of the Earth. Over time, it has shifted to a framework that is structured, organized and universally recognized by all institutions and bodies interactively engaged towards intellectual and cultural progress. Cultural tourism conferences organized in all areas of knowledge can only be an extension of the phenomenon of scientific journey, which marked advanced peoples, including Muslims.

## CHAPTER II: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The talk about social and economic development, as one of the fundamental goals and objectives adopted in the promotion of a commercial or industrial sector always needs to be reviewed, especially when it comes to a multi-disciplinary sector, as it is the case with cultural tourism. It is not enough to develop a plan for the implementation of the tourism sector, while concentrating on the technical part alone, or providing just the tangible conditions for investment, without focusing on the very spirit and essence of the project, which is essential for it to come into being. By the spirit of the project we mean the cultural and intellectual platform on which it is based and which should be strongly present among stakeholders. Unfortunately, this is not the case for a lot of cultural tourism projects, which are often threatened with failure, due to the inability of the parties concerned to identify the problems posed to it. This is due to their deep lack of understanding of the core value of the cultural aspect of such an enterprise, thinking that it is a minor component that could only obstruct the implementation of their projects.

It was therefore imperative that the proposed strategy attributes to this cultural platform the attention it deserves, in view of its leading role in the following areas:

### 1. Presenting the right image of the host country

One of the established facts in the process of managing the tourism sector, in general, and the cultural tourism sector, in particular, is the direct relationship which the tourist has with their destination. Tourists' presence in a receptive structure gives them the opportunity to mingle in the social and cultural context marking the life of the population of the host site. Learning about the historical monuments of a country, visiting its museums, tasting its cuisine, interacting with the daily habits of the people, their traditions, religious rites, arts festivals and craft skills, as well as their standard of living, allows the tourist to come up with a comprehensive picture of the host country, free of stereotypical, and perhaps biased, images which they might have formed in their country of origin. This image can be even darker if the media in their country adopts a position inimical to the host country, with all the interpretations this might have; politically, ethnically or ideologically. One of the most important challenges of cultural tourism is the emancipation of the tourist from stereotypical understandings of the host country, by host countries' reformulating a different image, derived from direct coexistence in the host country. This cannot be achieved overnight, but in the long run, with the increase in the number of tourists visiting the country, as well as with the host countries' accumulation of expertise in the field of information and services, and in maintaining and rehabilitating their historical monuments.

### 2. Restoring confidence in the vitality and motivational force of the Muslim identity

Restoring the confidence of Islamic countries in their genius, embodied in all the architectural achievements they have accumulated throughout their brilliant history, is the main incentive for their awareness of the importance of **investing in the**

**cultural tourism sector. Firstly, this means a rational and modern assumption of those achievements. Secondly, it involves all the logistical structures for marketing this product at the global level.**

The lack of self-confidence, or rather the ignorance of the value of the cultural and historical heritage, only prevents from investing this heritage as an instrument of development and extending bridges of communication with other peoples. At best, it leads to the adoption of tourism models imposed, by globalization, on all vulnerable peoples who are likely to neglect their cultural heritage. It is well known that these models which are imposed from abroad, and alien to the Islamic memory and identity, are constantly subject to disappearance, as a result of their falling under the mercy of stereotypes promoted by globalization, unlike the projects that are inspired by the symbolic assets of the Islamic identity; they are eligible to go on resisting all perversion attempts to obscure and distort the authenticity of this identity.

### **3. Recognizing the right of Islamic developing countries to publicize their heritage and the genius of their peoples**

This recognition is an important asset which Islamic developing countries are to build, through having an important and qualitative tourist public opinion that is considerate of their cultural heritage and active in giving them the legitimacy to define their projects on the global level, and in confirming their ability to contribute effectively to develop the foundations of dialogue among civilizations. This goes hand in hand with the international instruments, declarations and covenants advocating the right of all peoples to contribute to their cultural heritage, for the enrichment and fortification of the human civilization, as contained in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001, and the Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by ISESCO in 2004.

The aspiration of Islamic countries to establish an equal and common dialogue among civilizations, based on diversity and pluralism, is the bridge on which they can depend to market their cultural tourism products. Such cultural products help publicize a country's genius manifest in their cross-border architectural cultural heritage, making the beauty and the glamour of a geographical area extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Far East. This is the genius of our tolerant Islamic religion, open to the noble values espoused by all the peoples of the Earth convinced of the worth of consolidating the foundations of world peace. This is also the genius of creativity, which draws its influence and credibility, throughout its long history, from the virtue of recognition of the other, whenever this latter is capable of adding a new coherent building block in the edifice of knowledge and human civilization. Thanks to this genius, many people living under the banner of Islam have been able, for centuries ago, to develop their sciences, arts, literature and industries, with the blessing and support of wise Muslims, away from any arrogant or exclusionary fanaticism. The historical Islamic monuments in which the Muslim world abounds are perhaps the best evidence of such genius, which is the product of a cognitive, social and cultural cross-fertilization that could not have happened had it not been for the open Islamic care which assures cultural tourists that the cultural and historical heritage proudly owned by the Muslim Ummah is for all humanity. This openness is in itself one of the secrets of this Ummah's exemplary genius.

#### **4. Gearing the Islamic heritage towards civilizational communication**

The Strategy aims to deepen the awareness of the actors in the tourism sector of the concept of cultural tourism, which refers to the overall ingredients necessary to transform an Islamic country into a large and rich cultural product worthy of arousing the cognitive and exploratory curiosity of Muslim and non-Muslims alike. This makes the act of cultural tourism an advanced form of cultural, social and civilizational communication raising the tourist's curiosity from the level of a simple pleasure, subject to the law and the whims of chance or self-consumption, to the level of intellectual and spiritual satisfaction, as long as the conditions and incentives of rational and systematic marketing are available, consistent with the teachings of our true religion, as well as the requirements for the protection and rehabilitation of the Muslim world's cultural potentials, varying according to the historical and geographical specificities of each country. This can be approached through historical monuments reflecting the depth of the spiritual and creative memory, such as mosques, old schools, museums and libraries housing valuable manuscripts, as well as historical gates, walls, forts and markets. There is also the oral and symbolic heritage, reflected in the various traditions that are manifest in daily life, clothing, cooking and creative or religious festivities and events, and all trades expressive of the capabilities and skills in creativity and innovation.

#### **5. Responding to the call for coexistence**

The establishment, for instance, of an Islamic gallery, gathering the multiple groups of tourists belonging to different nationalities and races, would symbolize the possibility of coexistence among all the peoples of the Earth. The same applies to those very groups gathering in front of an Islamic monument representing the glory of ancient history, or in an arts festival, reflecting the nobility of the Islamic discourse. This coexistence, which is considered by short-sighted people as circumstantial, is an in-depth model for spontaneous coexistence. Whenever there are conditions for the interaction of shared values, individuals and groups are organized within a more open and cohesive relationship. Such coexistence is the aim of cultural tourism, in the face of the hybrid practices of globalization that threaten to undermine it, to the best of their sophisticated technical means. Interacting with an artistic event, or within a heritage space, can be applicable to the relationships between peoples, in different walks of life, and on the overall political or religious situations, which are often mismanaged, becoming a tool for serious contradictions and rivalries, which have negative consequences on any possible dialogue among civilizations, particularly for developing countries, which are the first victims of such unwarranted imbalances.

#### **6. Raising awareness about the utility of investment in the cultural tourism sector**

The Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World also aims to sensitize relevant officials and civil society organs to the importance of protecting our Islamic cultural identity, while taking pride in its heritage and cultural diversity characterized throughout history by its spirit of openness and tolerance. The objective of the Strategy is also to urge all concerned parties to pool efforts together and secure material and logistic support to develop cultural tourism,

according to integrated development plans based on a clear and creative vision that would contribute to the creation of new areas of development, and allow for equal communication with the peoples of the world, in addition to achieving access to spaces of cultural and tourist globalization, with established principles and modern convictions committed to their values and roots. Development and progress in this field gives the Arab Islamic civilization a major additional impetus enabling it to occupy an important position of leadership on the global map of tourism, given the value of its heritage capable of increasing its development performance and raising it to an advanced level, as befits its historical and cultural specificity.

## **7. Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development**

The Strategy stresses the importance of the role of the cultural tourism sector as a key developmental component in improving Muslim peoples' economic and social conditions. This goes hand in hand with the overall objectives explained above, with regard to exploring new horizons to develop mechanisms for the advancement of Muslim peoples' economic, social and cultural lives. This has been confirmed by the consensus of international experts on the transformation of the cultural tourism sector into an essential engine of sustainable development, with emphasis on its positive effects in bringing important hard currency resources, providing employment and contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage, making it known to the world of tourism, nationally and internationally, and creating cultural intermediaries for marketing cultural tourism products, in addition to strengthening the mechanisms of intervention and preparation. All these positive effects will directly contribute to the creation of integrated and sustainable development for various areas within the cultural tourism sector.

Cultural tourism plays a pivotal role in the activation of the economic sector, thus contributing to meet the requirements of human development, which will remain constantly in dire need to diversify its tributaries, with an absolute necessity to go beyond the traditional view of the concept of development, in general, and economic development, in particular, by looking for new and modern mechanisms to achieve this goal, following the example of leading countries that managed to transform cultural tourism from a mere complementary element into a structured industry. This enabled it to occupy advanced positions in international trade, as shown in the World Tourism Organization reports. Tourism revenues account for 11 % of the total global production, providing about 200 million job opportunities, thus accounting for 8% of job openings in the world.

In recent decades, it has been observed that the growing awareness, within economic actors, of the importance of the sector's performance has led to the creation of a strong and systematic competitiveness to attract more tourists from different geographical and cultural backgrounds. If, for instance, America, Eastern and Western Europe and East Asia are taking the lead in the process of attraction, particularly during the last two decades, the Middle East, in turn, has become one of the main poles in attracting a high proportion of tourists, which amounted last year to approximately 46 million tourists, according to a study conducted for American Express Travel. This figure is expected to rise, in the light of logistic measures, the

development of which may inevitably lead to the transformation of the Middle East into a vital destination for international tourism in the coming years. It should be noted that global political tensions, which this region is one of its main spots, have become one of the factors of attraction, because they give way to a cultural, civilizational, social and ideological curiosity in other parts of the globe.

### **8. Cultural tourism as a tool to stem the globalization tide**

Cultural tourism is one of the inviolable forts to be constructed by Muslim peoples, just like the rest of the world, in order to shield against the risks of globalization threatening peoples' cultural and civilizational specificities.

It was necessary for the Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World to take into account the risks of globalization, not for unreasonable boycotting of all that is related to it, but on the basis of looking for joint plans and strategies aimed at exploring and providing all economic, developmental and technical means necessary to turn the Muslim world into a coherent and cohesive magnate, enjoying enough immunity and effectiveness to make it a real force capable of taking advantage of globalization and overcoming its negative aspects, especially the information obstacle, the atrophy of which weakens the bonds of understanding and coexistence among the peoples of these countries. Foremost among these peoples are the minorities in Asia, Europe and Africa. With this big obstacle, it is impossible to talk about the possibilities of joint construction, both economically and culturally. This is totally incompatible with the message of our Islamic religion, calling for cooperation and interdependence among mankind. Thus, it may be said that the success of Muslim countries to achieve world recognition for their coherence and unity, for their performance in such vital areas as culture and tourism, and for their ability to exploit this performance in establishing an equal dialogue among civilizations, away from conflict, will put an end to the monopoly of the cultural tourism market by dominant States, and to the marketing of a typically cultural tourism product intended to abolish the principle of difference and diversity, which is the prerequisite for the advancement of any integrated human civilization, built on multiple participatory foundations, regardless of religious, racial or geographic considerations. Admitting the characteristic of cultural diversity in the field of tourism requires from all parties to be willing to listen to the other, without any prejudice fueling conflict and exclusion.

### **9. Cultural tourism as a civilizational alternative to commonplace tourism**

One of the objectives of cultural tourism is to create constructive and inventive concepts of travel, as a means of achieving pleasure and benefit, to get rid of the monotony of daily life, looking for different geographical and human outlets which enjoy multi-cultural specificities, and in which are organized all the components expressive of the civilizational identity of the host country, such as its historical monuments, cuisine, traditions and customs, spiritual rituals and artistic events. All these and many other components allow the tourist to live in a special situation of spiritual and physical recreation, combining intellect with intimacy. Even more, they contribute to making out of him a model tourist, regarded as a key asset of

cultural tourism. These creative concepts, which are reformulated by cultural tourism, particularly for the peoples of the Islamic world, seek the protection of high values and spiritual truths from the futility of commercial tourism, which constitute a serious threat to the population's attitudes, as well as its cultural property and, therefore, the fundamentals and principles of the Muslim identity.

#### **10. Involving stakeholders influential in shaping the international public opinion**

Among the most important gains that could accrue to the host Islamic countries from the increasing number of tourists coming from various countries around the world, are the impressions, and the cultural and civilizational empathy by those coming back to their homelands. Such feedback will help in the formulation of an image different from the stereotypical or distorted views circulated by certain Western media outlets that stigmatize Islamic countries as backward, extremist and terrorism-sponsoring. It is certain that the corrective convictions which tourists take back to their countries contribute, with the passing of time, to build a public opinion opposing the uncivilized positions adopted by their regimes and official media networks against this or that Islamic country. If we acknowledge in advance that a significant proportion of foreign tourism enthusiasts is made up of intellectuals, media figures, artists and businessmen, we are sure of the impact that can be exercised by this category on their regimes, in order to mitigate their biased position against Muslim peoples in general. These tourists belong to active civic organizations, international institutions and decision-making bodies. They can also possess an intellectual, cultural or artistic power, with a strong presence in the world media. Therefore, attracting this distinct segment is perhaps the guarantee of a concrete performance of cultural tourism.

#### **11. Harnessing cultural tourism to improve living conditions**

In addition to the developmental role played by tourism in peoples' social lives, there is another role which has not yet benefitted from the attention it deserves from the authorities in charge of the sector; it is the role of modernizing developing societies, partly through tourism. The establishment of solid foundations for the construction of the tourist sector requires, as an objective element, the provision of appropriate mechanisms to attract foreign tourists. These mechanisms include the presentation of the tourism product on the basis of the Islamic modernist vision, open to the other. This openness should not prejudice the Islamic cultural and civilizational essence, nor ease up on the devotion to Islamic high moral values, which can never yield to the temptation of tourist polarization at the expense of moral values and rules of conduct, congruent with the message of our religion and inherent traditions.

What we mean by these mechanisms is to provide the entire infrastructure, including the technical and administrative qualifications allowing tourists to adapt, coexist and integrate spontaneously within the daily life of the host country. These mechanisms should be identical to those which foreign tourists have been used to in their multiple travels, and which have become a necessity in their daily lives.

Therefore, we can say that the host country's awareness of the conditions for updating these structures reflects its conviction of the necessity to materialize the

concept of modernity, to make it concrete and practical, rather than being mere rhetoric designed for media consumption and, quite often for being included routinely and formally in the agendas of the authorities. This implies the necessity to deepen the concept of modernizing the attitudes and mentalities administering tourism, this concept being a cultural and civilizational conviction the completion of which correlates with providing implementation and follow-up mechanisms.

The modernization strategy takes into consideration all the phases of tourist attraction. These include the definition of points of attraction as a product in the global tourism market, the tourist arrival to and departure from these points, and other phases:

#### *- On the way to the host site*

The focus on this aspect is due to the fact that many of the tourist sites, particularly archaeological ones existing in some peripheral neighbourhoods in many of the classified world heritage cities, or in their suburbs, suffer from the lack of paved roads on the way to them, or from poor hygiene and lack of lighting, security, sanitation and drinking water, making them vulnerable to criminals and homeless people. This causes disappointment and severe shock to the visitors, who are surprised by that abyss between the attractive historical information they have about the site and its miserable state in reality. Moreover, visitors cannot benefit from the services which they have been accustomed to in their visits to similar sites in certain developed countries. Modernizing cultural tourism is an urgent necessity, all the more when it comes to some of the sites in oases or mountains, for example, attracting many tourists coming out to discover the features of a different civilization and enjoy a nature of environmental and human warm, but instead, they find themselves in a site lacking the minimum conditions of accommodation and hospitality.

Believing in the crucial role of cultural tourism stipulates that necessary effort be made to update the infrastructure necessary for the promotion of the tourist sector. This cannot be achieved without modernizing mentalities, which, in turn, needs a clear plan of action and a binding strategy involving all the parties concerned, in one way or another, over the question of policy development.

#### *- Improving population life quality*

While talking about the conditions to modernize infrastructure, it must be noted that the benefits of modernizing the sector are not only material, but also moral, represented in the social environment and the human relations interacting in tourist attraction sites. The repeated visits by foreign tourists, to some remote locations in the oases or mountainous areas, allow for weaving new patterns of communication with local populations, which through the act of communicating with the other, can accumulate new expertise and knowledge in various areas, enabling them to open on other nations.

#### *- Rehabilitation of the tourist guide sector*

The Strategy considers the tourist guide as the corner stone and the most sensitive and important channel in correcting or distorting the host country's relationship with the

groups of tourists visiting it. The tourist guide is the sound accompanying all the views seen by tourists. In other words, tourist guides are the eyes through which the tourist sees the inner and outer image. It is this concomitant sound and this speaking eye that determines the form of the tourist's integration in the host country's public life. The guide's voice explains, analyzes, calls and defines, taking the tourist from the date and function of an architectural form to its physical and aesthetic components. Then it moves to the population's habits, traditions, values and rituals, to the nature of its social fabric, and to trades and their materials, and arts and their types. His discourse is bound to a variety of contexts and topics, ranging from the general to the specific, and vice versa. The enlightening by the guide varies according to the culture and interests of the convoy, as well as its religious or ethnic affiliations and age categories. This being the case, the guide is required to be a distinct model of the population and of the setting he/she belongs to and speaks in its name, both in terms of physical appearance, behaviour, language and cultural background. A tourist guide is supposed to be able to open an integrated dialogue, based on acceptance of others and respect for difference and cultural diversity. In their communication with the convoy or the tourist group they are entrusted with, the tourist guides represent the real gateway to the country's identity and the specificity of its archaeological sites. In addition to that, tourist guides have a highly important responsibility to purify the image of their country from all the defects and prejudices the other associates it with. A tourist guide's discourse should be constantly vigilant, with as an overall objective to debunk all the suspicious or false assumptions adopted towards their country. The tourist guide should make use of his/her cognitive and linguistic skills to deliver commanding messages in form and content.

Due to the authorities' awareness of the role ascribed to the tourist guide in the establishment and construction of this possible dialogue, it would be obvious and necessary that they ensure the codification of its terms and the development of administrative and training procedures, to move from a stage marked, for several decades, by anarchy and randomness, to a stage governed by administrative and institutional methodology. This does not mean ending with the first phase, linked with conditions and grounds that will not be exceeded without addressing a series of obstacles in a real and responsible manner, perhaps reforming the social and living conditions of citizens, most importantly. The absence of employment opportunities, increasing illiteracy, and the multiplicity of deviant behaviours, resulting from the chronic social differences, remain a breeding ground for intrusion upon the tourist guide sector, by lots of people who contribute directly to tarnish the image of their own country. They also contribute to fixing the negative image adopted by some tourists, either by providing a false image identifying with the tourist's prejudices and their flight of fancy, or an overly self-sanctifying image, based on ethnic, religious or historical considerations, added to other behaviours that often turn into a media subject used to dwarf the original image. It would therefore be the duty of the authorities in charge of the sector to have as their first priority putting an end to this chronic and complex phenomenon, which happens to be conspired by a bunch of alien parties, which are interested in cultural tourism only when it is a source of

rapid gains, in the pejorative sense. Besides, official guides must be motivated by all means consistent with the nature of the sector, particularly by continuous training, so as they can update their information in all fields of knowledge concerning their Arab-Islamic identity, without losing sight of the history and civilizations of the world's peoples. They should also be provided with sufficient documents to facilitate their mission, whether concerning tourism projects programmed by the authorities or about new regional and international laws.

## CHAPTER III: AREAS OF CULTURAL TOURISM

With a view to being the center of intersection and interaction of all the creative, artistic and social ways of life of a people, cultural tourism is characterized by the multiplicity and diversity of its areas. Culture, in the modern sense, is the integrated expression of all attitudes that reflect the intellectual, spiritual and cultural identity, of individuals and groups, at one point in history, at a certain place. It is manifest in architecture, in all its forms and manifestations, in arts, in literature, in science, and in other forms of aesthetic and creative expression, as well as the cuisine and clothing, in addition to traditions, social customs and religious rites and seasons, not to mention cultural festivals, crafts and traditional industries, as well as the methods and traditions of agricultural and pastoral production. The most important areas of cultural tourism are as follows:

### 1. Religious tourism

The religious dimension occupies a privileged position in cultural tourism. It is associated with the spiritual aspect of the human being in general. The depth of this aspect in the human being reflects a permanent longing for sublime existence, transcending purely material concerns, dictated by the temptations of everyday life and the demands that keep the spirit of alienation and exclusion from the paths of spiritual meditation, which helps rediscover one's essence and reconcile with it.

Certainly, religious tourism plays an essential role in strengthening the ties of love, brotherhood and social solidarity among the Muslim world people, and also among all the peoples of the earth. In view of the increasing number of spiritual points of attraction in various parts of the globe, including mosques, churches, and historical shrines of the various revealed religions, travelling to those sites has become an important quest and a new cultural tourism destination. The demand for this kind of tourism has doubled in recent decades, as a result of religious awareness along with the decline of materialistic trends and the failure of their subsequent utopist ideas which did not succeed in providing psychological and social tranquility. A lot of religious sites are now regaining their vitality and dynamism, following the renewed rebirth of the voice of faith in all parts of the globe. They have become a space for intellectual and spiritual dialogue. In this context, the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and observing Umrah is one of the finest examples of heartfelt Islamic religious tourism.

With regard to the religious awakening in the world in general, and the Islamic world, in particular, as well as the great importance of religious tourism in deepening the spiritual and social communication, experts believe that religious tourism is more likely to be the engine of cultural tourism and a stem of regional economy than any other field of cultural tourism. Therefore, taking care of religious sites has become an urgent need for all Islamic countries known for their religious and spiritual sites. This requires the provision of all appropriate conditions to rehabilitate these sites and make them redouble their attracting power. In this context, we must commend the leading experiences of a number of Islamic countries that have admirably succeeded in managing religious tourism projects and providing the highest quality services to beneficiaries. Such successful experiences must be

expanded within the framework of Islamic solidarity and cultural interaction, for the benefit of those Member States lacking technical expertise and adequate resources.

## **2. Historical tourism**

### **a. Civilizational implications**

Historical monuments are among the most important points of attraction in the area of cultural tourism, because they are great treasures which the world's peoples are proud of. They are also the most expressive certificate a nation can have of its history and civilization. A civilization that lacks historical reference has no credibility. Similarly, a nation whose geography suffers from vacuum or deficiency in the area of architectural and cultural heritage has no moral authority, regardless of its industrial, technical, economic or financial power. A material and technical prosperity is of no value if it is not based on a spiritual and cultural ground enhanced by its inherent and common high values. Thankfully, the Islamic civilization is distinguished by the richness of its cultural and traditional reserves, as well as by its high universal values promising humanity with so many achievements, with respect to its long tradition dating back to the dawn of Islam.

In Al Andalus (which can be considered part of the Islamic world, at least from a historical and cultural perspective), North Africa, and the Middle, Near and Far East, historical Islamic monuments provide strong evidence of the greatness and influence of the Islamic civilization. They will make the future destination of historical cultural tourism, for all groups and individuals coming from all parts of the globe, representing different religions, beliefs and ethnicities, to have a closer look at the genius of a civilization that has a history of refuting all malicious slanders. Those tourists visit Islamic monuments in recognition of a civilization which has long provided a communicational bridge between ancient cultures and the European Renaissance, and which could prevent other ancient civilizations from disappearance. The tolerance of the Islamic religion, through its patronage of the Assyrian, Babylonian, ancient Egyptian and Greek civilizations, is what enabled them to survive, to be rediscovered by the West, at a time when the latter was living under the darkness of the Middle Ages. The West could not have linked its present with the assets of ancient cultures, had it not been for the great cultural renaissance which was led by the Islamic genius, through its fertile and efficient interaction with these civilizations, added to the intellectual, scientific and moral values of our religion, which were examples for those peoples to follow, in order to overcome their ignorance and backwardness at the time. A nation's pride in its historical monuments is a pride in the elevated rank it has achieved worldwide, as well as in the broad space it has offered for the blending and overlapping of such knowledge. It is a pride in the values which the model tourist cannot but renew their recognition of their humanitarian and cultural depth.

### **b. The specificity of its tourists**

Here we can say that historical monuments attract special and distinguished cultural tourists, characterized by curiosity and cultural knowledge enabling them to know about the sources and origins of human civilizations, and to identify with the

cultural specificity which accompanied the establishment of these monuments and contributed to their continuity, across multiple and varied civilizations. Tourists fascinated with visiting historical monuments often have a balance of knowledge allowing them to recognize their cultural and aesthetic secrets. They also have an expert gift for scientific and technical comparison between what is being seen and what is classified in the archives of memory, which are often rich in visual observations and in parallel documentary and explanatory texts.

In their contact with the historical monuments, these tourists invoke all their historical and creative knowledge, as well as their direct proficient observation of what is genuine, new or fake. They are immune from information effects which may be confusing and distorting. This category of tourists is also a model, compared with some other tourists who are passive in their perception of history. These do not abide by any ideological authority, being overwhelmed by consecrating prejudices against the heritage of the Islamic civilization. An exemplary tourist deals with historical monuments away from ethnic or religious classifications. Thus, his appreciation for ancient Egyptian civilization sites agrees with his respect to the features of the Islamic, Christian or Buddhist civilization. This appreciation is in fact an appreciation for his cultural and civilizational heritage.

### **c. Components of historical monuments**

#### **• Ancient Islamic cities, the greatest reserves of historical monuments**

Away from discussing the details of historical monuments in which the Muslim world abounds, we will focus on living models of those ancient cities that are rich in cultural and historical monuments and attractions. Suffice it to name one single ancient Muslim city to find out how much it has in store for the visitor. Muslim ancient cities are veritable magnets for tourists who come from every part of the world to experience their centuries of history and cultural and artistic heritage. Monuments speak tales of the glorious past handed down to new generations through an unbroken chain of ancestors who were great scholars whose works crossed all barriers and pushed the boundaries of human knowledge in diverse fields. These cities could be considered as big living, open and renewable museums offering visitors the joy of discovering the beauty of their ancient mosques, schools, forts and traditional baths, as well as their historical walls and gates and their metropolitan markets that are as impressive as ever. Talking about these attributes stipulates that we talk about all the technical skills which artists, engineers and craftsmen excelled in using to improve the magnificence of their construction and engineering, to the maximum degree of beauty. While moving between the various historical sites in the Islamic world, tourists are most notably impressed by the high technical skills that are the mouthpiece of the Islamic manufacturer genius, reflected in his ability to transform wood, gypsum, marble and glass to eternal masterpieces, in which interact the skills of architects and craftsmen, creative in the design of architectural spaces to a high degree of beauty. Their building materials reveal the finest rhythms, by which are obsessed the mind and heart of the beholder, who finds himself in front of timeless masterpieces, produced by capacities that were not interested in eternizing their names as much as in

eternizing those very works of art, and transforming them into a historical aesthetic heritage. A careful consideration of these creations, which draw from multiple artistic and cultural references, takes us beyond artistic comfort to the limits of intellectual meditation in their spiritual, symbolic and intellectual connotations. The accuracy of the engineering and art ornaments deepen the conviction of the expert tourist that they are based on a spiritual and aesthetic reference, full of secrets and ideas. In the same vein, we can talk about the remarkable technique of building water routes with their various facilities, thanks to which those monuments have become points of attraction for the population living its normal life in tranquility and spontaneously.

• **Islamic ancient cities: a symbol of tolerance and dialogue among civilizations**

There is no doubt that the great importance of the age-old Islamic cities is not due simply to the aestheticism of their engineering, the genius of their distribution, or their outstanding arts and skills in the elements making their facilities (wood, marble and inscriptions), but also to their historical memory of openness and human, intellectual and religious tolerance, throughout the ages. Most ancient Islamic cities were famous for their creative ability to mix the segments of their populations, often belonging to different races and ethnicities, which found in the religion of Islam their best haven. This encouraged creativity and innovation in various fields, which made these cities an example of civilizational and human coexistence. The significant role of these cities in melting the local culture with other cultures, in one matrix, bearing witness to the indispensable experience of Islamic historical openness to different cultural patterns in a spirit of acquaintance and exchange, on the way to building the human common good, founded by these cities as a contribution to the long march of human civilization. This means that the revitalization of cultural tourism requires an investment of this wealth, diversity and pluralism, in its cultural, artistic and creative manifestations, with a prospective vision aiming at highlighting the cultural prestige of these cities and upgrading their cultural tourism. This is precisely the philosophy of the ISESCO Programme of Islamic Culture Capitals.

• **Islamic culture capitals**

Undoubtedly, beyond the cultural field, the ISESCO programme to celebrate Islamic culture capitals has a number of dimensions, covering other sectors positively affected by the events witnessed by these capitals. There is no doubt that tourism is one of these sectors that benefit most from the huge cultural and artistic momentum generated by the celebration festivities of these capitals.

The Islamic and Arab culture capitals have proven to be places of great artistic, cultural and historical attraction not only for foreigners, but also for the local population. In fact, great store is set by the celebration programme of Islamic and Arab culture capitals to help promote cultural tourism across the Muslim and Arab world.

The celebration of the culture of these capitals is not merely a celebration of their history, inventors, scientists, and cultural and historical landmarks. It is also an occasion to promote their cultural and touristic merits, since cultural

tourism is one of the pillars of the cultural dimension in sustainable development.

Because the development of cultural tourism in the Islamic world is the motivation behind this Strategy, the outstanding contribution of the Islamic Culture Capitals Programme to the revitalization of tourism in those capitals, and to the increase in the number of their visitors, emphasizes the need to work in earnest to carry on this programme towards the promotion of cultural tourism in Member States.

### **3. Ecotourism**

It is a tourism reconciling mankind with nature, which was taken from him by the constraints of life, in cities using a systematic violence against him - by necessity - to make him a prisoner of a steel spiral, free from any mercy or human feelings. It is no different from one city to another, whether in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa or the Americas, except in the sharpness of car alarms, demographic pressure, the encroachment of concrete, the dominance of the machine on all everyday-life facilities, and the scarcity of green spaces. All of these factors make enjoying natural and pure air an extraordinary moment in the life of the city people, and make a moment of contemplation in non-artificial grass a deferred wish for holidays ahead, as well as directly enjoying the natural beauty of mountains, rivers and deserts, instead of seeing them mummified and rigid on television screens or in mural paintings.

What distinguish ecotourism from the other forms of cultural tourism are its amenities in multiple areas. If the centre of enjoyment was comfortable existence within nature, its heart is, for example, in the euphoria of the exercise of hunting in its various kinds, legally of course, fishing, mountaineering, diving, for contemplating the beauty of coral reefs and their surrounding, as well as the fun of travelling in forest routes to discover their wealth of rare birds, ancient trees unique in the form of their stumps and branches, added to their medicinal plants. It is known that the increase of global warming, caused by the extravagance of developed countries, with their giant industrial companies, in the depletion of the natural reserves of the main areas that were known in the world for conserving ecological balance, has contributed significantly to the increase in natural disasters and major imbalances, which lead to the continuation of the killing and displacement of millions of people, and the destruction of their properties, such as houses and fields. Thus, international specialized organizations, institutions, academies and institutes continuously warn against the consequences of ignoring the vital role of preserving the environment, and against the repercussions of their exacerbation on the fate of all living beings, stressing the need for further efforts to address each of the abuses that occur in this area, mobilize more support from the defenders of model environment, and encourage rediscovering the beauty of nature, by encouraging tourists to travel to the areas that are not affected by pollution, enjoying the stay in a wilderness or maritime environment that still retains its virginity, purity, and humanitarian, cultural and natural balance.

More than other nations, Islamic countries find themselves concerned with the responsibility of caring for the environment protection and moralizing man's relationship with it, and urging him to enjoy its beauty and invest its resources to achieve a balanced development, as prescribed by our religion.

Development envisaged by the ecotourism, especially in its Islamic depth is a noble and rational development, based on creative synergy, by looking for effective and responsible means to achieve ecological balance, and protecting all areas relating to wild, water or sea life, through qualifying the relevant staff, and supporting the association adopting the idea of sewing the values of environmental awareness among the younger generations and the population in general, in addition to what sustainable development can gain from projects based on village, mountain, sea and desert resorts, which are usually the ideal space for the establishment of multidisciplinary natural reserves, drawing the attention of foreign tourists.

Hence, the Strategy emphasizes that the inclusion by the Member States of ecotourism in their development plans is an inclusion of the most important interface clearly reflecting the level of their contribution to the reduction of catastrophic damage to the environment. It also reflects their vigilance from falling into the traps of globalized companies, which keep swallowing further natural resources in any remote area in the globe. Furthermore, it reflects their celebration of cultural tourism, and their progress in promoting it inside and outside cities. Almighty Allah granted Islamic lands with all what foreign and local tourists can dream of: geological and environmental diversity, bringing the mountains to the desert, and the sea to plains rich in their fields and rivers. They are sites where visitors find their lost tranquility of everyday, away from merciless cities of concrete and machines.

It should be noted here that it is fortunate that ISESCO coordinates the efforts, policies and plans of Member States in the field of environment through the Islamic Conferences of Ministers of Environment. It is, undoubtedly, an opportunity to sensitize decision-makers in this field to the need to integrate cultural factors and tourism data in these policies and plans.

#### **4. Health tourism**

Health tourism is an extension of ecotourism, as its locations correlate with model natural sites, located at the springs of rivers, beaches and mountain heights, in addition to desert oases.

This area of cultural tourism has also become of a significant presence among the other areas, as it began to attract more investors in the sector, based on the increasing demand from local and foreign tourists alike. This led to a rise in the proportion of supply around the world, particularly in the Islamic countries, richly endowed with many of the famous therapeutic points of attraction, nationally and globally, thanks to the adequate the ecological, geological and climatic conditions they provided. These touristic sites owe their importance to their reputation in healing many chronic diseases.

Because of the desperation of people living with these diseases for modern medical treatment, along with the belief of a large proportion of them in the culture of

physical and spiritual interaction with nature, through the use of its raw elements in the restoration of the loss in their physical and spiritual energies, it was natural to take advantage of their vacations or request a special sick leave, looking for the warmth of the sources of mineral and sulfur water, which have structural and thermal characteristics for curing many diseases, as well as rare gases and heavy metals, added to the purity of mountain air, the tranquility of the desert, and the balsam contained in the hot sand, curing body and spirit.

For many centuries ago, the West has been guided to health tourism due to its direct effect on human health, as well as for its recreational aspect, making it a necessity. In addition to being inexpensive and not causing any negative repercussions on human health, it is also effective in curing some diseases. The multiplicity of mineral springs in Central Europe benefitted all the countries having them, except for those who have no knowledge of the feasibility of this investment. Thanks to the special importance attached by these countries to their explored therapeutic sites, the latter occupy a prominent position at the international level, thanks to the advanced expertise in developing the industry of natural therapy, and turning it into a cultural tourism product of great interest to companies investing in the tourism sector. They have upgraded its services and the competence of the staff in charge of it to a modern, high level, rivaling chemical clinics, if not exceeding them in some cases.

For their part, the Arab and Muslim countries are no less fortunate than the rest of the world, as Almighty Allah granted most of them with several natural therapeutic sites. Some of them occupy a privileged position in the list of world therapeutic sites, both in terms of services and tourism marketing. Also, with regard to the important economic returns of these sites, this strategy urges the competent authorities in the Member States to give more care and attention to the area of health tourism through the creation and rehabilitation of more therapeutic sites, in accordance with international standards, to attract more tourists and to rise to the challenge of regional and international competitiveness in this area, through making tourist maps, in order to promote the benefits of therapeutic sites in a systematic way.

## 5. Conference tourism

In its broadest sense, conference tourism is, along with its parallel scientific and intellectual activities, the finest form of cultural tourism, to which the Strategy attaches special attention, with respect to its distinguished performance in the field of Islamic cultural tourism. The reputation of any Islamic State in hosting and organizing conferences is, in itself, a major asset, confirming its capabilities in the field of cultural tourism. The success of any Islamic State within this framework makes it enjoy a special reputation, both at the Islamic level and internationally. To be granted the honour of hosting major conferences comprises more than one civilizational message for the host country:

- a- Its ranking** among the countries that enjoy stability and security, away from conflicts and social and political disputes, which are often the cause of the escalation of violence and counter-violence. In such a case, it is impossible to risk the lives of congregates belonging to various Islamic or foreign countries, in a congested political and social climate, threatening to explode

at any moment, or revealing the possibility of sudden shocks impeding the normal course of the conference's proceedings.

- b- Its ranking** among the States specialized in the theme of the conference. The symbolic and basic implication of hosting such events is not only the ability to provide the technical, organizational, material and service conditions for its success, but also the ability of the host country to contribute to the enrichment of its working papers and orienting the discussions at its open or closed sessions, on the basis of the theoretical and technical expertise of its representatives.
- c- Its ranking** among the states eligible to host big conferences, given the availability of all the logistics and human resources to convene the conference in the best possible conditions, from the initial preparation phase, which could extend for months, to the closing sessions followed by the return of the congregates to their home countries. Conference hosting is now submitted to international standards, combining technological, technical and scientific conditions with logistics and services. There is no room for any negligence, error or improvisation. Realizing the great symbolic value of organizing international, regional and sub-regional conferences, the Muslim world countries have embarked upon developing their capabilities, in order to upgrade tourism to the required level. The long list of conferences successfully organized in many Arab and Muslim countries throughout the year, in various economic, commercial, cultural and artistic areas, are the best proof of the special status enjoyed by this type of tourism within the authorities in charge of the sector.

Based on the experience and expertise accumulated by Arab and Muslim States in this area, the added value proposed by the Strategy for the promotion of conference tourism is to invite these states to consider upgrading their efforts and achievements from local to regional initiatives, which has become a civilizational necessity, after regional blocks have become a dominant feature of development and economic trends of the Great Powers, and a substitute for local initiatives, which, no matter how the level of progress is, remain vulnerable to transcendence and regression before the sweeping stride of the conglomerate initiatives coming from giant decision-makers, which derive their strength from the ingestion of isolated local achievements. From the perspective of this strategy, the orientation of participatory initiatives is based on developing a new platform based on proposing projects that could be presented by experts in the sector to attract businessmen around the world, and encourage them to hold conferences and meetings in these countries, provided that these proposals cover the fundamental and urgent issues of interest to the Islamic and international public opinion. Among these are:

- ◆ Conferences enhancing dialogue among civilizations and redressing the image of Islam and Muslims;
- ◆ Conferences on **modern technology**, in all its patterns, especially information technology;
- ◆ Conferences on **global warming**, desertification and water resources;

- ◆ International Conferences for studying **investment opportunities within the Islamic world**, in trade, industry and agriculture;
- ◆ Conferences on **migration issues**, with all their intellectual, artistic, media and popular derivations;
- ◆ Conferences on **human rights**;
- ◆ Conferences on the mechanisms for **the preservation and development of heritage**, for employment in sustainable development as well as conferences on **the mechanisms and techniques for organizing major events**, with all their cultural and touristic terms of reference.

The central goal of the Strategy's interest in this type of cultural tourism is to qualify it for global competitiveness, in order to attract quality tourists and international investors, who may contribute to pumping significant quantities of hard currency into the treasury of the host State. They also improve its image in the media in international media, the highest gain that any state interested in this sector can aspire to achieve.

To attain this goal, due attention must be given for the rehabilitation of the staff specialized in the management and organization of conferences, which have become, in recent decades, an integral part of the cultural tourism industry.

In this context, suffice it to cite the Meeting Professionals International (MPI), which exceeded 24000 associate members, belonging to 160 sectors across the world. Their mission is to provide services to the bodies involved in the organization of tourism conferences. Also, a significant proportion of them have certificates, giving them the title of Certified Meeting Professionals (CMP). The lucky ones among them are those holding the Certified Meeting Manager (CMM) higher diploma, thanks to which they are classified as professional organizers, assigned to the organization of major international conferences. We should also commend the leading experiences in this area in a number of Arab and Islamic countries. The Strategy emphasizes the need for disseminating and making use of these experiences in setting up the information platform for Member States, through the establishment of an electronic directory specialized in conference tourism, the incentives, and services that allow interested visitors to know about all the details related to cultural tourism and its various facilities.

## 6. Festival tourism

If heritage tourism, exhibition tourism, conference tourism, health tourism, religious tourism, ecotourism and other areas of cultural tourism are characterized by attracting specific segments of local and foreign tourists, festival tourism stands apart by attracting all tourism segments, regardless of their main interests.

By their artistic and cultural orientations, their recreational and ceremonial nature, their various programmes which often involve renowned stars beloved to the masses, festivals constitute an exceptional opportunity for recreation and temporary alleviating the constraints of everyday life and its burdensome requirements. It was therefore expected that the phenomenon of organizing festivals dominates the general

trends of all countries that see cultural tourism as an essential means to enrich their artistic, intellectual, and cultural assets, and as an essential resource of economic development and a form of confirming their stable and secure status. If we just take a quick look at the list of film and art festivals announced by Arab and Islamic countries every year, we will make sure of the privileged position occupied by this type of tourism in their programmes and plans. You can hardly find an Arab or Islamic city not having dozens of festivals, wherein cinemas compete with theaters, and musical scenes with poetry tents. These cultural events and others are aimed at publicizing the creative and artistic attainments of the organizing States or cities.

Even if we try to avoid talking about the contents of hundreds of musical and artistic festivals, which have become a tourist haunt worrying the tourism institutions and cultural and tourism departments in charge of developing recreational programmes in the Islamic world, we cannot overlook the opposed media positions some of them raise because part of their contents go against the specificity of the Islamic identity, in spite of their great and tangible efficiency in the activation of the sector, in terms of development, culture and media. Henceforth, the Strategy envisages giving its viewpoint on the subject based on:

**First:** Its assessment of the current historic circumstances the Islamic world is witnessing. In the main, these are circumstances that require more vigilance and do not allow for drifting with the tide of suspicious values, continuously exercising their role of destroying ancient human civilizations, under the pretext of calling for inevitable integration in the globalization market. The most dangerous channels diffusing these calls are the artistic festival channels, because of their narcotic effect on the recipient, especially if he lacks intellectual and cultural immunity.

**Second:** Its full awareness of the necessity to invest all the art and heritage potentials of the Islamic civilization for the production of tourist festivals in harmony with its specificity, not contradicting the aesthetic and artistic values established by all ancient civilizations in their endless search for eternal values celebrating noble creativity. The ultimate goal of this selection is to establish a common regulatory framework for art festivals, through the creation of an advisory body alongside an executive one, within the mechanisms for the implementation of this Strategy. Both bodies should be engaged in developing a comprehensive list of the most important festivals in the Islamic countries that have the criteria referred to above, in order to select what is worthy of material and moral support, in the prospect of their international marketing, through all available media and promotional mechanisms. They are also to be presented to the international community as models of tourism consistent with the deep and open Islamic spirit, distinguished by its cultural renown and special trend.

It should be noted that this selection does not mean an implicit denigration of the importance of the other festivals, nor engaging in a competition or exclusion, as much as it is intended to ensure the protection and maintenance of our cultural and heritage assets against the hurricane of globalization, which comes at everything and everybody. In this difficult period of history, the real product enjoying cultural and touristic attractiveness is the one that can convince the other with its specificity

different from the rest of standardized one-dimensional products, which are produced in a mechanic way, seeking rapid and temporary gain, void of any cultural, innovative or aesthetic component enhanced by its civilizational frame of reference.

## **7. Exhibition tourism**

### **a. Establishing a new platform for international Islamic exhibitions**

Exhibitions are among the distinct areas which the Cultural Tourism Strategy aspires to adopt in the implementation of its future directions at the regional level, following the example of advanced countries where special attention is given to exhibitions as a key forum to highlight the achievements and progress made by a participating country, especially the host, in science, culture, technology, marketing, and other relevant fields. Not only do exhibitions serve as a platform to launch products and services, but they also provide an opportunity for Arab and Muslim countries to carve out a niche for themselves in world history.

If exhibitions occupy a special position at the international level, in view of their strong inclusion within the plans for upgrading cultural tourism, Islamic countries are required, more than ever before, to make good use of the experiences they have accumulated for many years, through their positive participations in local, regional and international exhibitions, in order to concentrate on the development of participatory plans that are likely to develop a new vision for the technique of organizing larger cosmic-oriented Islamic exhibitions, able to rise to the challenge of international competitiveness. Islamic countries are in a better position to take on leading roles in this area, **thanks to their rich and diverse heritage assets**, which have become, in recent decades, the focus of the world media and the institutes of sociological and industrial studies.

### **b. Islamic exhibitions' programmes of action**

The objectives set forth under this subsection are as follows:

- ◆ Highlight the uniqueness of the diversity characterizing the Islamic civilization, and defining its elements of similarity and disparity.
- ◆ Jointly publicize the standards of creativity achieved by the Member States in upgrading their products, following their radiance in their specialties, consistent with their cultural and touristic components.
- ◆ Exchange expertise among actors specializing in designing and refining the science of marketing.
- ◆ Conduct joint research on the technical means for marketing Member State products.
- ◆ Restructure new multidisciplinary and compound investment and development infrastructure, on the basis of strengthened bridges of cooperation and solidarity between Islamic States and other friendly nations.
- ◆ Introduce the true image of the Muslim nation as one capable of contributing to the common civilizational edifice, on the basis of its permanent and responsible

incarnation of the high values urged upon by our religion, glorifying science and labour, as well as upholding the principle of equal dialogue and constructive tolerance.

## **8. Religious tracks and ancient trade routes tourism**

### **a. Historical, civilizational significance**

The elaboration of rehabilitation plans for the ancient Islamic trade routes is, in itself, a key element of Islamic and Arab cultural tourism. The renewed celebration of their tracks is to mark an important component of the Arab-Islamic personality and identity, as well as a reminder to all mankind of the capabilities of this personality to open up and work hard to enrich local and regional development competencies, through the exchange of expertise and experience between them and other peoples of the Earth. Humanity will be in a permanent need of benefitting from those historical, cultural and civilizational signs which trade routes hammered in its memory, in particular with regard to the question of understanding, coexistence and interdependence. Those routes were not merely neutral and simple crossroads, but also ways of participatory, multidimensional and multifunctional interaction, which enabled them to retain their historical radiance for several centuries ago. It can be said that they were originally a model for the most important building blocks that have proved effective in extending and strengthening the bridges between the segments of one people, as well as among neighbouring and faraway peoples. That different tribes and races take the same route necessarily leads to their search for a common language, guaranteeing them the possibility of understanding and coexistence, and to exchange cultural experiences and knowledge. What is meant here by a common language is not the direct operative language, but the symbolic meaning of common behaviours, values, and goals. These are concepts exceeding, in importance and priority, the limits of simple language knowledge and understanding, to stronger and deeper limits, taking into account mutual interests, one of the main aims of trade, which include also:

#### ***- Ancient trade routes: a symbol of peaceful interaction***

The spread of the spirit of peace and security was necessary in those roads for the success of any business venture. In the absence of a state of peace and security, all elements for construction, and social and human solidarity vanish, which leads to the collision of business expectations - which are in fact development aspirations - with the obstacle of destructive conflicts.

The emphasis on this element does not mean that these roads have always been easy to take. Since the dawn of history, contradictions and differing views in dealing with individual and collective interests, have been, and will remain, an integral part of human nature, especially in those chronic cases lacking the opportunities to listen to the other and recognize their input in the construction of any common social or civilizational project. However, these cases remain uncommon and transient, the impact of which quickly shrinks in front of the patterns rooted in history, as is the case with ancient trade routes, which were able to carve their lasting and exquisite image in the memory of humanity thanks to

their resilience in the face of political and geographic changes. In this context, we must commend the spirit of peace and security that had prevailed all the way to the Ancient House (the Sacred House of Allah) before and after Islam, resulting from the authenticity of faith within pilgrims, which distanced them from committing sin, and all acts of aggression in conflict with the essence of the spiritual journey, in which they give precious sacrifices to have its benedictions, pursuant to the holy verse: **“Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety”** (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 125).

*- Ancient spiritual and trade routes: a symbol of crosscultural fertilisation*

If the dominance of the spirit of peace and coexistence was one of the most important virtues that characterized those ancient roads, it was not because they were within reach, but out of being a great cultural achievement, which is impossible to achieve in the absence of an advanced cultural platform of consensus, set by all actors and parties interested in the commercial investment of roads. The trips of convoys, which take weeks and months, including multiple human models with various concerns, as well as multiple categories of age, are similar to a mobile social structure governed by manual and intellectual customs, values, principles and skills, based on cultural and spiritual references, from which individuals and groups inspire their moral values, allowing them to build social relations in their various patterns and levels. The subjective and objective conditions for a journey through these routes and roads are in fact open schools providing the users with more awareness and knowledge, for their communication and understanding, through spontaneous and intimate exchange of experiences, products and methods of living. Since the pre-Islamic era, the commercial and religious convoys heading to Mecca used to gather in three major markets, historically famous for their cultural and commercial dimension, namely Okaz, Mijanna and Dhul-majaz, in which pilgrims experienced cross-cultural, commercial and social communication, pending the pilgrimage season. In this context, it is noteworthy that there was a situation of doubt within many of the believers regarding the practice of business in these markets, fearing that it would be contrary to the message of Islam, until Almighty Allah revealed these words: **“It is no crime in you if you seek the bounty of your Lord (during pilgrimage)”** (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 198).

**b. Examples of religious and trade routes**

At the outset, it must be recalled that the pilgrim routes leading to the Sacred House of Allah are among the old routes most distinguished by their several points of departure, especially after the big spread of the Prophet’s noble message, from the Arabian Peninsula to the rest of Asia to South-West Europe, to North and Central Africa through the Near East, contributing significantly to the branching of geographical routes ranging from deserts and mountains, to sea and water routes. This resulted in a tremendous amount of local and regional maps, with their various complex and cross-point tracks having a common destination, the Holy Mosque.

We are convinced that we should take into consideration all of these roads, as they have a leading role in the promotion of cultural tourism, which is reflected in the reference document prepared by ISESCO to revive the African, Asian and Maghreb

pilgrimage routes, in order to provide mechanisms for carrying out the Strategy for Cultural Tourism. However, the talk will be limited to the African Pilgrimage route, as it keeps with the purpose, especially since the Silk Road, which falls within the Strategy's interest, includes a significant proportion of sub-roads.

- **The African pilgrimage route as a model**

The interest of the Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World in the African pilgrimage route, dating back to the medieval period, falls within the framework of its substantive celebration of the areas and mechanisms most capable of activating its directions. This will be achieved only through being based on a reference of spiritual and historical authenticity, having the consensus of Member States and of the international community, and leading to contribute to the Islamic and human civilization achievements and transformations, dictated by the topicality of the present and the prospects of the future.

Extending from the Atlantic to the borders of the Red Sea, the African pilgrimage route was the cultural, religious and civilizational bridge linking Africa, the Middle and Far East, across the total of those States making up the Belt of Sudan. The groups of pilgrims coming from all these countries, with common feelings seeking pilgrimage in the Ka'ba, and the benediction of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), constituted the ideal area to bring their peoples closer together and to unite them in an exceptional case of intellectual, cultural and commercial communication, enriching experiences and expertise, and widening the prospects for common coexistence, leading inevitably to the blending of specificities and identities, away from the narrow considerations of geographical barriers and ethnic affiliations.

Since the hope to visit to the Sacred House of Allah is the highest aspiration a Muslim can have, it was not restricted to a specific Muslim category, but it included all social groups, the haves and the have-nots. It also included all the intellectual, scientific, technical skills and professional competences making up the fabric of Muslim societies, which has made the road leading to it a channel for the interaction of all types of intellectual, spiritual and cultural communication, in particular with regard to the delivery of knowledge. Many of the ideas, values, customs, and scientific and intellectual manuscripts were traveling across the globe, thanks to the constant movement of pilgrims. As stressed by researchers specialized in routing the ways to the Hajj, the African pilgrimage route was as varied as the points of departure of pilgrims. It also varies depending on the route chosen for compatibility with their cultural, social and commercial aspirations.

- **The African pilgrimage route: a context to activate cultural tourism**

Recalling the trip's general atmosphere along this route, we can make very important conclusions as follows:

**First: It is an area of field research**, academic study, and historical, religious, social and cultural documentation, which allows researchers to have a close

look at the nature of actors in the convergence of different peoples, extending bridges of understanding and acquaintance among them, and drawing lessons from the values of solidarity and unity, collaboration, and dialogue based on the need to accept and respect the other; values which we can be proud of.

**Second: Whether this atmosphere can persist** in the form of a cultural and civilizational practice, which the Muslim Ummah is in need of restoring, in line with the current historical conditions, and away from the false political contradictions leading to the expansion of the gap between neighbouring peoples, and also between the members of one people, which reduces the opportunities for participatory planning for any regional development action.

**Thirdly and finally, based on the two conclusions above**, the Strategy considers the African pilgrimage route as a model framework for the implementation of a significant proportion of participatory cultural tourism projects in the Islamic world, with the contribution of the countries located in the Belt of Sudan, along with the rest of the Islamic countries, through the mechanisms of action identified in the reference document on the pilgrimage routes of Africa, Asia and the Maghreb mentioned above. They will deal with all the geographical, historical and cultural components characterizing these pilgrimage routes, in order to re-update, and upgrade them to the level of the world cultural tourism products, following the Silk Road example.

#### • **The Silk Road**

The Silk Road is a civilizational project within the context of cultural tourism, extending beyond a single people or denomination, to reach multi-ethnic peoples of different beliefs, and countries across the globe, in order to concretize the bonds of creative and constructive communication among civilizations, with diverse and different values and customs in their cultural and civilizational terms of reference.

If the Silk Road has been known by this name, which was given to it by the German geographer von Richthofen in the nineteenth century AD, it is because it had a reputation for this function for several centuries ago, dating back to the second century BC. This function had its effects on the interaction between great and ancient civilizations, such as the Chinese, Iranian, Greek, Hindu, Romanian and other civilizations, all melting in the Islamic pot, especially after the eighth century AD.

The Silk Road is one of the most famous ancient trade routes in the world. It served as the lifeline upon which depended China's trade ties with South and West Asia, Europe and North Africa. Given the large quantities of silk textiles transported through this road, it was natural that it takes this name instead of names of other products. The seventh and eighth centuries period was the golden period that witnessed the road's increasing prosperity, due to the high pace of business dealings in China's exchange with other countries, as its imports from the West and Central Asia increased, to include gold and silver coins, in addition to rare birds and the various arts and foods, as well as clothing and jewelry. Its exports equally varied, including, in addition to the silk

industry, papermaking, printing and ceramic pots, in addition to compasses. Parallel to the economic and trade exchanges, knowledge and intellectual and professional achievements were also flourishing, as the Silk Road was also a road for dialogue. Thanks to it Buddhism found way to the neighbouring regions, and so was the case for Zoroastrianism and Kamfushism, as well as Judaism Christianity, and Islam, without losing sight of mystic and Irfanic schools and creeds. This confirms that the Silk Road was a historical road that was between religions, and also between East and West, as it was a key factor in the development of various relationships that existed between them, and the bridge along which were founded political and commercial values, traditions and contracts, which have become a real road to the modernist vision to be adopted by the world at a later stage in the management of commercial, economic and administrative matters among peoples and nations.

The length of this road equals one quarter of the planet's circumference, as it started 2100 years ago, from the region of Xian, China, as a crossroad in northern China. The most dangerous area crossed by the road was the Taklamakan desert, to be divided after it in two sub-roads, **a northern one** through crossing the major areas of: Bulgar-Kipchak and Eastern Europe, then the Crimean Peninsula, via the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmara and the Balkans, to extend to Venice.

**The second sub-road** runs south, crossing Turkistan, Khorassan, Mesopotamia, Kurdistan and Anatolia, and then to Antioch, from which it extends to the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt and the Levant.

By the early first century BC, the Southern Silk Road opened, leading to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Iran, from the West, to Alexandria.

We can also talk about the road to Pakistan and Kabul, Afghanistan to Head Gulf. As for the coastal road, it led to Iran and Rome.

In addition to this civilizational trade route, there are other trade routes that also contributed to cultural communication among peoples, such as the Gold Road and the Salt Road.

#### • **Trade routes in the Arabian Peninsula**

Speaking on the ancient trade routes, we cannot ignore the reference to the Arabian Peninsula, which includes the oldest-known routes on the global level, dating back to the third millennium BC, as confirmed by the Assyrian literature, which links the start of commercial convoys in the region to the beginning of the phenomenon of camel domestication, the primary means to regulate the movement of convoys. Among the most important articles of trade which these convoys were competing to transfer are:

**Perfumes** which used to come to the coastal cities by sea from India and North Africa, and **frankincense**, which came from Dhofar, Southern Oman, to be later transferred to the regions and cities of barter, in the north of the peninsula, Mesopotamia, and the Levant, within what was then known as the journeys by winter and summer, mentioned in the Book of Almighty Allah: **“For the**

**covenants (of security and safeguard enjoyed) by the Quraish, their covenants (covering) journeys by winter and summer”** (Surah Quraish, verses 1-2). It continued with the Islamic conquests and did not stop in the peninsula until the emergence of modern means of transport, which obviously lead to the creation of new routes.

The continuation of these commercial convoys, over several centuries, contributed directly and effectively to the prosperity of the region at all levels, and to the expansion of human populations and the founding of many cities. It was also a key factor in the consolidation of many social traditions and Islamic spiritual values regulating everyday relationships of Muslims with each other and with other peoples.

Perhaps one of the most important phenomena created by the journeys by winter and summer is the phenomenon of integration of women in public life. Their presence was strong and active in the general social life around the mobility of the convoys, as they had a lot of regulatory functions concerning the normal conduct of family life. They also excelled in wool industry for domestic use and barter. This qualified them to play a leading developmental role over time.

## 9. Archaeological tourism

This tourism concerns researchers, experts of archaeological sites and historians, who come from inside and outside the country, as these sites appeal on them to find out what would contribute to shed light on the realities of some historical or geological stages witnessed by the site in ancient and recent times, to enrich these facts, or to undergo a correction of scientific errors. Most Islamic ancient places hold a lot of historical secrets, which remain constantly in need for further discovery and sound scientific and field follow-up. Therefore, archaeological sites are characterized by an exceptional value, as far as heritage is concerned. They are a common human memory, worthy of maintenance and care. These sites may be discovered either at an early stage, having not yet undergone sufficient drilling and exploration to find out what are the facts they hide, newly discovered, or a future project for research and exploration.

If the Strategy acknowledges the great care attached by a lot of Islamic countries to these sites, especially at the level of infrastructure and services, this does not prevent from making some reservations with regard to the neglect these sites are subject to in other Islamic countries. In view of their existence in open spaces near or far from cities, they are vulnerable to uncovering and looting. It also happens that they fell within the designs of architectural expansion or road construction, thus being subject to loss, which means a loss of an integral part of the human memory and heritage. As for the problems faced when visiting them in such states, they can be summed up in the following elements:

- ◆ Poor access roads.
- ◆ Lack of health facilities, and all the necessary services to be provided for tourists.
- ◆ Insecurity.

The reason for this is perhaps not including them within local tourism sites, either

because of the lack of demand, disintegration into tourist maps, or because they do not fulfill reception conditions. This prejudices the balance of the sector, and reduces its influence for the countries looking forward to increasing their investment and media assets in the competitive tourist market. This increase cannot be achieved through a piecemeal vision interested in a specific field of tourism at the expense of the others, but through a holistic plan dealing with the sector as a whole, wherein all components are equal.

As is the case for a large number of cultural tourism areas covering historical and civilizational monuments, with a focus on archaeological tourism, the role of the Islamic Heritage Committee, established by ISESCO for documenting, maintaining and protecting these attributes and features, will be a crucial and prominent role in the concretization of the contribution of this tourism in the other elements promoting cultural tourism, in particular, and the development process, in general.

## CHAPTER IV: MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

This chapter is an extension of the previous chapters, as they included a number of proposed means for the implementation of some of the goals set forth, either in the context of the areas of cultural tourism, or its goals. Thus, this chapter could be considered just as a reminder and emphasis of what the Strategy has so far dealt with, especially in Chapter III.

The second point to be emphasized is related to the need for **Member States to set up regulatory and management institutional structures**, to ensure the development of joint plans with a clear agenda, in order to carry out the central proposals contained in the Strategy. Without these institutional structures, a lot of opportunities for participatory action will be missed, given that they constitute the hope of the Muslim Ummah in this complex and critical stage, which the world is witnessing in the first decade of the third millennium.

The Strategy bases its proposal for mechanisms for the implementation of its programme of action on two interconnected elements. **The first one** is the recognition of the tireless efforts of many of the Arab and Islamic countries to promote the cultural tourism sector. The Strategy also commends the significant progress achieved by these countries at the country level and internationally, both in terms of integrating the sector into their overall economic fabric, or in terms of their ability to upgrade its product to rise to the challenge of competition in global markets, by bringing in regional and international capitals, in addition to the concrete development of their infrastructure, and their success in the training of their administrative executives overseeing the functioning of the sector, according to established and globally recognized standards. There is no doubt the leading experiences of these countries are worthy of appreciation, as they contribute effectively to pay a tribute to the Islamic civilization, so that it may develop a universal civilizational project, marked by openness, tolerance and constructive dialogue.

**The second element** of focus for the Strategy is the need and imperativeness to engage in comprehensive programmes of partnership, as collaborative action is the real motive for any proposal that can be made in the context of the search for implementation mechanisms. This is based on the conviction that the continuous efforts made by certain Islamic countries, in promoting the cultural tourism sector, always require extending the bridges of technical and information communication among them. This contributes to the establishment of a solid and appropriate ground, marked by the multiplicity and diversity of its tangible and intangible cultural and heritage qualifications, **first**, with a view to rise to the challenge of developing cultural tourism projects, and, **second**, in order to acquire the expertise to deal with the emerging challenges at the internal or external levels, which happen to demolish their gains, especially if they were not aware of the dangers of savage globalization living on the hunt of isolated minorities, lacking a geographical and strategic depth protecting them from the consequences of such sudden shocks and imbalances.

Hence, we can say that, despite the great interest given by the Strategy to the role that can be played by each individual State in the planning of policy for the promotion of the cultural tourism sector, it emphasizes that the effectiveness of this role will remain limited and inadequate, as long as they do not take into account the specificity of the cultural condition, which characterizes the current historical circumstances, marked by the growing conviction of the importance of regional blocs, without which there will be no constructive and coherent presence, to cope with all types of potential challenges. In view of the explicit and implicit schemes, which the Islamic world is suffering from, and which have increased in recent decades, the culture of solidarity and partnership among the peoples of the Islamic world remains a central demand, and a spiritual and tangible guideline for the set-up of any cultural or economic project, in particular that of promoting cultural tourism.

Within this fixed and firm conviction, the Strategy suggests an action plan, with its mechanisms of implementation, based on the principle of participatory planning, which cannot be activated at the level of the Member States, unless it is achieved at the national level. It is impossible for any Islamic State to launch a participatory cultural tourism initiative, if it does not have an advanced level of scientific and technical knowledge of all issues related to the success of a specific experience in the field of cultural tourism. Therefore, the Strategy considers that the positive and concrete results achieved by each Islamic State are the real and effective basis for all the different regional participatory experiences of several Islamic countries. Furthermore, local experiences can serve as workshops and laboratories supplying and enriching the Islamic participatory experience, with its innovations and achievements in this context. The initiation of any joint programme is essentially based on the objective conviction with the magnitude of the added value of the participating States, and their role in the success of the proposed programmes and projects.

From this point, it appears that the concretization of the Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World requires a series of actions on the ground, which cannot be achieved only through the concerted efforts of the administrative and organizational skills involved. These include governments, ministries in charge, provincial municipal councils and local authorities, the public and private sector, as well as local actors and the civil community institutions, in addition to university researchers, academics, experts, research consultancies and configuration and setup companies, qualified to provide the means to update the action plan proposed below, with its mechanisms of implementation, in the light of what was set out in the previous three chapters of the Draft Strategy.

### **1. The Draft Programme of Action:**

It contains the following:

- **The adoption of the cultural tourism sector as a bridge for civilizational communication**

As already noted, in more than one context, the Strategy's Programme of Action stresses the need to promote the cultural tourism sector, and place it among the priorities that govern the basic orientations of the Islamic countries, internally and externally, as one of the most important means for closer communication and

solidarity among Muslim peoples, and with the other peoples of the world, on the basis of a constructive and equal civilizational and universal dialogue, away from racist and hegemonic practices, which are likely to escalate tensions and conflicts, dividing the world into contradictory and conflicting poles, blocs and alliances, pre-empting the dreams of peoples, especially the developing ones, to move forward to the prospects of progress and prosperity.

- **Developing major participatory projects for international marketing**

It has to do with proposing major participatory projects, based, in their elaboration, on the cultural tourism products each Islamic State is known for; and in their selection, on the criteria of diversity, originality and quality, expressing the richness and uniqueness of the Islamic heritage, and making sure that they belong to the most important areas of cultural tourism, which are more present at the international level. The purpose of elaborating these joint projects is their marketing at the global level on behalf of the Member States, so as they take the form of major cultural events reflecting the most important characteristics of the Islamic tourist product, i.e. cultural depth, promotional maturity, and a strong ability of competitiveness in the international tourism market. Among the most important of these proposed projects, we can talk about the project of celebrating the African, Maghreb and Asian pilgrimage routes, as well as the project of celebrating the Silk Road, which have been previously covered by the Strategy, in the course of illustrating the areas of cultural tourism in the Islamic world.

If we recognize in advance the presence of these proposed projects in the tourism programmes of some Islamic and non-Islamic countries, we emphasize, however, that the project proposed by the Strategy is distinguished by the involvement of all the Islamic countries concerned with the subject, in its organization and employment as a tourism and cultural product, covering a large geographical area, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Far East. This will give it a dimension of celebration for a long period of time.

- **Concretizing local contribution**, which is supposed to enrich the overall programme, through parallel tourism projects presented by Member States' competent institutions, taking advantage of their heritage, cultural and artistic potentials.

- **Making a comprehensive inventory of the components of cultural tourism in the Islamic world**, particularly in relation to their tangible and intangible cultural features, in order to assess their promotional and marketing potentials, to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation, and to know the strengths and shortcomings therein. There is also the measurement of the effectiveness of the relevant institutions, with a view to identifying obstacles and necessities for the development of major participatory projects designed for international marketing.

- **Qualifying scientific, technical and administrative competencies**, for the completion of studies and field research, thus allowing for creating new ideas, and to propose big projects that can be implemented in the maintenance and rehabilitation of the Islamic cultural heritage, in addition to establishing a solid ground for the total legal and technical conditions, which would simplify the procedure of promotion and marketing.

- **Securing operating budget resources**, locally, regionally and internationally, in order to complete the processes of scientific, administrative and technical rehabilitation, looking for parallel resources to fund the processes of providing necessary and appropriate infrastructure and logistics.
- **Developing a multi-pronged media plan**, investing modern audio-visual media – the Internet and satellite channels – with the aim of presenting the achievements of cultural tourism in the Member States with a modern and convincing methodology that would contribute to improving the image of the Muslim world and of its major tourism projects. It would also contribute to encourage the international community – including the opposing parties – to rediscover the cultural richness of the Islamic civilization.
- **Developing an exploitative marketing strategy** of the components of cultural tourism, and encouraging the private sector to invest in promoting its products.
- **Assessing the immediate material, economic, social and moral impact** of the development of cultural tourism activities on the daily life of the local population and its economies, and developing future scenarios for cultural tourism.

## 2. Mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategy's overall programme

Before elaborating on what the Strategy deems necessary for the implementation of projects directed towards promoting the cultural tourism sector at the level of the Islamic countries, and investing it culturally, economically and culturally, on the basis of their rich natural, geographical and cultural potentials, three important issues should be raised, for their direct and effective impact on the success of any expanded participatory strategy, namely:

### • Spreading the culture of respect for and maintenance of local heritage

Mainstreaming the culture of respect for the maintenance of local heritage is a primary step for the advancement of cultural tourism. A historical legacy neglected by the grandchildren is a legacy threatened of vanishing and disappearing at any moment. The risk of neglect may increase when it is caused by the ignorance of some officials of its importance for the sector, as well as the renegeing of some agents in the municipalities in charge of these sites on the responsibility of maintaining them on grounds of lack of human and material resources, even if it has to do with the minimum conditions of hygiene and maintenance. There is no doubt that the honourable and protective people interested in this heritage are suffering from the lack of a sense of responsibility, especially when they discover, in some of their tourist of inspection, that these sites have become dumps, or when they read in local newspapers news of looting a site plan by robbery gangs targeting neglected tangible heritage. By and large, such news have become very common in developing countries, as their heritage is continuously subject to theft, which is sometimes caused by local people, either because of their absolute ignorance of the cultural and civilizational value of this heritage, or because of their obsession with becoming quickly rich. Perhaps the most important thing that can be raised in this context is those archaeological sites which benefited, by some coincidence, from huge donations from foreign or regional donors. They were re-restored and rehabilitated,

to be an indicator of the historical and cultural importance they have regained among officials and the population. However, they soon return to their first status, as a result of neglect and oblivion. This invites us to consider the dissemination of the culture of respect for local and human heritage as a vital requirement that must be included among the first priorities of the ministry in charge, convinced with the strategy of joint action in the sector of cultural tourism. This strategy can engage more than one party, such as the ministries of education, of culture, and of endowments and Islamic affairs, as well as civil society groups, and the leagues of neighbourhoods containing some historical and heritage sites, without neglecting the municipalities in charge of the management of public affairs in the region. All this should be made within an integrated national plan, covering all areas known to contain these sites, including rural, mountain and desert areas, giving great importance to the media aspect, and the parallel promotional activities, such as specialized seminars, and art events, and training workshops.

#### • Updating national tourism maps

The process of modernization of national tourism maps requires the technical expertise capable of updating cultural tourism maps covering all the archaeological, therapeutic and natural sites. This task is undertaken by the competent authorities in a number of Arab and Islamic States that have accumulated an advanced expertise in this field. However, these States remain in need of further efforts to develop their work, because of the following imbalances:

- There is a large proportion of these maps suffering from huge gaps, because their tracks are void of any important sites that are an integral part of national and Islamic memory. Perhaps, technicians neglect them to avoid any potential embarrassment, either because they are inaccessible, or because of their degradation, which makes them constantly forgotten.

- These maps are limited to mentioning locations, without giving interest to the ways leading to them. These ways have become necessary, especially for specialized tourists, who come in large numbers to the host country with a precise plan to visit the locations in question. Some of them look forward to knowing religious sites, such as mosques and shrines, while others seek to enjoy scientific landmarks, such as old schools across the Islamic world, as well as the old houses where lived scientists and intellectuals, and the ancient walls, historical hotels, and markets. The methodology upon which the Strategy insists in making the maps is due to the conviction with the obligation to seek internationally recognized professionalism, which calls on stakeholders to take advantage of the skills of experts and academics specializing in Islamic cultural heritage, and imbued with a high Islamic spirit, rather than relying on the technicians of local or foreign travel agencies, who are satisfied with reproducing the Western orientalist vision which had been consecrated by colonization. **In the light of these national maps, thematic comprehensive cultural tourism maps can be developed to help those interested to have an overview of the main sites in the Islamic world, whether for heritage, environmental or health tourism, or other sites related to all areas of cultural tourism.**

### • **Drawing up a full national inventory of historical cultural heritage**

The professional preparation of cultural tourism maps will automatically open the road to technicians and experts to carry out an inventory of the riches of the historical memory of their homeland, and present it in a scientific and modern way to local and foreign tourists. This is a task that should be given the interest it deserves by officials of the sector, in all Islamic countries. The objective of this process is not limited to preserving the heritage memory, but it has also to do with sparing a lot of these monuments the scourge of loss and oblivion, thus urging officials to protect and maintain them. Officials often pay attention only to the main monuments in their towns, as the primary destination of foreign or local tourists, without paying the minimum attention to what they call marginal sites. This is serious indeed. The central monuments take their value from the multiple micro-sites surrounding it. It is the margins that enrich the historical depth of the center, with the multiple and various cultural and civilizational symbolic signs they add to it. It also gives tourists a general and comprehensive vision of the specificity of the spaces visited.

The importance of an inventory is reflected in the protection of the forgotten sites from the hands of speculators who lack the spirit of patriotism, and do not hesitate to invest them in commercial purposes, doing harm to their original historical value. Their protection through the elaboration of introductory forms, may allow for the possibility of restoring and rehabilitating them by protective donors, at the Arab-Islamic or international levels.

### **3. Supportive measures to ensure the effective implementation of the overall participatory programme**

As well as emphasizing on the mechanisms to activate the three elements referred to above, at the local level, as essential ingredients for the success of the contracts, joint and future projects, which the cultural tourism sector could prepare for, regionally, the Strategy will put forth a number of proposals relative to practical actions that must be undertaken to facilitate the implementation of the overall participatory programme for the development of cultural tourism. Given the integrated nature of these actions and the diversity of their fields, on the one hand, and the multiplicity of parties concerned with their implementation – organizations, governmental and non-governmental institutions, the civil society, the private sector and the media – on the other hand, the advisory board for the implementation of the Cultural Strategy for the Islamic World will, within its terms of reference and under the supervision of ISESCO, coordinate these actions through the identification of their priorities and the examination of the reports by the relevant sub-committees, before they are presented to the sessions of the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Culture. These procedures include:

#### • **Civilizational development**

What is meant in the Strategy by civilizational rehabilitation is to provide the conditions to contribute to the building of Islamic societies, with the prevalence among their segments of human of sound relationships, based on high and modern

civilizational foundations, reducing contradictions which often lead to the intensification of conflicts and other behaviors negatively influencing their development and prosperity. At all its different levels, this rehabilitation is the best way to promote a real cultural tourism taking the Islamic societies towards their participatory perspectives, the ingredients for the future civilization are made up, with no room for any possibility for the advancement of cultural tourism, in fragmented societies lacking the conditions for human and civilizational communication. This is done through:

- ◆ The employment of all the channels and ways to reduce the scourge of extremism, which poverty and ignorance contribute to a great deal to the prevalence of its harm.
- ◆ Joint cultural orientation initiatives, to contribute to the consolidation of world peace, as a form of expression of the Islamic will to communicate and understand.
- ◆ Strengthening partnership with international media institutions open to the Islamic civilization, to enable them access to its tourist and cultural achievements.
- ◆ Initiatives of solidarity and symbiosis to alleviate the debt burden on the Islamic countries in need, so as they can exercise their right to economic integration, which contributes to the prosperity of their peoples.
- ◆ Educating the younger generations on their history and Islamic values, and encouraging them to master modern technical skills to enhance their capacities in the elaboration and implementation of cultural tourism projects.
- ◆ Calling for respect for minorities, the protection of their right to preserve their cultural specificities, and the practice of rituals and ceremonies, as long as they do not show any intent to harm the values of our Islamic religion.
- ◆ The formulation and adoption of a moral charter, in coordination with the competent international bodies, to reduce the immoral violations damaging the sanctities and specifics of our peoples.
- ◆ The mobilization of public and private educational and cultural institutions to protect and promote cultural diversity and incorporate it in their cultural and educational programmes.

#### • **Cultural heritage**

The Strategy is based on the need for the rehabilitation of the Islamic tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as it is the reference adopted in the direct definition of the memory of the Islamic peoples and their civilization, and as its role is not limited to referring to a specific historical era. It goes beyond that to translate the level of awareness of cultural creative and civilizational heritage characterizing that era. A historical monument, for example, is not known only as material and geometric volumes, but also as a manifestation of cultural and social awareness. The study of any archaeological site requires an approach to the overlapped and intersecting

fields of knowledge, wherein elements of exact science react with other elements of abstract and concrete scientific, spiritual, religious, intellectual and humanitarian knowledge. The role of historical monuments in the Islamic world is reflected in the incentive feature, which calls for the improvement of the civilizational level of cultural entities, not for the reproduction of the previous models, but for the production of a variety of cultural and civilizational alternatives, in harmony with the originality and the specificity of the inherent historical moment, which would show the credibility of the continuity of the nation in construction, innovation and creation. In addition to their incentive feature, it can be said that historical monuments are implicitly giving away the moments of retreat and vacuum experienced by the nation, for stated or implied comparison. In addition, they are rightly considered the mirror that reflects the nature of cultural diversity characterizing the peoples across their historical and cultural itinerary. What is meant here by cultural diversity is the amount of cultural and creative concerns expressed in the multiple functions of historical buildings, for example, in the diversity of engineering visions adopted in their construction, as well as the multiplicity and diversity of their aesthetic components. Tourists can then know about all the technical and professional skills which marked some stage of civilizational development that characterized the mobility and vitality of the Islamic nation and its various peoples. The same goes for all the tangible and intangible elements of the Islamic cultural heritage. In order to maintain and develop these elements, so as they can make the front of tourism marketing at the global level, the Strategy suggests the practical measures listed below:

- ◆ Activating the role of the Islamic Heritage Committee to perform its functions and terms of reference for the protection of the Islamic heritage.
- ◆ Adopting a policy for the rehabilitation of historical and heritage sites, through their integration into the real estate investment plans, being an essential source of economic development, in the prospect of making them Islamic and international tourist attractions.
- ◆ Providing support to academic bodies and to the institutions specialized in the revival and conservation of heritage.
- ◆ Cooperating with research centers specialized in regional and international heritage, and with the World Tourism Organization, in order to acquire and develop techniques and skills to preserve the heritage components, working, for example, on the development of three-dimensional digital versions concerning intangible heritage, in order to deepen the appreciation of its beauty by foreign tourists.
- ◆ Promoting and supporting the Arab and Islamic presence in the competent international bodies, including the World Heritage Committee, in order to raise and treat the common issues relating to the sector, including the bids of ancient Islamic sites to be classified as human heritage sites.
- ◆ Modernizing and updating the laws on heritage, in order to conform to international standards, taking into account the principle of local specificity.

- ◆ Taking care of the sites discovered locally and regional for facilitating access to them, in addition to sensitizing the population present in these sites to their historical and cultural worth.
- ◆ Integrating models of Islamic monuments in education curricula, and presenting them in cultural events, to raise awareness of heritage among future generations.
- ◆ Carrying out the ISESCO programme of Islamic heritage days, which aims, through monuments, museums, libraries and manuscript centres open to the public to enrich cultural tourism, and publicise the Islamic civilizational heritage, locally, regionally and internationally.

#### • Media

The media rehabilitation is a key factor in correcting the others' vision and perceptions of the host country, as they are often extremely ambiguous and distorted. They can be summarized as follows:

- ◆ **A perception that is subject to the projections of the central vision** of a traditional reference, which has divided the world into developed, developing and underdeveloped. The Islamic world is placed under the category of developing and underdeveloped countries, where tourists hold the value judgment congruent with this perception.
- ◆ **An orientalist perception:** the Arab-Islamic world in general is cornered in an illusionist and imaginary vision making tourists hope to discover a reality that coincides with their expectations.
- ◆ **A third perception based on the major imbalances** which the world is living in recent years, and which boil down the Islamic world to the notion of religious extremism and exclusion, contrary to Western values.
- ◆ **A fourth selective perception** tempting tourists to visit some specific cities of the Islamic world in order to enjoy specific tourist attractions. What is noticeable is that the interests of people with this selective tendency are divided between what is merely cultural, reflected, for example, in the focus on historical monuments or economic achievements, and what is decadent, translated in the search for the sensual pleasures of all kinds and forms.

Outside of these multiple and conflicting classifications, you can also talk about a **fifth perception closer to objectivity. It is represented by a category of tourists enlightened by their own convictions derived from an accurate and objective reading of the reality of Islam, thereby moderating the reductionist and suspicious projections.**

If the direct visit of tourists contributes relatively to redress that image, a large group of them maintain it in their mind, despite their direct contact with the place, especially if they had the opportunity to experience some situations identical to their previous convictions.

In this context, the Strategy proposes the following practical measures for the rehabilitation of the media sector, and to rebuild the information system, effective in correcting the tourist's erroneous perception:

- ◆ Considering the media sector as an integral part of the infrastructure of the tourism sector, and one of its main components, in view of its substantive or symbolic power, behind the success or failure of any cultural or tourist project, regardless of its sponsors.
- ◆ Developing a multi-lingual specialized web portal, with the Member States collecting its data related to the coverage of conferences and symposia, or to the update of the information concerning the cultural and tourism product of each individual State. It is to be enhanced with documents, photos and maps, providing those interested, from every part of the globe, in all the elements necessary to inform them about the sector's potentials, and to identify its tangible and intangible heritage, as well as the developments in its investment projects and its scheduled artistic and creative events throughout the year.
- ◆ Encouraging film industry officials to produce documentaries and television programmes, painting an honourable objective picture of the cultural and civilizational maturity of the Islamic personality, and of its values advocating constructive communication.
- ◆ Creating the objective conditions for opening up to foreign media institutions, in order to correct prejudices they happen to have which affect negatively the cultural and civilizational identity of the Islamic world, especially in some situations of tension and political controversy.
- ◆ Conducting training sessions, at the regional level, for young media professionals, supervised by experts in the field of audiovisual, and cultural and touristic marketing.
- ◆ Issuing multi-lingual quarterly regional bulletins meant to define the developments of the cultural tourism sector within the Member States.
- ◆ Strengthening the Arab and Islamic presence in the various phases of the World Summit on the Information Society, to keep abreast of the developments and achievements in the sector.
- ◆ Preparing informative material to be broadcast by satellite televisions specialized in the promotion of the cultural tourism product.
- ◆ Networking websites specialized in cultural tourism across the Muslim world.

• **Human resources**

The qualification of human resources is urgently needed, in order to promote the cultural tourism sector, being a symbolic and tangible capital, which sows the seeds of life in the soil of any cultural, industrial or commercial project. No matter how available and variable are the touristic sites all types of infrastructure related to them in the host country, their activation, promotion and marketing remain dependent upon the availability of human capacities qualified to improve the conditions of their

presentation for tourism investment at the regional and international levels. This makes these resources an essential engine that cannot be overlooked. Due to the overlapping and intertwined nature of the fields of the cultural tourism sector, which almost covers all the vital interests of the host country, reckoning the types of these resources needs a larger space, which is not allowed by the Strategy's guidelines, especially since some of them have been referred to in the previous three chapters. These resources are characterized by their presence in more than a ministerial and administrative system, depending on the multiplicity of the tourist areas, which have different competences, according to the competent authorities, such as the ministries of culture, of endowments, of agriculture, of housing, of education, and of waters and mining. Talking about the human resources of a ministry, or an institution close to the sector, means talking about the hierarchical distribution of workers in all administrative frameworks, such as executives, technical and academic experts, hotels managers, people in charge of reserves and therapeutic sites, tourist guides, cleaning agents and so on. Based on this approach, the process of qualifying these human resources will naturally vary according to their sector-based functions. It will go through the internationally recognized training channels, either by obtaining scientific and academic diplomas, or by participating in training sessions and workshops in the country and abroad, so as the human resources keep seeking continuous learning, in line with the transformations and successive developments taking place in the field of cultural tourism. The measures proposed by the Strategy in this regard are as follows:

- ◆ Developing participatory programmes, in the form of workshops and training seminars for the staff working in the sector, particularly in the area of project development, marketing, promotion and computing, in order to develop competencies and expertise, and keep pace with the rapid theoretical and practical progress that is being witnessed in this field.
- ◆ Organizing regional meetings on the importance of private sector investment in the field of cultural tourism, and the ways to encourage private investors to promote the sector.
- ◆ Organizing meetings between experts of the Islamic countries, in different terms of reference, and then between them and international experts, to exchange experiences, update their knowledge, and have access to new mechanisms for the advancement of the tourism sector.
- ◆ Rehabilitating the tourist guide sector, legally, organizationally and cognitively, by conducting workshops supervised by specialized experts. The objective is to help tourist guides develop their skills, and keep them regularly updated on the developments of cultural tourism.
- ◆ Organizing local and regional fora and workshops, in order to deepen the awareness of the actors in the Member States of the importance and efficacy of the joint regional projects, which have a significant role in strengthening the bonds of solidarity and collaboration, and exchanging field and theory expertise.
- ◆ Allocating documentary programmes, in local media channels, for educating the population on the civilizational and economic importance of cultural

tourism, taking into account the preservation and protection of values from foreign influences, negatively affecting the originality of local customs and traditions.

#### • **Investment**

Investment development involves the integration of cultural tourism in the economic cycle, which requires the employment of all the mechanisms referred to in the above areas. Investment is the cornerstone of tourism projects, which no party can put at risk, except if it has concrete guarantees to invest its funds in a specific cultural tourism sector. The more integrated the conditions to stimulate investment are, the more likely the private and public sectors are to finance major tourism projects, along with international organizations and institutions with economic and financial power. This can be achieved through:

- ◆ Elaborating accurate and convincing projects, deriving their credibility from the commitment to the internationally recognized standards in the field of cultural tourism, in order to ensure their financing by the relevant funds, and provide for their marketing.
- ◆ According priority to joint regional projects, which contribute to the development of cross-border experiences, likely to reach the level of model experiences drawing the attention of international media and tourism marketing agencies.
- ◆ Continuous updating of data, depending on the evolution of the product, and on the potential cultural and economic shocks in the world.
- ◆ Organizing meetings of experts to study the most effective ways to raise the value of the cultural tourism product, ensure its quality and develop joint plans for the implementation of programmes for the promotion of cultural tourism, and the completion of studies on the demand and supply, in accordance with recognized international standards.
- ◆ Strengthening presence at international exhibitions, for exchanging expertise, promoting the Islamic product and opening up new marketing opportunities.
- ◆ Encouraging investors to establish travel agencies specialized in cultural tourism for young people, NGOs, and community service institutions of the various administrative departments.

## Conclusion

The contents and directions of the Strategy for the Development of Cultural Tourism in the Islamic World confirm the importance of the effective and basic role that can be played by this sector in the three main integrated areas of action:

**First:** The investment of the sector of cultural tourism in strengthening the bonds of cooperation and solidarity among Islamic countries, through the establishment of regulatory and institutional channels, aiming to secure the various participatory plans, which are dictated by the conditions for upgrading the tourist activity, from the exchange of expertise to the elaboration of major regional or international investment projects. This ambition can, undoubtedly, be achieved through the commitment of Islamic countries to activate a tourism strategy, agreed upon and accredited by the official circles, particularly through a simplified and expeditious mechanism of administrative and customs procedures relating to the organization of trips, and increasing the volume of their flow among the Islamic countries, to identify their common heritage, in addition to encouraging businessmen to discover new sources of investment outside their local and regional borders.

**Second:** The investment of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, with its multiplicity and diversity accumulated by the Islamic civilization through its long history, in order to build bridges of communication between them and the rest of the world's peoples, enabling it to regain confidence in its creative and innovative contribution in the making of the future human civilization, based on an equal dialogue unconditioned by any ethnic or religious considerations, and enhanced by the high human values leading to the spontaneous and flexible integration among all cultures and civilizations, away from false conflicts and contradictions.

**Third:** The investment of the cultural tourism sector in the diversification of ways to achieve sustainable development, as its multiple fields require the opening of variety workshops, in terms of specialties and modalities of work. This is sure to contribute to the development of strong and convincing tourism projects, with a high degree of credibility in the international market. This, in turn, will allow for wider job opportunities, with all that this implies for the national income and economic performance advancement of Muslim countries.

It goes without saying that exploring the prospects of these integrated domains of action is incumbent upon the will of Member States to set up a legal and administrative framework to serve in the implementation of the Draft Strategy, building on its broad lines, which include the core areas of the cultural tourism sector, targeting their investment as an internationally marketable civilizational product. The Strategy also includes the mechanisms for achieving these targets, in view of the significant progress made by the Islamic countries in this regard, and the growing awareness, among their official circles, of the major changes that govern the world's circuit over the last decades. These conditions make us confident that the prospects for setting the Strategy in motion are quite promising.

**“And say: ‘Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers’”** (Surah At-Tawba, verse 105).

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	
• <b>Methodology.....</b>	
<b>CHAPTER I: CONCEPTS .....</b>	
<b>1. Defining Cultural Tourism .....</b>	
<b>2. The concept of cultural tourism as an integral part of the         Muslim culture.....</b>	
<b>CHAPTER II: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES .....</b>	
<b>CHAPTER III: AREAS OF CULTURAL TOURISM .....</b>	
<b>1. Religious tourism.....</b>	
<b>2. Historical tourism .....</b>	
<b>3. Ecotourism .....</b>	
<b>4. Health tourism.....</b>	
<b>5. Conference tourism.....</b>	
<b>6. Festival tourism .....</b>	
<b>7. Exhibition tourism .....</b>	
<b>8. Religious tracks and ancient trade routes tourism .....</b>	
<b>9. Archaeological tourism.....</b>	
<b>CHAPTER IV: MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CULTURAL TOURISM STRATEGY ....</b>	
<b>1. The draft programme of action .....</b>	
<b>2. Mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategy's overall         programme .....</b>	
<b>3. Supportive measures to ensure the effective implementation of         the overall participatory programme .....</b>	
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	