
UN body backs IPE vision on tourism

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The United Nations' World Tourism Organization (**UNWTO**) has announced its support for the Initiative for Palestinian Economy (IFE) as the "road map" for the development of tourism in the Palestinian territories. UNWTO committed to supporting the OQR and the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) on a range of items including institutional building within MoTA to develop and implement a marketing strategy and plan.

In a **document** titled "The value and potential of tourism for socio-economic development in Palestine", the UNWTO notes that "the development of tourism in Palestine can harness significant socio-economic impacts within a relative short period of time ... Supporting tourism in Palestine is transforming these opportunities into community development and empowerment."

The UNWTO is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

The April 2014 document examines the opportunities and challenges for the tourism sector in the Palestinian territories, and also sets out the UNWTO's commitment for technical support for the Office of the Quartet Representative's strategy on tourism. The document states that "the Initiative for Palestinian Economy (IFE) – Tourism Sector developed by The Office of the Quartet Representative offers a comprehensive road map to advance tourism in Palestine and make the sector one of the most important contributors to its socioeconomic development and job creation."

- Areas of UNWTO technical assistance may include:
- Tourism policy and planning
- Product development and diversification
- Investment promotion
- Quality standards
- Skills development and capacity building
- Institutional building and governance, namely the creation of a tourism promotion structure
- Development and implementation of a marketing strategy and plan

The document follows discussions between senior UNWTO officials and Quartet Representative Tony Blair on the importance of boosting tourism to the Palestinian territories.

Tourism is one of the eight sectors set out under the **Initiative for the Palestinian Economy** – a detailed plan designed to effect transformative change and substantial growth in the Palestinian economy and create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

Under the IPE's tourism strategy, OQR staff are working with the Palestinians to kick start the process of improving the tourism offer by developing four geographic tourist hubs across the West Bank: Bethlehem, Jericho, Nablus and Jerusalem. This includes organising joint workshops with the Ministry, the private sector tourism associations, municipalities, chamber of commerce, governors' offices and the Ministry of Local Government. The objective is to develop a joint vision and plan for each geographic hub that would give direction to the PA, as well as to donors and investors on what needs developments to be done and where. The tourism offer for each geographic hub will also be developed into a brand for marketing purposes.

OQR staff are also working with MoTA and UNWTO to develop the proper infrastructure and capacity within the ministry in order to effectively market the Palestinian territories as a tourist destination.

<http://www.quartetrep.org/quartet/news-entry/unwto-palestine-tourism/>