

ASTANA DECLARATION

18th session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

8 October 2009

Gathered in Astana (Kazakhstan), in a country that in past times was traversed by the ancient and legendary Silk Routes, the representatives of the countries participating in the eighteenth session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO),

Making reference to the Statutes of the World Tourism Organization and to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, which underline the role of this activity as a factor of economic and social development, but also as a vehicle for peace, understanding, cultural enrichment, environmental preservation and dialogue among peoples, Aware of the exceptional value and diversity of the tourism potential, both cultural and natural, of the countries that in the past were traversed by the ancient Silk Routes,

Underlining the importance of the initiative of the World Tourism Organization and of the United Nations system, which for fifteen years now has aimed to revive the ancient Silk Road as a supporting element of the tourism development of the immense region of Eurasia and the Middle East,

Recalling the commitment of 24 countries in favour of this initiative and calling upon the other members of the UNWTO that are interested to join it or to provide their support to it,

Recalling the declarations of Samarkand (1994), Khiva (1999) and Bukhara (2002), as well as the conclusions of the meetings organized by the UNWTO on the subject of the Silk Road in Xian (China) in 1996, Nara (Japan), Tehran (Iran) and Istanbul (Turkey) in 1997, Kyoto (Japan) and Almaty (Kazakhstan) in 1998, Beijing (China) in 2003, and once again in Almaty in 2008,

Underlining the growing interest of local authorities, and, in particular, of the representatives of the cultural and touristic cities situated along the Silk Road, as manifested by the Mayors' Forum held in Almaty in September 2008,

1. **Welcome** the success that the raising of the subject of the Silk Road has already met among operators of the tourism sector as well as among the media and the general public;
2. **Underline** the remarkable capacity for growth and for the sustainable development of products based on the cultural and ecological riches of the sites and attractions that lie all along the 12,000 kilometres of the ancient Routes;
3. **Draw the attention** of governments to the obstacle posed to visitors who wish to discover these riches by the multiplicity of visas and administrative procedures that make it difficult to cross borders, and request the UNWTO Secretary-General to take all necessary initiatives in consultation with the pertinent administrations of countries concerned on this issue;

4. **Express their wish** for the UNWTO to continue to support the promotional efforts aimed at enhancing the visibility and market access of the Silk Road destinations among the professionals of the countries that generate tourists who travel to these destinations;
5. **Lend their support** to the initiatives of the municipal and local authorities, based on public-private partnership, aimed at building new tourism attractions themed on the Silk Road;
6. **Request** the UNWTO Secretary-General a) to further increase the effectiveness of the means the Secretariat of the Organization applies in favour of the initiative, b) to strengthen the coordination among Member States and c) to revisit the cooperation agreement with the Support Office opened in Samarkand in 2004, with the assistance of Uzbekistan, in line with the current review process concerning all UNWTO external entities, and with a view to further supporting the Silk Road Initiative;
7. **Appeal** to the United Nations agencies and programmes, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO, which have shown interest in the initiative on various occasions, to lend it stronger support in conjunction with the UNWTO; and
8. **Decide** to once again discuss this subject and to take stock of the progress made, on the occasion of the nineteenth session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization in 2011.

The Declaration was adopted on 8 October 2009 in Astana by the participants in the 18th General Assembly, generously hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan.