



Summary of Silk Road Activities 1993-2011

1993

Silk Road Project General Assembly Bali, Republic of Indonesia

In a world of highly competitive global tourism, the **World Tourism Organization (WTO)** conceptualized the idea of a long-term tourism project that would promote the natural and cultural richness of the historic Silk Road and unite the participating countries through tourism exchange. During this conference, WTO requested the Secretary General to accord this initiative with **A/RES/316(X)** within the resolutions of the General Assembly.

Additional Assembly information: <http://www.unwto.org/conferences/ga/ga.php?lang=E>

1994

First International Silk Road Meeting Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan

Samarkand Declaration

Under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and former Secretary General of WTO, Antonio Enriquez Savignac, nineteen participating countries adopted the **Samarkand Declaration** on Silk Road Tourism. With the Samarkand Declaration a new trans-continental tourism concept was born, its main objectives being: commitment to regional cooperation, thus contributing to regional stability and prosperity; establishment of a high quality tourism brand, uniting different stakeholders from all levels; and the firm decision to link culture with tourism. The countries of the Silk Road share an immense cultural and natural heritage. The strength of the Silk Road tourism project lies in its ability to promote this added value, while safeguarding important issues such as sustainability, heritage conservation and respect to local communities.

Samarkand Declaration available here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/declarations>

Adoption of the Silk Road Logotype

In order to embody the unity of all participants (Member States, organizations, public and private stakeholders, etc.) under a common banner, a distinct logo representing the WTO Silk Road tourism project was adopted.

Silk Road Events 1994/95: World Travel Market London and at ITB Berlin

The objectives adopted at the First International Silk Road Meeting in Uzbekistan were put into practice for the first time at the World Travel Market in London (November 1994). At this event, the WTO Secretariat sponsored a meeting that brought different stakeholders interested in the Silk Road together (the Member States, tour operators, travel trade press, etc.).

At ITB Berlin (March 1995) a 10 minute long promotional video clip - "Travelling the Silk Road" - a WTO/ UNESCO joint venture produced by WTN Productions London, was presented. Other activities included a Business to Business meeting and a joint press conference offered by WTO und UNESCO representatives outlining the main guidelines of the Silk Road tourism project.

1996

First Silk Road Travel Forum Xi'an, People's Republic of China

The Travel Forum in Xi'an brought over 110 tourism officials, scholars, and journalists from 25 nations together, as well as representatives from UNESCO and UNDP. At the forum, the participating Member States agreed upon a document that established a framework for future **joint marketing and promotional strategies**. The Travel Forum also cleared the way for Silk Road countries to establish new business links with tour operators active across the region.

1997

Second Silk Road Travel Forum Nara, Japan

In collaboration with UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Tourism Exchange Centre (APTEC), WTO organized the Second Travel Forum in Nara, Japan. The Forum followed on the objectives already outlined in Xi'an: joint marketing and promotional strategies, and strengthening ties between the Silk Road countries and the travel trade. Furthermore, WTO presented **The Silk Road**, an extensive Silk Road tourism inventory containing information regarding attractions, facilities, accommodations, transport and information centres. The publication was financed by the government of Japan and was updated in 2006.

The Silk Road (2006) and additional Programme publications available here:
<http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/publications>

Second International Silk Road Meeting Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Organized by WTO, UNESCO and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Second International Silk Road Meeting focussed on the Silk Road's **natural and cultural heritage**. Cultural based tourism not only strengthens local tourism structures, but also introduces sustainability into the total equation (cultural preservation and conservation, local development, social prosperity). Additional topics included: joint Silk Road marketing campaigns, the intensification of cultural exchange, the development of new Silk Road tourism products, and the improvement of product delivery.

Recommendations:

- Creation of a Silk Road Website

- Establishment of an annual Silk Road Tourism Day and a Motor Rally event
- Adoption of a Silk Road Anthem

Additional information, World Tourism Day:

<http://www.unwto.org/worldtourismday/index.php?lang=E>

International Silk Road Meeting on Tourism and the Environment

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

The Meeting, jointly organized by the State Agency of Tourism and Sport under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, WTO, UNDP, and UNESCO, was attended by over 120 participants specialized in Silk Road tourism and ecotourism. The participant countries recognised the need to introduce **sustainability and environmental protection policies** into their development strategies. Additional issues discussed included: investment possibilities along the Silk Road and infrastructure issues. The participants noted that adequate infrastructure is a prerequisite for the successful development of tourism. In this sense, WTO, UNESCO and UNDP agreed to assist the Kyrgyz Government in this field of endeavour.

UNWTO General Assembly Workshop

Istanbul, Republic of Turkey

The workshop, organized by WTO, gave key stakeholders the opportunity to discuss relevant matters concerning the Silk Road tourism project. The session concluded with the adoption of two new initiatives (resolution **A/RES/367(XII)**) by the General Assembly: (1) to develop an Action Plan linking Silk Road Handicraft Centres; a similar project, carries out by UNDP, was already underway in Uzbekistan, and (2) the attending participants firmly supported an initiative to develop a 26- part television travel series featuring Silk Road destinations.

1998

Third Silk Road Travel Forum Kyoto, Japan

Launched as a joint effort between WTO and APTEC, the Kyoto Forum provided an ideal opportunity to familiarize Silk Road countries and their tourism products with the salient Japanese market. The Forum's main objectives were met: to establish a business relationship between the Silk Road countries and the promising Japanese outbound market, as well as to provide the travel trade with detailed information about on-going Silk Road tourism activities.

Recommendations:

- Urging national tourism administrations to appeal to their governments regarding Visa Facilitation along the Silk Road and the exploration of a possible Silk Road tourist visa for all countries
- Silk Road countries should begin promotion in Japanese market gradually, in order to establish substantial business links with Japanese counterparts
- The targeting of seniors in the Japanese market as an affluent age group for tourism
- Appeal to aviation authorities for further improvements in facilitating charter flights for multi-national tours

Conclusions of Third Silk Road Travel Forum, please visit the "past events" option on our website

Silk Road Tour Operators Workshop Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Outbound/ Inbound Tour operators from the major tourism markets were invited to this workshop to discuss measures concerning **brand awareness and destination management**. The Workshop focused on carrying out critical appraisal of the Silk Road from a uniquely external view, identifying possible weak points and proposing suggestions that would further strengthen the product.

Third International Silk Road Meeting Tbilisi, Georgia

Attended by over 85 international delegates from 26 countries, the Third International Silk Road Meeting constituted an important step in establishing the Silk Road as a tourism destination. Building on the advances made until the date (a unified framework, common Action Plans, tourism sector networking, etc.), the high level attendants agreed upon future guidelines: to increase efforts to achieve global awareness for the Silk Road brand, to promote intercultural dialogue, to intensify product development, and to invest in human capital. Additionally, the Meeting also focused on investment opportunities, hotel development, and travel facilitation issues.

Recommendations:

- Identification of visa restrictions as most serious impediment to the project, calling upon tourism administrations to appeal to their governments regarding visa and frontier formalities
- Establishment of business links with the aviation industry of the region

Conclusions of the Third International Silk Road Meeting in Georgia, please visit the "past events" option on our website

1999

WTO/UNESCO Tourism and Culture Seminar Khiva, Republic of Uzbekistan

The joint WTO/UNESCO Seminar focussed on issues relating to cultural heritage. Discussed matters included: (1) development of guidelines to help preserve cultural heritage, and (2) endorsement of tourism as an instrument to drive prosperity, cultural exchange and understanding between cultures. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Organization of World Heritage Sites (OWHC), present at the seminar, assured their assistance in developing future projects.

Recommendations:

- Support the aims of the proclamation of the year 2000 - "International Year for a Culture of Peace" - as stated in **Resolution 52/15** of the UN General Assembly
- Call for the adoption of the WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism by 2000

Khiva Declaration

The Khiva Declaration, supported by WTO, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, calls upon the countries of Central Asia to adopt policies that can help preserve their natural and cultural heritage.

Khiva Declaration available here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/declarations>

2002

Fourth International Silk Road Meeting Bukhara, Republic of Uzbekistan

Attendants of the Fourth International Silk Road Meeting convened in Bukhara to address the issue of sustainable tourism development, stressing the benefits of cultural stimulation and ecological tourism along the Silk Road.

Bukhara Declaration

The signatories of the Bukhara Declaration identified over excessive visa and custom regulations as an impediment to the progress of the Silk Road as a tourism destination. Consequently, WTO appealed to the Silk Road countries to ease their visa formalities. Additional issues included an invitation to local and international stakeholders to invest in Silk Road tourism, thus guaranteeing a perspective of economic and social stability, and the request of the WTO Secretariat to maximize the full potential of the Silk Road Tourism Project emblem for global promotion.

Bukhara Declaration available here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/declarations>
Conclusions of the Fourth International Silk Road Meeting available on "past events" option on our website

Establishment of a "Silk Road Support Office" in Samarkand

The delegates attending the Fourth International Silk Road Meeting also agreed to study Uzbekistan's offer to host a Silk Road Support Office in Samarkand. It was at this city where the original Silk Road Project was launched in 1994.

2003

UNWTO General Assembly Workshop Beijing, People's Republic of China

At the fifteenth session of the UNWTO General Assembly, senior officials of WTO and UNDP convened to discuss the possibility of implementing an inter-regional Silk Road Project focussed on areas such as trade, transport, investment, and cross-boarder formalities. The necessity to locate donors that could support future decision-making was also addressed. Additional resolutions adopted were: the creation of the first World Committee on Tourism Ethics within **A/RES/469(XV)**, and the proposal to establish "International Year of Tourism" within **A/RES/456(XV)**.

2004

The Silk Road Initiative (SRI)

Since 2004, UNWTO has also been a partner of an ambitious and long-term **inter-regional Silk Road project which is funded by UNDP**. The Silk Road Initiative (SRI) was established to enhance regional cooperation and development in the areas of tourism, trade and investment. The key aims of the Initiative are to improve policy and legal conditions for trade; to attract investment to the region; and to promote and attract tourism. The programme's overarching goal is to assist the region meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of reducing poverty and promoting growth and gender equality. Since its inception, SRI has involved the participation of the Governments of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As the Initiative develops, there are plans to extend its participation to all Silk Road countries. Within the framework of the SRI; several international events have been organized, particularly with regard to the development and promotion of the Silk Road at the municipal level.

Five **Silk Road Mayor Forums** have been organized: Tashkent, Uzbekistan (October 2006), Lanzhou, China (July 2007), Almaty, Kazakhstan (September 2008), Pyeongtaek, Republic of Korea (May 2009), and Rizhao, China (January 2010). In addition to these conferences, meetings have also been organized on Silk Road Investment, with a view to strengthening dialogue and collaboration between a wide range of regional public and private sector representatives interested in investing in Silk Road tourism development.

The UN Silk Road City Awards

As part of the wider initiative, UNWTO is collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to design and launch the **UN Silk Road City Awards** initiative. The initiative, held on an annual basis, awards the title of "UN Silk Road City" to a select group of cities which demonstrate their historic links to the Silk Road, a commitment to sustainable tourism and cultural, environmental and socio-economic development. This initiative is the first awards scheme of its kind to be launched by the United Nations exclusively for the Silk Road. It will play a key role in highlighting the cultural wealth diversity and innovation of the Silk Road countries, their outstanding tourism attractions and unique history to the wider international community. As well as seeking to raise awareness of the Silk Road and help foster sustainable tourism development, this prestigious initiative will also provide Silk Road countries with a unique opportunity to promote and enhance their cities to a wider audience, bringing together people from diverse cultural backgrounds and help promote greater cooperation, understanding and cultural dialogue between the participating countries.

The awards scheme was formally launched in December 2008 with the **first meeting of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG)** at the UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid. The Eminent Persons Group (EPG) will play an important role in the UN Silk Road City Awards initiative, not least in promoting and raising awareness of Silk Road tourism, culture and tradition. Invited members will have a considerable knowledge of Silk Road countries and the wider region, with a diverse range of backgrounds, including politics, business, tourism, academia and the arts. The Group will act primarily as an independent panel of experts which will assume the responsibility of evaluating and judging applications of shortlisted cities, and subsequently selecting the cities which are to be awarded the prestigious status of *UN Silk Road City*.

2006

First Silk Road Investment Forum Xi'an, People's Republic of China

The principal goal of the First Investment Forum was to promote the Silk Road as a new and dynamic investment destination. It endorsed a number of concrete actions to pursue regional cooperation and development, as well as fostering dialogue between the various stakeholders from the region. Several new products, including the first regional **Silk Road Investors' Guide**, the first **Silk Road Map** of the region, and two new issues of the **Silk Road Newsletters**, were presented at the Forum.

2009

UNWTO General Assembly Silk Road Meeting Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

Astana Declaration

Arranged by UNWTO, the Astana Declaration, adopted during the 18th Session of the General Assembly, brought to the attention of participating governments the continuing obstacle of visa facilitation and the multiplicity of administrative procedures. These issues are especially important, for they hinder an increase in cross- border tourism flows. The Declaration also recommended further integration among Member States, in light of the ongoing global economic crisis. The Declaration also appealed to UNDP and UNESCO for further support and assistance.

Astana Declaration available here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/declarations>

Shiraz Silk Road Mayors Forum Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran

The Fifth Silk Road Mayors Forum was hosted by the Municipality of Shiraz and the Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization. The Forum culminated with the adoption of the **Shiraz Declaration**. Representatives from over 48 cities in 26 different countries attended the event, supported by UNWTO, UNESCO, and the Silk Road Global Alliance. The forum centred upon bringing the international initiative to the local level and promoting new opportunities for supporters of the Silk Road (a networking event connecting stakeholders from the local, regional, national and international level). Along with the passing of the Shiraz Declaration, the following objectives were agreed upon:

- Promotion of peace, unity and cooperation through the Silk Road
- The development of transit networks including air, sea, rail and highways
- The establishment of a committee to examine the feasibility of a Silk Road airline
- The establishment of Silk Road parks and boulevards in all Silk Road Member States

Shiraz Declaration available here: <http://silkroad.unwto.org/en/content/declarations>

Fifth International Silk Road Meeting Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan

On 8-9 October 2010, over 250 delegates from more than 25 countries met in the historic Registan Square, Samarkand, Uzbekistan to discuss opportunities for driving tourism development through strengthening the Silk Road brand. Organized jointly by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Government of Uzbekistan, the Meeting was a milestone event marking the commencement of an important new phase in the development of the UNWTO Silk Road Programme.

At the Meeting, representatives from Ministries of Tourism, UN agencies, destination marketing organizations and private sector stakeholders expressed their support and commitment to increasing efforts to develop a more internationally competitive, seamless Silk Road tourism product.

UNWTO introduced its draft “**Silk Road Action Plan 2010/2011**” as a framework for development and encouraged feedback, input and support from all Silk Road stakeholders. The Action Plan addresses the challenges facing Silk Road tourism and sets out strategic activity within three key focus areas:

- Marketing and promotion
- Capacity building and destination management
- Travel facilitation

Additionally, participants at the Meeting identified seven development priorities:

- Conduct a comprehensive Silk Road brand analysis, identifying key market segments, perception and values
- Develop a brand toolkit, tailor- made to the needs of varying Silk Road stakeholder groups
- Promote the brand through targeted, collaborative promotional activities
- Foster community- based development projects, particularly focusing on enhanced cultural heritage management
- Maximise collaborative efforts with other United Nations agencies, NGOs, investment institutions and donors

- Address travel facilitation issues, including border and visa formalities, working towards the development of a Silk Road tourist visa
- Achieve our mission to raise the Silk Road's profile through achieving sustainable, responsible and internationally competitive tourism development

Silk Road Action Plan available on the Silk Road website

2011

Silk Road Ministers' Summit at ITB Berlin 2011 Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany 9-13 March

On 9 March 2011, Ministers, Ambassadors and high-ranking officials from over 20 countries met at ITB Berlin at the first annual **UNWTO Silk Road Ministers' Summit** to discuss the challenges and opportunities for Silk Road tourism development. Organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and supported by ITB Berlin, the Summit was an opportunity for key decision makers to share ideas on how to enhance cooperation to promote and strengthen the Silk Road tourism brand. At the Summit, UNWTO introduced new concepts and initiatives, and sought input from the Member States on the proposed next steps moving forward. UNWTO reiterated the importance of addressing key obstacles that continue to impede tourism growth along the Silk Road, such as visas, border crossing procedures and transnational cooperation issues.

The Summit was attended by representatives from the following UNWTO Member States: Armenia, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, India, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

The following key points came out of the Summit debate and discussions:

- There is **strong support and endorsement** from the Member States to advance the UNWTO Silk Road Action Plan
- **Three key focus areas** for development remain: i) marketing and promotion, ii) capacity building and destination management, and iii) travel facilitation
- **Social media** will play an important role in promotional activity for the Silk Road, looking ahead
- The **Silk Road Task Force** is currently being mobilized
- UNWTO will be working closely with sister **UN agencies** in pursuit of its development and capacity building activities
- While some progress is being made in a number of Silk Road Member States on the issue of **travel facilitation**, much remains to be done as insufficient information on border control procedures and complicated visa processes continue to prevent travel to the regions
- **Public-private partnerships** remain increasingly important, and UNWTO will be engaging private sector partners and sponsors to drive the development of the Programme initiatives
- UNWTO will continue its efforts to promote the Silk Road as an **overarching brand at international fairs**, with a consolidated programme of activities already established in Europe (ITB Berlin and WTM London), UNWTO is now concentrating on expanding Silk Road presence at Asian fairs
- UNWTO is seeking donors to support the development of a **comprehensive market research study** on the Silk Road brand

Additional UNWTO Silk Road events at ITB Berlin included:

- A **Silk Road B2B Tour Operators Networking Event** that brought inbound and outbound tour operators together to explore new business opportunities
- A **Silk Road Hour**, a collection of short films and live cultural performances featuring the destinations of the Silk Road, organized by the National Tourism Administrations, was shown daily at the fair
- A **Workshop on the Protection of Tourists/Consumers and Travel Organizers**