



CAREC REGIONAL WORKSHOP TOURISM PORTAL BETA VERSION

26 January 2021

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

I. Introduction

1. A Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) consultation webinar on the tourism portal was held virtually on 26 January 2021. Tourism officials from the eleven CAREC countries, private sector representatives as well as ADB project officers and consultants from the technical assistance consortium attended the webinar. The objectives of the webinar were to (i) present the beta version of the tourism portal to the participants and gather their feedback and suggestions on the scope and overall structure; and (ii) discuss the next steps, particularly with regards to information collection and content generation. Ms. Ramola Singru, ADB Senior Urban Development Specialist and Ms. Carmen Garcia Perez, ADB Regional Cooperation Specialist welcomed the participants and provided opening remarks. The agenda and list of participants are in Appendix 1 and 2.

II. Rationale

2. The CAREC Tourism Strategy 2030 was endorsed on 7 December at the 19th CAREC Ministerial Conference. One of the strategic pillars of the CAREC Tourism Strategy 2030 is marketing and branding. This includes supporting the creation and promotion of a common umbrella brand ("Visit Silk Road") through the development of a CAREC tourism web portal. The portal will serve as a regional tool for sharing tourism-related information and generating business opportunities for the private sector in CAREC countries.

3. The CAREC tourism portal targets two different audiences: institutional and travelers. The institutional part will be a tool for linking regional partners and promoting information sharing, including on tourism projects and investment-related information, tourism data and statistics, events, and educational and training resources. The sections of the portal targeting potential and actual travelers will focus on providing information about the countries, regions, and tourism attractions, whilst promoting the services of private sector tourism providers in the region.

III. Highlights of the Workshop

4. The ADB project team presented the scope and objectives of the web portal as well as its alignment with the CAREC Tourism Strategy 2030. The project team noted that, as a first step, the web portal is being developed only in English. Once the English version is fully operational, the Russian version will be developed. Mr. Pedro Ferreira, web development expert, presented the web portal features and navigation structure, including (i) portal pages depicting the seven priority tourism regions (cluster groups) in CAREC and the tourism attractions and experiences within the priority regions; (ii) areas within the portal for partners (tour operators and other private sector providers) to have their offerings inserted; and (iii) institutional areas of the portal, including education and training features, investment-related features, as well as the publications and statistics section.

5. Mr. Carlos Faria, team leader of the project team, presented the envisioned timeline for the operationalization of the web portal and the templates for information collection. The proposed timeline for information collection is as follows: (i) 8 weeks for provision of tourism-related content (information on countries, regions, and tourism attractions); (ii) 6 weeks for

provision of the institutional and investment-related content; and (iii) 6 weeks for provision of the learning and education content. Templates for information collection on countries, regions, and tourism attractions have already been prepared to ensure consistency and to facilitate the process of gathering, reviewing, and uploading information onto the website.

6. Participants expressed their gratitude to the CAREC Secretariat for the conduct of the webinar and welcomed the CAREC tourism portal, noting that such comprehensive tool is highly needed to support countries' tourism promotion efforts and attract more tourists to the region. Participants agreed on the overall structure of the portal and provided valuable feedback and suggestions with regards to adjustments and additional features that could be integrated in the portal, as follows:

7. **Inclusion of more user-generated content.** Participants noted that the portal could be made more dynamic and interactive by including sections that allow users and tourists to share their experiences. This could include blogs, articles, comments and reviews on tourism attractions, and links to social media. This is key as tourists increasingly rely on what they have learned from media (particularly social media) and word-of-mouth when selecting their destinations. The Mekong Tourism website offers a good example on how user-generated content could be included in a regional tourism portal. In addition, online surveys to measure tourists' satisfaction after travel could also be considered.

8. **Greater emphasis on private sector.** Participants highlighted the importance of using the tourism portal as a platform for local businesses (tour operators, hospitality providers, etc.) to advertise and market their products and services. This will help generate revenues and income for the local tourism industry as well as facilitate business-to-business relations and collaboration between private sector stakeholders in the region.

9. **Complementarity with national websites and resources.** Participants noted that a lot of information is currently available in their respective national tourism websites and, therefore, the CAREC tourism portal could be strengthened by including links to these websites and other tourism-related national resources. As the CAREC tourism portal will also include a section on projects, links to the websites of the agencies in charge of investment promotion could also be included. Linked to this, it was suggested that the section on projects could also include: (i) information on tourism-related projects being implemented by other development partners; and (ii) a section including best practices on tourism investments. At the same time, while the information already available within the tourism agencies can be used, it will be important that the CAREC tourism portal generates its own original content. This, however, may require more time than the envisioned timeline.

10. **Differentiated experiences.** Participants noted that travelers visiting the portal may have different profiles. General country guides can be useful for providing information to tourists that have limited knowledge about Silk Road and tourism attractions in CAREC countries. However, the portal should also be able to offer valuable information for repeating visitors. This could be achieved by including a page with cross-border routes with different durations, or by providing links to local websites to offer tourists the possibility of deepening the content. For example, Ms. Kiyal Kenzhematova, Deputy Director of Tourism Department of the Kyrgyz Republic shared with the participants 3D maps with the main tourism spots of the country which have been recently prepared and noted that this could be replicated in other CAREC countries.

11. **Tourism data and statistics.** Participants stressed that, at the moment, there is no standard methodology for data collection and tourism statistics in CAREC countries. Hence, it will be necessary to include a description on the methodology used by each country in the section on tourism data and statistics. The information available from UNWTO with regards to data and the specific methodological aspects could be used for this purpose. On this



matter, Mr. Giorgi Bregadze, Head of the Research and Planning Department of the Georgian National Tourism Administration and CAREC Tourism Focal for Georgia, made a proposal to undertake a research on the current status of tourism data collection in all CAREC countries, existing shortcomings, and recommendations for standardization of tourism statistics in the region.

12. Other proposed suggestions and adjustments included: (i) in the education page, provide a list of institutions with courses, degrees, scholarships, and capacity building programs in the tourism sector; and (ii) revise the order in which countries are displayed in the website based on the alphabetical order followed in other CAREC events (i.e. PRC to be included after Azerbaijan). Participants also requested that the CAREC Secretariat further consults with the tourism focal points in each country once all the information has been uploaded for final validation before the portal is launched.

13. The ADB project team thanked the participants for their active participation and contributions and stressed that it is highly important that the countries take ownership as the development of the tourism portal moves forward. The first step has been to put together a framework (beta version), which needs to be populated and made attractive through the content that will need to be provided by the countries. The beta version of the portal represents the basis for further development and additional features can be added in subsequent phases, including revenue generating features that could help finance the management of the portal and make it sustainable.

IV. Next Steps

14. The ADB project team will (i) revise and make the necessary adjustments in the beta version of the website based on the comments and feedback received from the CAREC countries; and (ii) circulate the templates to initiate the process of information gathering as per the timeline discussed during the webinar.

CAREC Tourism Web Portal – Presentation of Beta Version
26 January 2021; 1400-1600pm Manila time

Tuesday, 26 January 2021

1345–1400 Registration

1400–1600 CAREC Tourism Web Portal – Presentation of Beta Version
Virtual via Zoom

1400–1405 Introductory Remarks (5mins)

Ms. Ramola Naik Singru, Senior Urban Development Specialist and Ms. Carmen Garcia Perez, Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRD

1405–1430 Presentation on the CAREC Tourism Web Portal Beta Version (25min)

Mr. Carlos Faria, Team Leader and Tourism Economist; and Mr. Pedro Ferreira, Web Developer, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda

This session will present the beta version of the CAREC tourism web portal including key features and highlights as well as share the proposed timeline for submission of requested country information. Country information will be added to the portal as soon as received from country focals.

1430–1555 Open Discussion (85mins)

Moderator: Ms. Ramola Naik Singru, Senior Urban Development Specialist and Ms. Carmen Garcia Perez, Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRD

Participants from CAREC countries will be requested to provide their views and inputs on the beta version of the CAREC tourism web portal. Questions and suggestions on the portal are highly encouraged.

1555-1600 Wrap-up (5mins)

Ms. Ramola Naik Singru, Senior Urban Development Specialist and Ms. Carmen Garcia Perez, Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRD

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

I. CAREC COUNTRIES

A. Afghanistan

1. Mr. Murtaza Azizi, Director for Tourism, Ministry of Information and Culture
2. Mr. Ramin Ateeqzada, Director for Research and Development of Tourism, Ministry of Information and Culture

B. Azerbaijan

3. Ms. Gunay Bayramova, Head of Division on Tourism Industry and Projects, Tourism Policy and Strategy Department, State Tourism Agency and CAREC Tourism Focal

C. People's Republic of China

4. Mr. Chen Gao, Deputy Director, Department of International Exchanges and Cooperation, Ministry of Culture and Tourism and CAREC Tourism focal
5. Ms. Ningting Hu, Researcher, Statistics Department, China Tourism Academy
6. Ms. Jiachen Zhang, Deputy Director, Division of International Exchange, Inner Mongolia Bureau of Culture and Tourism

D. Georgia

7. Mr. Giorgi Bregadze, Head, Research and Planning Department, Georgian National Tourism Administration
8. Ms. Teona Nanava, Senior Specialist, Brand Development Division, Georgian National Tourism Administration

E. Kazakhstan

9. Ms. Malika Koshkarova, Chief Expert, Division of International Cooperation and Investment Promotion, Committee of the Tourism Industry, Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan
10. Mr. Marat Ainabekov, Deputy Head of the Tourism Department of Almaty City, Akimat of Almaty City
11. Ms. Dilyara Izenay, Senior Expert of the Tourism Department of Almaty City, Akimat of Almaty City
12. Ms. Zhanar Alchimbayeva, Head of Tourism Department, Akimat of Almaty region.
13. Mr. Arkau Shantayev, Head of Division of Infrastructure and Domestic Tourism Development, Tourism Department, Akimat of Almaty Region
14. Ms. Maiya Agadilova. Head of the Competence Centre of the International University of Tourism and Hospitality under the Ministry of Culture and Sports, Turkestan City
15. Mr. Zhomart Khazhy, Acting Head of the Tourism Department, Akimat of Zhambyl Region

16. Ms. Saltanat Tulekova, Senior Expert of Tourism Division of the Tourism Department, Akimat of Zhambyl Region
17. Mr. Sayat Meirbek, Expert of Tourism Division of the Tourism Department, Akimat of Zhambyl Region
18. Mr. Talgat Amanbaev, Managing Director, Kazakh Tourism National Company under the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
19. Mr. Kuanysh Dairbekov, Head of Digital & Promotion Department, Kazakh Tourism National Company, Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan
20. Mr. Daniyel Serzhanuly, Head of Product Development Department, Kazakh Tourism National Company, Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan
21. Ms. Rysty Karabayeva, President, Eurasian Tourism Association
22. Ms. Rashida Shaikenova, President of Kazakhstan Tourism Association, Almaty City
23. Mr. Timur Dyusengaliev, Director, Jibek Joly Company.
24. Mr. Yerkin Tikenov, Director, Incide Travel consulting and IT Tourism PhD, Student Kazakh Academy of Sports and Tourism, Almaty
25. Ms. Daulet Yessenaliyev, Deputy Director of the “Open Travel Advisory” LLP, Local Independent Expert in Tourism, Almaty City
26. Ms. Gumira Rymbayeva, Project Coordinator of EU/UNESCO on Silk Road, UNESCO, Almaty, Kazakhstan
27. Mr. Bruno Walter, Managing Director of Pratto Consulting LTd and Founder of ITB Advisory the Consulting Arm of ITB Messe, Berlin, Germany
28. Mr. Farruh Khojatov, Director of Tourism Company Go Travel Tajikistan

F. Kyrgyz Republic

29. Ms. Kiyal Kenzhematova, Deputy Director of Tourism Department
30. Mr. Avtandil Esenamanov, Leading Specialist, Tourism Department under the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism

G. Mongolia

31. Ms. Bayasgalan Saranjav, Director General of the Department of the Tourism Policy, Ministry of Environment and Tourism

H. Pakistan

32. Mr. Malik Babur Javed, Manager Publicity & Promotion, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation
33. Cap (Rtd) Kamran Ahmad Afridi, Director General, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture & Tourism Authority
34. Mr. Waqas Ahmed Zia, Section Officer Toursim, Information, Tourism and IT, GoAJ&K.

I. Tajikistan

35. Mr. Kamoliddin Muminzod, Deputy Chairman, Tajikistan Committee of Tourism Development
36. Mr. Muso Saydahmatzoda, Head of Economy and Planning Department, Tajikistan Committee of Tourism Development
37. Mr. Farrukhruz Izatullozoda, Head of Tourism Development Department, Tajikistan Committee of Tourism Development

J. Turkmenistan

- 38. Mr. Akynnyaz Agamyradov, Head of Tourism Department, Ministry of Culture
- 39. Ms. Gulshat Bakyyeva, Deputy Head of Tourism Department, Ministry of Culture and CAREC Tourism focal
- 40. Mr. Shokhrat Hudayberdiyev, Senior Specialist of Tourism Department, Ministry of Culture
- 41. Ms. Gozel Rustamgeldiyeva, Specialist of Tourism Department, Ministry of Culture
- 42. Ms. Soltanjemal Rejepova, Head of Sub-division for financing of science, education and culture sectors, Division for financing and development of social and cultural sphere, Ministry of Finance

K. Uzbekistan

- 43. Mr. Shukhrat Isakulov, Head, Department of Tourism Forecasting and Human Development, State Committee for Tourism Development and CAREC Tourism focal
- 44. Mr. Abdirakhmat Rakhimov, Head, Information technology Department, State Committee for Tourism Development
- 45. Mr. Rustam Igamberdiev, Head, IFI Grant Fund Division, State Committee for Tourism Development
- 46. Mr. Timur Bairov, Head, Information-analytical Department, State Committee for Tourism Development

II. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

A. Asian Development Bank

- 47. Ms. Ramola Naik Singru, Senior Urban Development Specialist, CWUW
- 48. Ms. Carmen Garcia Perez, Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRC
- 49. Ms. Ruby Torralba, Senior Programs Assistant, CWRC
- 50. Ms. Irene de Roma, Programs Officer, CWRC
- 51. Mr. Arystan Galiyev, Project Officer, KARM

III. ADB/CAREC CONSULTANTS

- 52. Ms. Farah Ahmadi, Regional Cooperation Coordinator, Afghanistan
- 53. Mr. Ashraf Kuliyeu, Advisor to the CAREC NFP, Azerbaijan
- 54. Ms. Chaoyi Hu, Regional Cooperation Coordinator, PRC
- 55. Ms. Ekaterine Koroshinadze, Regional Cooperation Coordinator, Georgia
- 56. Mr. Diyar Tassym, Advisor to the CAREC NFP, Kazakhstan
- 57. Ms. Guldana Sadykova, Senior Regional Cooperation Coordinator, Kazakhstan
- 58. Mr. Meder Turgunbekov, Advisor to the CAREC NFP, Kyrgyz Republic
- 59. Ms. Aidana Berdykova, Regional Cooperation Coordinator, Kyrgyz Republic
- 60. Ms. Amarjargal Delgersaikhan, Advisor the CAREC NFP, Mongolia
- 61. Ms. Beenish Amjad, Advisor the CAREC NFP, Pakistan
- 62. Ms. Ganjina Fazilova, Regional Cooperation Coordinator, Tajikistan
- 63. Mr. Durdy Ilamanov, Advisor to the CAREC NFP, Turkmenistan
- 64. Mr. Nadir Safaev, Senior Advisor to the CAREC NFP, Uzbekistan
- 65. Mr. Rovshan Mamurov, Regional Cooperation Coordinator, Uzbekistan
- 66. Ms. Jennifer Lapis, Regional Cooperation Coordinator, ADB HQ
- 67. Mr. Alzeus Alzate, Administration Assistant, ADB HQ
- 68. Mr. Carlos Faria, Team Leader, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda
- 69. Mr. Pedro Ferreira, Web Developer, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda

70. Mr. Alessio Poluzzi, Market Analysis and Tourism Promotion Specialist; and Tourism Services Expert, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda
71. Mr. Kenichi Hashimoto, Regional and Urban Planning Specialist, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda
72. Ms. Feruza Nazarova, Tourism Business Development Specialist, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda
73. Mr. Heinrich Wyes, Social and Environmental Expert, and Tourism Infrastructure Expert, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda
74. Ms. Natalia Bakhtadze Engländer, Local Tourism Consultant for Georgia
75. Ms. Gulya Kolakova, Local Tourism Consultant for Turkmenistan
76. Ms. Zhandiya Zohalso
77. Mr. Almas Baitenov, ABEC Consultant

IV. INTERPRETER

78. Mr. Zhenya Sinelschikov
79. Mr. Rustam Sataev
80. Mr. Ahmad Farhad Fidai
81. Mr. Mohammad Irfan Shekib
82. Ms. Yuting Zhang (Annie)
83. Ms. Jinpan Lin (Amy)