

A Roadmap Towards Development and Integration of Accessible Tourism HRD in MENA Region

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My Speech Remarks:

- This presentation on behalf of ENAT-ANAT or ENAT-MENA Regional Working Committee for promoting jointly Accessible Tourism, with a vision, to making the two regions accessible destinations for all tourists wish to visit the regions, in other words, we are working globally towards making information, infrastructure and services accessible with all the stakeholders of the industry
- I am not going to talk about people with special needs as a vulnerable group and these people just in need of help; to us as a committee we are stating firmly that their rights to enjoy and to share the benefits of tourism: is no more debatable, this right is already adopted by the UN Convention Article 30 and the UNWTO resolution-in Dakar in 2005
- I am talking about their economic importance and contribution to the industry.
- Accessible Tourism is not another country, it is a market being neglected or marginalized and has not received the attention it “should” deserve from the region industry
- This is leading me to this question...Are we missing this market? The answer is yes we do! Can we catch it? Yes we can.
- Accessible Tourism (AT) should be a key component in the UNWTO “Recovery Roadmap”, because IT:

- Potentially worth (\$3 billion) revenues to the MENA region and (\$89 billion) in Europe
- Creates thousands of jobs, addresses poverty at the community level, reinforces products diversity, a regional image-building tool, a driver to quality and competitiveness
- ENAT-ANAT Regional Working Committee, is in a working session since last February 2008, we are committed and ready to give hands, arms, eyes and legs and to lend and to share each country in the region, with the required technical support, expertise and the experience of our members in the 30 European Countries to the region 22 Countries: Our purpose, Where each country can be able to set up their own national networking group/organisation...etc.
- We in the MENA region and Africa the last, Europe, Asia, Latin America, Australia, Canada and North America are already active and Accessible Tourism is being institutionalized as part of their industry
- This presentation is a “call” to all of you to join us now and today not tomorrow and I am asking the UNWTO, Arab Tourism Organisation (ATO) and your excellences here from the Ministries of Tourism to give us the direction and the guidance how to move forward in your respective country
- We, the committee, are proposing pilot projects, let us work together each year on one tourist attraction: Let us start with Jordan and call a project “Petra for All” next year in Egypt “Pyramids for All” and then in Saudi Arabia “Makkah for All” and...etc.
- Finally: Accessible Tourism is not the absence of physical barriers alone, but the addressing the social-cultural barriers, which is the changing of the mind-set of our staff in the industry along the whole chain of services on how to deal with and to serve our special customers with special manners and attitudes:
- For the Staff: Reengineering, adapting and integrating our education and training curricula, facilities and preparing our instructors/educators/trainers with right technology, the right knowledge, skills, in the right time and at the right place.
- For the Business owners/service providers: working along with them to realizing what is the right business and sustainable models for her/his enterprises

- **For governments’ policy-makers:** with permission of H. Exc. Dr. Talib Rifai, UNWTO G. Sec. interim, I am quoting the essence of his ITB-Berlin speech remarks, to us they are the foundations for us if we are serious to seeing through this vision of accessible tourism in the MENA region is happening :
 1. Mind-set change
 2. Alternation of policies and practices
 3. Working together all as stakeholders
 4. Investing and facilitating investment into this potential promising market
- My 2nd quotation is from Shaikha Hissa Al-Thani-“...people with special needs are invisible in the Arab World”; let us as an Arab tourism industry made them visible as tourists, customers and as employees...as many of them have talents and are worthy to be employed within our industry.
- My personal story belongs to my Sister-in-law Natalie in Germany, she has a daughter called Kristina, she is 17 years old, mentally challenged, and she is not a wealthy mum, but year after year she managed to save around 4,000 Euros, to take Kristina, her daughter Maria and herself on holiday. She chose to go to Israel because it’s more accessible for their holiday, I would like Natalie, Kristina and Maria to enjoy their holiday too in the Arab region and spend the 4,000 Euros in one of the region’s touristic destinations.



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Thankyou