

Report
Virtual Meeting of the Experts from Tourism Ministries/Departments of D-8 member states to discuss the proposal of the “D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award”, on 07 March 2024

The inaugural D-8 Tourism Experts Meeting for the "D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award" took place virtually on March 7, 2024.

Mr. Ahmar Ismail, Director-I at the D-8 Secretariat, chaired the meeting, which was attended by experts and officials from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkiye. Please find the list of participants attached as **Annex I**.

Agenda Item 1 - Opening of the Meeting by Director I:

Mr. Ahmar Ismail, Director-I of the D-8 Secretariat declared the meeting open.

Agenda Item 2 - Statement delivered by Director-I on behalf of the Secretary General

Mr. Ahmar Ismail delivered the opening remarks, on behalf of Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, the Secretary-General of D-8. He provided a historical perspective on the initiative of the D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award. The statement is attached as **Annex II**.

Agenda Item 3 - Discussion on the proposed Draft Concept Note on “D-8 City of the Year Award”

The Secretariat introduced the draft concept note for discussion during the meeting. Experts from the member states suggested amendments to the criteria for the selection process and the proposed timeline outlined in the concept note. These suggestions were discussed and subsequently agreed upon and incorporated into the text of the proposed concept note. The updated concept note is attached as **Annex III**.

Agenda Item 4 - Discussion on nomination of the D-8 City of the Year for 2024–25

The nomination process was discussed, and the following agreements were reached among the experts:

- The Secretariat will prepare and distribute the draft selection criteria for the D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award, including proposed activities and events to be held during the nominated period, by March 11, 2024.
- All member states will provide their views and feedback on the proposed criteria, to the Secretariat by 20 March 2024.
- A virtual senior official Meeting of tourism Ministries/Departments from member states will be convened on March 20, 2024, to finalize the selection criteria.
- Member states will submit their dossiers by June 20, 2024, including video presentations and introductions of nominated cities based on the selection criteria, through their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Closing of the Meeting:

All participants expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for organizing the meeting and presenting the draft concept note for discussion.

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**STATEMENT BY THE D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL, AMBASSADOR
ISIAKA ABDULQADIR IMAM, ON THE OCCASION OF THE TECHNICAL
MEETING OF THE D-8 TOURISM CITY OF THE YEAR AWARD, 7
MARCH 2024, ISTANBUL**

Esteemed Participants,

I extend my warm greetings to all delegates attending the technical Experts meeting on the D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award. As we convene to deliberate on one of the key priority areas of our organization, namely the tourism sector, it gives me a great pleasure to underscore the significance of this initiative within the framework of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D8).

The Third D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, held in Murree, Bhurban, Pakistan in August 2023, marked a pivotal moment in our collective commitment towards advancing the tourism sector within our member states. Through the adoption of the Islamabad Declaration on Tourism, the D8 Tourism Ministers affirmed their dedication to recognizing and promoting excellence in tourism by establishing the "D-8 Tourism City of the Year" Award initiative.

The objectives behind the "D-8 Tourism City of the Year" Award initiative are manifold. Firstly, the initiative is aimed at promoting tourism excellence in our member countries by encouraging other cities to take advantage of the benefits that may accrue to the city that won the award. Secondly, the initiative is aimed at fostering cultural exchange and cooperation by way of the local population taking new traditions and behaviors from the foreign tourists as a result of the cultural exchange. Lastly, the initiative is aimed at driving economic development across our member cities.

Esteemed Participants,

It is important that we take necessary steps to operationalize the proposed "D-8 Tourism City of the Year" Award Initiative. It is in this regard that the Secretariat has deemed it important to call this meeting to discuss the modalities to operationalize this initiative and deliberate on the Concept Note on the "D-8 Tourism City of the Year" Award initiative, which the Secretariat had developed and shared with the member states for their, considerations and comments.

The Concept Note covers a wide range of areas such as objectives, criteria and time-line. The proposed selection criteria encompass a comprehensive set of parameters, reflecting the diverse facets of a city's tourism performance, from infrastructure and sustainability to cultural heritage preservation to Tourist Safety and Security to Cross-Cultural Engagement and technological innovation. The proposed timeline provides a structured framework for the establishment of the award. Also, we should delineate the roles and responsibilities of the chosen city, so that the candidate city can contribute effectively to our collective goals in the area of tourism cooperation.

In conclusion, **Dear Participants**, I urge the esteemed representatives from the Tourism Ministries of each D-8 Member States to engage actively in the deliberations, during this meeting. Also, we should encourage all member cities in our respective countries to adhere to the deadlines and actively participate in the submission and evaluation process.

I am confident that the D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award initiative will serve as a catalyst for positive transformation within our member states, fostering healthy competition and driving continuous improvement in the tourism sector.

Let us work together to realize the full potential of this initiative and strengthen the bonds of cooperation and friendship among our nations.

Thank you for your attention.

Concept Note for the D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award

Introduction:

The Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D8) has recognized the vital role that tourism sector plays in fostering economic development and cultural exchange among member countries. In line with this commitment, the Third D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, convened in Murree, Bhurban, Pakistan from 4 to 5 August 2023, adopted a Declaration outlining the establishment of the "D-8 Tourism City of the Year". This aims to recognize and promote outstanding achievements and innovations in the tourism sector within D-8 member cities.

Objectives:

The primary objectives of selection of the D-8 Tourism City of the Year are as follows:

- **Promotion of Tourism Excellence:** To acknowledge and promote cities within the D-8 member countries that have demonstrated excellence, innovation, and sustainable practices in the tourism sector.
- **Cultural Exchange and Cooperation:** To encourage cultural exchange and cooperation among D-8 member countries by highlighting cities that have successfully enhanced cross-cultural understanding and collaboration through tourism.
- **Economic Development:** To recognize cities that have effectively utilized tourism as a catalyst for economic development, job creation, and poverty alleviation.

Criteria for Selection:

The selection of the D-8 Tourism City of the Year will be based on a comprehensive set of criteria reflecting the diverse aspects of a city's tourism performance. The Secretariat wishes to suggest that the criteria for selection could include the following seven criteria:

- i. **Tourism Infrastructure:** Assessment of the city's tourism-related infrastructure, including transportation, accommodation, and other essential facilities.
- ii. **Sustainability:** Evaluation of sustainable practices in tourism, such as eco-friendly initiatives, conservation efforts, and community involvement.
- iii. **Cultural Heritage Preservation:** Recognition of cities that have effectively preserved and promoted their cultural heritage through tourism activities.
- iv. **Innovation and Technology:** Consideration of cities that have embraced innovative technologies and practices to enhance the tourist experience and promote tourism development.
- v. **Tourist Safety and Security:** Evaluation of measures taken to ensure the safety and security of tourists, including the implementation of effective emergency response systems.
- vi. **Tourism Promotion and Marketing:** Recognition of cities that have demonstrated excellence in promoting their tourism offerings through effective marketing strategies.
- vii. **Cross-Cultural Engagement:** Assessment of efforts to foster cross-cultural understanding and engagement, including initiatives that promote cultural exchange and cooperation among D-8 member states.
- viii. **Planned Events and Activities:** Prepare list of Tourism events such as exhibition, tourism fairs, and film festivals in the nominated D-8 Tourism City of the year (proposed by Pakistan).
- ix. **Social, Cultural, Civil Impacts:** Recognition of mid-long terms social, cultural and civil impacts, if the city in question would be titled as D-8 Tourism City of the year award (proposed by Pakistan).

Selection Process:

The selection process for the D-8 Tourism City of the Year will involve a rigorous evaluation by senior official's/expert panel composed of representatives from the Tourism Ministries of each D-8 Member State **and experts appointed from the private sector/tourism industry of each D-8 Member State** (highlighted text proposed by Malaysia). The panel will consider detailed submissions from candidate cities, which may include video

presentations as well as a comprehensive dossier specified by selection criteria.

The selected city will be officially acknowledged and launched as the “D-8 Tourism City of the Year” during the next Ministerial Meeting on Tourism.

In view of the foregoing, the Secretariat wishes to suggest that the senior official/s/expert panel composed of representatives from the Tourism Ministries of each D-8 Member State should convene as soon as possible for the following:

- i. Discuss and agree on the criteria for the D-8 Tourism City of the Year for 2025, which will be launched by the Senior Officials Meeting.
- ii. Discuss and agree on the selection process of D-8 Tourism City of the Year for 2025.
- iii. Discuss and agree on the expected roles / responsibilities of the D-8 Tourism City of the Year.
- iv. Propose a date for the selection of the D8 City of the Year for 2025.

Timeline:

The Secretariat wishes to suggest the following timeline for the establishment of the D-8 Tourism City of the Year Award.

- **March 11, 2024:** The Secretariat to share the proposed selection criteria.
- **March 20, 2024:** Senior Official Meeting will be held virtually to discuss and finalize the selection criteria.
20 June, 2024: Receipt of dossiers (including video presentations as well as introduction of the nominated cities based on the selection criteria) through Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the member state.
10 June-July, 2024: Meeting(s) of the experts’ group to finally select the D-8 tourism city of the year.
- **Third/Fourth quarter of 2024:** Meeting of the Senior Officials of Tourism of the D8 member states will discuss and finalize the

suggested nomination. This nomination will be adopted and announce by the subsequent Ministerial Meeting.

The D-8 Tourism City of the Year award is anticipated to inspire healthy competition among member cities, driving continuous improvement in the tourism sector and fostering stronger ties among D-8 countries.