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PRESS RELEASE

D-8 ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION

D-8 MEMBER STATES AGREE TO REJIG TOURISM SECTOR TO ENHANCE COOPERATION

The Member States of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) have agreed to rejig the tourism sector in their countries with a view to enhance cooperation further and promote sustainable development. This joint statement was made during the just-concluded Fourth Senior Officials and Third Ministerial meetings on Tourism held in Bhurban, Muree, Pakistan from 3 - 5 August 2023. The meetings had in attendance Ministers in charge of tourism and other senior officials from D-8 Member Countries.

Delivering his keynote address at the two-day event hosted by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), the Secretary General of the D-8 Organization, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, highlighted the progress on D-8's tourism cooperation and the adverse effects of COVID-19 pandemic and how it had significantly impacted negatively on the revenue accruing from the sector.

He emphasized the importance of implementing the D-8 Comprehensive Strategy on Tourism Cooperation and the Crescent Moon Initiative, which were adopted by D-8 ministers in 2019 meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as part of efforts to restore the glory of the sector to what it was before the outbreak of the Pandemic.

Speaking further, Ambassador Imam highlighted the significance of tourism for D-8 Member States' economic development while he praised the idea of D-8 Designated Airports to facilitate people-to-people and business-to-business interactions among member countries. He, therefore, requested policy guidelines from member states to support the organization's objectives in the tourism sector and suggested tangible programs like information exchange, best practices

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exchange, and cross-border investments, adding that the “ultimate goal is to create world-class tourist destinations in all D-8 Member States”.

In his address, the Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Tourism and Sports, H.E. Awn Chaudry, who chaired the meeting, briefed participants on Pakistan’s efforts to promote its tourism. He emphasized the crucial role of the sector in further strengthening the existing cooperation of member states for sustainable development and economic growth.

The meeting, in its Communique, adopted the landmark document, ‘Islamabad Declaration on Tourism Cooperation 2023’, which contains the following key decisions:

- Develop funding facilities to support the D-8 Project Funding Programme for tourism cooperation.
- Develop a mechanism for selecting the D-8 Tourism City of the Year.
- To organize an annual Forum on Investment Promotion in the Tourism Sector.
- To make the tourist visa application process easier in accordance with national regulations.

The meeting also acknowledged the role of the private sector in the tourism industry and agreed to develop a mechanism to assist the industry stakeholders in promoting tourism activities among D-8 member states. The meeting also emphasized the importance of creating air connectivity as a critical component in promoting tourism amongst its member countries.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegation from member states who attended the meeting expressed their heartfelt appreciation for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made by the Government of Pakistan towards its successful conclusion, especially to H.E. Awn Chaudhry, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tourism and Sports, PTDC, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

The Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation is an inter-governmental organization comprised of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Türkiye. The Organization was founded by the Heads of State and Governments of those eight countries in 1997.

Istanbul, 9 August 2023