

Beirut

The Arab-World Travel & Tourism Exchange (AWTTE)

Beirut-Talal Hassanieh



From left : Abu Jabir, Bin Salman, Abdullah, Abu zaki and Al-Qalaa.

(من اليمين) السادة : أبو جابر، بن سلطان، عبدالله، أبو زكي، و القلعة.

Despite its limited resources, the Lebanese Tourism Ministry has started an active promotion campaign with the help of the private sector. The campaign started in London last year at the World Travel Market (WTM). It subsequently moved to Cairo when the Tourism Minister Dr. Ali Abdullah chose the Arab League podium to promote The "Arab-World Travel & Tourism Exchange" (AWTTE). Lebanon was the star of the "The Mediterranean Travel Fair" with a stand equal to the Egyptian stand.

The result of this promotion campaign was obvious through the success of the AWTTE organized by the tourism ministry with the cooperation of the Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group. The Exchange and exhibition were held in Beirut between 16 and 19 October with the participation of 23 Arab and foreign countries. There were 14 stands from a total of 130 companies.

The exchange was addressed by Prince Sultan bin Salman the head of the Saudi

Tourism Committee, Dr. Saadallah Agha al-Qalaa, the Syrian Minister of Tourism, Nabil al-Hamar, the Bahraini Minister of Information and Tourism, and ambassador Abdul-Rahman al-Suluh, representing the General Secretary of the Arab League. Other speakers included the deputy ministers of tourism from Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Oman, Egypt and Kuwait.

The discussions and lectures, in which officials and experts took part, were characterised by seriousness, precision and objectivity. The exchange emphasised the increased attention paid to tourism and the encouragement of investment through plans depending on a partnership between the public and the private sectors. Special attention was paid to training and providing human resources – the basis of the tourist industry.

Activating tourism between Arab countries was the main concern of the participants in the exchange. This matter has also been

discussed at other conference because inter-Arab tourism represents more than 42% of the total volume of Arab tourism, compared to 88% in the European Union. Mr. Rauf Abu Zaki said: "Most of our tourist energy is wasted because of restrictions, boarder controls and security worries".

The participants agreed that tourism is a complex process involving several ministries: Interior (for immigration, passports and security), Finance (customs), Information, Culture and Economics. Therefore, activating tourism goes beyond the capabilities and resources of the tourism ministry. It requires general policies and cooperation between different departments.

The closing communiqué stressed the idea of integration and cooperation to promote a better image of the Arab World abroad, especially at this time, and to intensify inter-Arab promotions through exhibitions, conferences and exchange visits. ■