

International Symposium On Tourism:

Morocco is a promising tourist pole

> Fez - Nour-eddine Saoudi &
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After Essaouira in 2006, the old city of Fez hosted the 7th edition of the International Symposium On Tourism on 28th –30th April 2007. The symposium provided the opportunity to take stock of the Blue Plan (2001-2010) and to think of a new plan by 2020.



The Minister of Tourism delivers his speech

وزير السياحة يلقي كلمته

The symposium was opened by Mr. Abdel-Aziz Mezian Belfkih who read the message of King Mohammed VI. His Majesty stressed Vision 2010, proposing a tourist strategy for Morocco, is in an advanced phase on the way to becoming a tangible reality, during six years of implementation. The King also called for "authentic, clean and responsible tourism, respecting man, nature and the environment".

Mr. Adil Douiri, Minister of Tourism, Craft Industry and Social Economy, stressed that the sector, in spite of an unfavourable economic situation, is in the process of reaching the objectives of the Blue Plan and that Morocco made progress in the organizational and legislative fields, as regards reinforcing the air links, and on the level of its power of promotion abroad.

He added that Morocco reached the last stage of this plan and outlined three priorities for the current year: to continue the realization of the great projects (seaside resorts) within the allocated time; to concentrate on interior tourism which faces difficulties, by launching the first invitations to tender of tourism projects for Moroccans; and to continue the implementation of the programs of urban and cultural tourism for six cities.

The meeting was marked by the signing of a partnership agreement between Morocco and the German group TUI, a leading international tour operator. This agreement, the second with TUI, aims at bringing 517,000 European tourists to Morocco between 2007 and 2010. The German giant has an integrated network

of 79 travel agents, in 18 European countries, airline companies, cruises and hotel chains. Similarly, the agency Nouvelles Frontières expressed its willingness to extend its projects in Morocco. In 2009 a hotel complex with 200 rooms will be opened. Morocco also attracted the leading French group, ACCOR, and the Spanish, FADESA, as well as a group of Gulf companies.

This agreement and projects reflect the confidence of international operators in the future of tourism in Morocco. It also signals support for the country's tourism strategy.

Obstacles to overcome

However, the reality of Moroccan tourism still has some weaknesses. Participants pointed out that, in spite of the efforts made by the internal tourist sector (for locals and Moroccans resident in other countries) through projects, such as "My Country's Treasures" and "the Tourism Card, promotion remains insufficient. The president of the National Federation of the Hotel Industry, stressed that "Morocco is sold well in France, marketing in England and Spain

improved while remaining poor in Italy, Germany and Scandinavia". Other speakers expressed their concern at the scarcity of highly qualified personnel, by stressing that many executives emigrate to Europe or towards the Gulf States, attracted by higher wages. There was also a mention of the need for supporting small tourist projects in the mountainous and arid zones to contribute to their economic and social development; to safeguard the environment within the framework of a durable policy of development; and to work for the improvement of the tourism product and its marketing.

The Blue Plan is the concretization of a contract-program over 10 years (2001-2010) between the public and private sectors, aiming at attracting 10 million tourists and at reaching a hotel capacity of 200,000 beds, thanks to the efforts of the private sector (national and foreign).

ITM was distinguished during this important event by its participation in the debates and the distribution of its issues which were admired by the participants.