

MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM FOUNDATION MANIFESTO



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CONTENTS

- 3 FOREWORD - TONY ZAHRA PRESIDENT MTF
- 5 THE GREAT STORY - ANDREW AGIUS MUSCAT SECRETARY GENERAL MTF
- 6 CORE POLICY OBJECTIVES
- 7 MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM FIGURES
- 8 MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM FORUM MANIFESTO
- 11 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM FOUNDATION

The Mediterranean Tourism Foundation (MTF) is a voluntary, non-governmental organisation initiative led by Malta. It was established by the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) on the 28th November 2013 and the Statute was formally adopted on 4th December 2015.

The MTF aims to encourage the implementation of actions that promote the sustainable growth of tourism across the Mediterranean region by developing tools and opportunities that support the various stakeholders in achieving this objective. MTF also aims to serve as a catalyst by presenting and disseminating existing initiatives to inspire the replication of pilot projects and good practices. The MTF is comprised of individual and corporate members from all over the world who share an interest in Mediterranean tourism related matters.

THE VISION

The vision of MTF is inspired by the shared will of stakeholders from both public and private tourism sectors to revitalise efforts to transform the Mediterranean into an area of peace, cooperation and prosperity by investing and promoting sustainable tourism growth across the region. Accordingly, the MTF is committed to reinforce co-ownership of new Mediterranean relations in areas related to tourism through concrete regional cooperation projects.

FOREWORD

The Mediterranean has recently been hitting the headlines for the wrong reasons. And what is mostly disconcerting is the fact that the end to all of this is yet to come. In the face of these developments many have passionately argued for ways how to stop tragedies from becoming the order of the day across the Mediterranean and accordingly presented a myriad of strategies for consideration by the international community. But many lost the wood for the trees in their attempts to find a quick fix as indeed the tragedies here do not revolve just around illegal immigration. Key matters include: the situations being experienced by many who are left unemployed including youth who by now some have started to lose hope in a future; the conflicts that arise due to power struggles and intolerance; and the loss of dignity experienced by all those who as a result of social and economic misery have ended up victims of the darker side of society and the economy. A lot has been said and done and while it is important to address emergencies none however seem to have identified a long term sustainable solution for the Mediterranean.

Indeed it is recognised by all that this challenge is definitely not an easy one. The Mediterranean is one of the rare borders in the world that separates two adjacent areas with opposite demographic characteristics and contrasted levels of development. This region, through its diversity, is representative of the rest of the planet and is thus a life-size laboratory for the World Vision exercise. In the meantime Mediterranean countries are undergoing intensive demographic, social, cultural, political, economic and environmental changes giving rise to various questions: Where will these changes lead? What lies ahead for the Mediterranean countries? How will they confront the ever-increasing difficulties being encountered? The good news is that the Mediterranean has a great story to share with the rest of the world, a story which has placed the Mediterranean region on top of the preference list of yesterday's and increasingly today's and tomorrow's travellers.

And this we believe is the Mediterranean solution: Tourism. Tourism is a powerful motor that gears economies, sustains environmental conservation, and leverages development of societies. Tourism eradicates instability and exterminates warlords and power mongers. Because tourism feeds the many as it creates opportunities of hope for a better future. The foundations for tourism are already



TONY ZAHRA
PRESIDENT - MTF



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FOREWORD

strong across the Mediterranean region thus it presents itself as a feasible and pertinent long term solution. And if managed right, tourism is not only sustainable but also easily adaptable and flexible to specific economic and social realities. But the way to achieve common quality tourism goals all across the Mare Nostrum region is still a long way to go but certainly not impossible. For thousands of years, there have been strong bonds between the peoples of the Mediterranean, due to the geography and history linked by a common sea. Despite political, economic, and cultural differences, we now need to rediscover the fact that our destiny lies in solidarity and, in particular, that joint action is imperative to improve the environment in which we live through tourism. A quick look to European history reveals that the principle being proposed here is very similar to the origins of the precursor of the European Union, the European Coal and Steel Community - an economic union created in 1952 that provided for the pooling of coal, iron, and steel production in Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. Indeed coal, iron and steel were key resources at the time in Europe and so presented themselves as the right basis for common interest that would lead to the achievement of a common goal: the attainment of economic growth and social development through stability and peace in the region. In our case and in our times, tourism is definitely that economic and social powerhouse that is capable not only to circumvent differences amongst key players in the Mediterranean region but significantly to emphasise the potential of strength through diversity. The key word here is synergy. And in all of this we believe Malta has a key role to play in. Why us? Because: Malta's economy depends on tourism thus is a model of how economic and social growth can be fuelled despite limited resources; Malta is too small to be considered as a political or economic threat to any of its neighbouring Mediterranean countries, hence the right driver for such an initiative; Malta is a member of the European Union, therefore it has an important say in this critical economic bloc for the Mediterranean; and Malta, despite its size, has the right passion and drive to act as a catalyst for the realisation of this vision. Significantly, this proposal is not pie in the sky.

Three years ago the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) started to spearhead an annual Mediterranean Tourism Forum, a conference with the objective to bring together stakeholders in the tourism sector with a specific interest in the Mediterranean region. This initiative was an immediate success and the idea of tourism as the Mediterranean solution has started to spread like fire across various countries in the Mediterranean. With the help of the Government of Malta we have now set up the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation to take it forward to the next step.

THE GREAT STORY

Story telling is popular again especially as tourists today are travelling to experience rather than just to see a destination. And in this context the Mediterranean region has probably the greatest story to tell. Three years ago the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) embarked upon a journey to bring from all over the world tourism stakeholders holding a special interest in the Mediterranean story to create synergies together and accordingly create the right setting to attract more tourists to the region.

The set goal was ambitious but immediately after the organisation of the first Mediterranean Tourism Forum in 2013 it was very clear that this project was going to grow beyond expectations. From its initial stages Mr Tony Zahra, MHRA President, and myself worked hard to ensure that the initiatives spearheaded through this project had to be action oriented. In this light we brought together various experts in particular Mr George Micallef, MHRA Deputy President and Dr Tijani Haddad, former Minister of Tourism of Tunisia and with their invaluable help we started to work to create the right base for the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation. This idea was immediately supported by the Maltese Minister of Tourism Dr Edward Zammit Lewis and through his efforts attracted the endorsement of the Prime Minister of Malta Dr Joseph Muscat to financially sponsor the establishment of the Foundation. Definitely Malta has the right characteristics to be the first country to act as the catalyst in achieving the scope and objectives of the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation and for this we are grateful to the Government of Malta for being there at the initial stages of this project. But this is not just a Maltese project but rather a Mediterranean project.

Towards this end the idea of compiling a MANIFESTO was inspired by the need to communicate to other potential partners and associates from both the private and public sectors to join and work together to make sure that the Mediterranean region does not remain only connoted to economic, political and social turmoil but significantly more as the region with the greatest story to tell to the rest of the World.



**ANDREW
AGIUS MUSCAT**
SECRETARY GENERAL
- MTF



... THIS IS NOT JUST
A MALTESE PROJECT BUT
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CORE POLICY OBJECTIVES

In recognition and in furtherance of the envisaged precepts the mission of MTF is to:

- a.** Promote and encourage tourism to and within the Mediterranean as a catalyst of increased understanding between the states, regions and peoples of the Mediterranean;
- b.** Promote and encourage tourism to and within the Mediterranean as an incentive for the preservation of the environment and the protection of cultural and historical assets within the Mediterranean;
- c.** Promote the acceptance by the peoples of the Mediterranean of the ideal that the social and economic benefits of tourism to and within the Mediterranean constitute the common heritage of the peoples of the Mediterranean upon whom is incumbent the obligation to nurture and protect such heritage;
- d.** Promote tourism as a vehicle to create employment, improved education opportunities and better distribution of wealth, leading to peace and stability in the region; and
- e.** Increase awareness of the Mediterranean region as a premier tourist multifaceted single destination.

In this light, the MTF Secretariat has the mandate to focus efforts on three main areas of operations:

DIALOGUE

- a.** To promote dialogue and the potential of synergies in political and commercial initiatives amongst stakeholders with an interest in Mediterranean tourism. This will be achieved through the organisation of sub-fora mainly addressing themes relating to:
 - i.** Operations (including matters of interest to Hotels, Restaurants, Airlines, Cruise Ports, Airports etc),
 - ii.** Political (including matters of interest to Mediterranean MEPs, Ministers, Mayors),
 - iii.** Culture and Education, and
 - iv.** Energy and the Environment from a Tourism and Hospitality perspective.

Accordingly the annual summit Forum will be held in Malta whereas at least two sub-fora will be held in different Mediterranean countries. Horizontal themes that will be addressed include: employment, migration, security, transport, industry standards, mobility, finance, innovation, marketing, communication, culinary, sport, niche tourism segments, gender equality, ethics, technology, and real estate.

EDUCATION

- b. To set up in Malta a centre of excellence in the Mediterranean region for tourism and hospitality education and continuous professional training. This set-up includes a network of stakeholders with an interest in the participation of this initiative; and

EVENTS

- c. To act as catalyst in promoting cultural, entertainment and sport events with a view to attract tourism during the shoulder months across the Mediterranean region as one destination.

The MTF aims to work in close collaboration with similar institutions that have an interest in Mediterranean tourism, including the UNWTO, HOTREC, 5+5, Union of the Mediterranean and the EU institutions amongst other. Given that tourism is such a key political and economic sector for countries across the Mediterranean we believe that this project will be successful as it will serve as the forum for stakeholders interested in Mediterranean tourism to get together, share initiatives and promote the region as a destination in itself.

MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM FIGURES

The Mediterranean region attracts approximately **350 million** tourists annually;

Almost **30%** of global tourism making the region the biggest tourism destination.

The Mediterranean tourism industry generates an average of **250 Billion Euros** per annum.

The majority, **90%**, of those who visit the Mediterranean, are motivated by leisure, **60%** of whom visit the Mediterranean in summer.

However, the Mediterranean tourism industry suffered a drop of **8%** in the past **7 years**; which drop was mostly attributed to new emerging markets as well as political turmoil.

MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM FOUNDATION MANIFESTO

Given the important, but relatively unexploited potential of tourism to contribute to peace and stability across the Mediterranean region, the MTF has over the past three years organised a Forum in Malta where international organisations, governments, local authorities, the private sector, consumers and the civil society discussed ways how to foster sustainable promotion, consumption and production patterns for tourism, with the following overarching conclusions:

- Tourism continues to be an important economic sector capable of attracting foreign direct investments and supporting sustainable economic development, the production of fairly distributed wealth, the creation of employment opportunities and poverty alleviation, particularly in developing countries and least developed countries. By promoting sustainable tourism across the Mediterranean is therefore equivalent to fighting at the roots of the causes leading to mass immigration or radicalisation of the deprived and unemployed that most often instigate acts of terrorism.
- The destination's local society and environment can absorb and benefit from the positive effects of tourism and such sustainable tourism development also provides ways of protecting and enriching the knowledge from local and indigenous culture. These economic benefits from the tourism sector can however be offset by negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts, which should be addressed and reduced through planning, policies and regulations.
- Voluntary mechanisms, access to training, fostering communication for transferring of knowledge, access to financial mechanisms, as well as consultations with local communities based on sustainability parameters, all have a key role to play in constructing tourism as a part solution to peace and stability across the Mediterranean.
- In order for all forms of tourism to become more sustainable, there needs to be improved governance by rethinking the existing infrastructure at destinations, especially with the assistance of relevant public and private operators, identifying innovative modes of travel, and strengthening the development of various 'niche' tourism segments (e.g. ecotourism, community or rural tourism, heritage or cultural tourism) to become a more significant share of the market and a major form of tourism for some countries.

On the 4th of December 2015, the MTF in collaboration with the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association and the Ministry of Tourism (Malta) organised the 3rd annual Mediterranean Tourism Forum. More than 800 delegates attended the Forum. The agenda included a special Assembly facilitated by Dr John Vassallo, President of the Malta Business Bureau and Strategic Adviser to Microsoft, which brought together 70 delegates from 38 countries. to discuss and identify specific actions related to the promotion and growth of a sustainable Mediterranean tourism strategy. which to be presented to the Prime Minister of Malta Dr Joseph Muscat for consideration and promotion in particular when Malta will be holding the Presidency of the European Union Council in 2017.

The conclusions of the workshop were compiled by expert representatives from, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association, Malta Business Bureau, University of Malta, the Malta Tourism Authority, Deloitte, Nexia BT, HVS and E&Y. Given the cross-sectoral characteristics of the tourism industry, this document's references to the private

sector cover the transportation to and from tourist destinations, the tour operators, the accommodation/hotel chains, and all the economic activities generating resources, products and services throughout the entire tourism value chain.

- 1.** Promote level playfield for all participants in tourism business. The ever increasing number of owners renting private apartments and holidays as tourist accommodation, especially through on-line distribution channels, and without always having to abide by the regulations applying to the hospitality sector, constitutes a threat to consumer protection and to jobs on the hotel industry.
- 2.** Ensure the use of fresh food is still possible. Food information regulations are making it harder for restaurants to use fresh food. Legislation should encourage the use of fresh food as is so much practiced across the Mediterranean countries.
- 3.** Ensure fair competition in online distribution. Enforced best price guarantees due to the dominant position of Online Travel Agents (OTAs) make entrepreneurs lose control over their prices and businesses. The dominant position of OTAs needs to be reversed.
- 4.** Improve the attractiveness of skilled workforce to the tourism sector. Promote initiatives that aim to attract skilled workers and upgrade skills of current employees working in the tourism industry with a view to offer them better opportunities that help them enjoy better career prospects and working conditions.
- 5.** Invest in human capital by creating a common base, a Euro-Mediterranean network of vocational training courses and establish recognition-accreditation of skills and diplomas through the creation of Mediterranean Tourism Foundation's Mediterranean Institute of Tourism Studies (MITS).
- 6.** Accelerate the transfer of knowledge, skills and technology by encouraging the emergence of Euro-Mediterranean competitiveness and research clusters in sectors related to sustainable tourism.
- 7.** Support a harmonised hotel classification system with common criteria and procedures through self regulation by Hotels across Mediterranean countries to enhance the reputation and quality of the hotel industry by creating transparency and security for the guests and thereby encouraging hotel marketing.
- 8.** Encourage the tourism industry, including transport companies, hoteliers, restaurateurs, airlines, airports, cruise liners, tour operators, travel agents and amongst others tourist guides, to adjust their activities, using more energy efficient and cleaner technologies in order to minimise as much as possible their impact on climate change.
- 9.** Encourage both the Public Authorities and the Private Sector to apply a tourism lens to policy and program development.
- 10.** Support start ups and R&D in tourism sector that promote innovative business development through the application of technology to sustainably enhance the tourists' experience as visitors.
- 11.** Support the conservation and promotion of traditional Mediterranean local crafts heritage and culture. This also includes giving priority to language learning through formal education and training since language is a key variable of the tourism product.
- 12.** Preserve the natural values of the territory and the functionality of coastal ecosystems. In this light ensure that international regulations in keeping the sea clean are adhered to by the relevant authorities.
- 13.** Emphasise the importance of ethics across the tourism sector in the Mediterranean region.

- 14.** Promote the further development of the film industry across the Mediterranean region, as in itself this will serve in promoting the Mediterranean destination through cinematographic scenes and potentially reaching out to more potential travellers from current and new emerging markets.
- 15.** Develop joint destination branding initiatives for the Mediterranean tourism sector with a view to appeal for the BRIC countries. This will help to promote the Mediterranean region as a premier destination for MICE business, the luxury segment and trail tourism.
- 16.** Work together to share best practices and establish policies that aim to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- 17.** Encourage benchmarking, measuring and analysis of results for Mediterranean Tourism performance with a view to establish and share best practices.
- 18.** Encourage the development and application of technology to ensure better security at tourism destinations across the Mediterranean region.
- 19.** Form integrated funding budgets for the restoration and protection of historical sites to secure the up keeping of Mediterranean heritage. This should include initiatives which create self sustained business models built upon the principles of education, exposure and cooperation.
- 20.** Support the setting up of a Mediterranean investment bank, based on the same principles as the European Investment Bank, and designed to encourage funding for SMEs operating in the tourism sector, which are key to the creation of wealth and jobs, and infrastructures.
- 21.** Achieve smarter Schengen visa policies and processes to minimise the deterrence to legitimate travellers.
- 22.** Review the regulatory framework for tourism to reduce administrative and fiscal burdens and ensure fair competition and promote cross-border sales and service provision.
- 23.** Promote smarter tax policies and better coordination between EU, national, regional and local authorities.
- 24.** Simplify tax and consumer protection law and ensure that it is consistently enforced.
- 25.** Facilitate access to EU funding for tourism SMEs in relation to growth and job creation across the Mediterranean region.
- 26.** Support the development and ongoing promotion of pan- Mediterranean thematic tourism products (e.g. cycle routes, gastronomy, culture, spa & wellness etc.).
- 27.** Facilitate strong cooperation with, and among, the private sector partners through public private initiatives.
- 28.** Promote good practice in extending the season and diversification (e.g. making tourism available to more people, such as people on low incomes, different age groups etc.)
- 29.** Promote the development and awareness of low-season opportunities (e.g by presenting festivals and events in digital maps and apps).
- 30.** Encourage better accessibility and in-destination facilities near tourist attractions to facilitate access and minimize disruption, as well as to eliminate language barriers.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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