

## **The First ECO Confobition on Health Tourism**

### **Ramsar Declaration**

*Ramsar, Mazandaran , Islamic Republic Iran,*

*August 19, 2014*

We, the Delegations of the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization participating in the "First ECO Confobition (Conference + Exhibition) on health Tourism", held on 18-20, 2014, in Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran

***Emphasizing*** the importance of Article 2(e) and 2(n) of the Treaty of Izmir and the relevant provisions of the ECO Vision 2015 to develop the ECO Region as a tourism destination;

***Recalling*** the Declaration of 1<sup>st</sup> ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism (Tehran, 2008) on promotion of Health Tourism;

***Recalling*** the decision of the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Planning Council to convene this Confobition;

***Bearing in mind*** the decisions of the 1st and 2nd ECO Coordination Committee Meetings on Health Tourism (Mashad, 2012 and 2013) regarding the mechanisms for promotion of health Tourism in the Region;

***Recalling*** also the Resolution of the "Fourth Conference on Health Tourism in the Islamic Countries (CHTIC)" (26-27 November 2013 Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran) supporting the outcome of the 2nd Coordination Committee Meeting among the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) on the sidelines of this Conference;

***Commending*** the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the First and Second ECO Coordination Committee Meetings on Health Tourism (Mashad, 2012 and 2013) and its leading efforts in promoting tourism facilitation, tourism marketing and research and training in tourism;

***Acknowledging*** the importance of the tourism industry for closer understanding among our people, for improved quality of life, peace and prosperity in the Region, and for the socio-economic growth of the ECO Member States;

***Considering*** the vast potential of the ECO Region in the field of tourism, especially health tourism and its ability to increase the Region's share in global tourism;

**Appreciating** the value of quality tourism and mindful of the importance of improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the tourism services in the ECO Region;

**Acknowledging** the objective of the Economic Cooperation Organization to promote sustainable economic development through cooperation of the Member States in the field of tourism, among others to attain well-being and prosperity of its people;

**Mindful** of the imperative of expansion of knowledge and expertise among health tourism experts and operators in the ECO Member States for enhanced health tourism capacities and opportunities in the Region;

**Stressing** the commercial nature of health tourism as a promising field of economic activities;

**Being aware of** job creation potential of health tourism and its role in sustainable development of the societies;

**Expressing** support and appreciation for the contribution of the ECO Secretariat and ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECO-CCI) to the development of the ECO health tourism market as well as expansion of health tourism initiatives among the ECO Member States;

**Emphasizing** the important role of the private sector in tourism industry and the need to encourage it to engage more deeply in the development of health tourism and investment in relevant services;

**Also emphasizing** the urgency of investment and financial support to the development of health tourism industry by the public and the private sectors;

**Encouraging** public-private partnership in health tourism marketing and cooperation with tourism organizations within the ECO Region and beyond;

- I. **Call upon** the ECO Member States to expand regional cooperation on health tourism through developing necessary coordination mechanisms, including the databanks, networks and professional associations and **Highlight** the need for establishing the "ECO Health Tourism Network".
- II. **Invite** the Member States to develop national policies and strategies on health tourism and diversify relevant services and products to match the growing demands of the regional and international markets.
- III. **Encourage** the Member States to support regional health tourism cooperation by providing legal and administrative support to the stakeholders, including health tourists, medical doctors, service providers, hospitals and entrepreneurs.
- IV. **Emphasize** the need for travel and visa facilitation for health tourists seeking urgent trans-border medical treatments and **request** the Member States to develop a fast track visa procedure for the concerned people, including the patients and the physicians.

- V. **Support** the need for enhanced cooperation between the tourism sectors /organizations and the health industry, especially the private sector, of the Member States in promoting regional health tourism.
- VI. **Encourage** adoption and application of international standards by hospitals, tour operators, physicians and specialists offering health tourism services and supports their collaboration to achieve an intra-ECO accreditation system.
- VII. **Taking into consideration** the impacts of health tourism industry on local communities and the necessity of fair allocation of resources **emphasize** the importance of academic contribution, through strong academic literature, to the regional health tourism.
- VIII. **Stress** the need for capacity building and training programs for health tourism providers and invite the Member States to organize training courses, study tours, field visits, academic courses and workshops in this area.
- IX. **Taking note of** the importance of timely and smooth transfer of health tourists to destinations, **call for** contribution by the transport sector to health tourism industry through direct flights and other modes of transport among the Member States.
- X. **Call upon** the insurance industry to initiate and develop regional and international healthcare insurance schemes.
- XI. **Taking note of** successful experience of the "First ECO Exhibition on Health Tourism" **encourage** organizing such health tourism related promotional activities on the sidelines of ECO health and tourism related meetings.
- XII. **Request** the tourism and health ministers and officials of the Member States to adopt necessary measures and actions to help develop health tourism industry through involving concerned sector's representatives in the policy making meetings.
- XIII. **Encourages** the Member States to participate in the relevant international events and exhibitions and utilize other means of marketing to promote their products.
- XIV. **Invite** relevant national, regional and international organizations to extend their technical assistance to the ECO Member States for development of health tourism industry.
- XV. **Also invite** national, regional and international (public and private) financial institutions to support projects and plans contributing to development of health tourism industry in the Region through establishing funds and joint ventures.
- XVI. **Takes note of** the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish health villages in Mazandaran Province in cooperation with ECO Member States.
- XVII. **Stress** the necessity of establishing a technical working group in order to discuss and find out the ways and means for implementation of the objectives of this declaration.
- XVIII. **Express** its profound thanks and gratitude to the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in particular people and authorities of the "Mazandaran Province Governorate and Ramsar City" as well as the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs", "Ministry of Health", "Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization" (ICHTO)", "Medical Council (IRIMC)", "Mazandaran Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Mines and Agriculture",

"Medical University" and "Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture" for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the successful conclusion of the First ECO Confobition on Health Tourism in Ramsar.

XIX. **Appreciate** the Member States for their active participation and contribution to the successful outcome of this Confobition.

XX. **Also appreciate** the "ECO Chamber of Commerce" and "ECO Secretariat" for the exemplary efforts devoted for successful outcome of this Confobition.

XXI. **Request** the ECO Member States to follow up the implementation of this Declaration and submit their reports to the ECO tourism and health ministerial meetings through ECO Secretariat.

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