# TOURISM

**Ongoing projects:**

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| :**Tourism** | **1. Project Category/Code:** |
| **ECO Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development** | **2. Project Title** |
| **T/PoA/SSP/2019** | **Project Code:** |
| The main goal of the project is to draw up a Roadmap to meet strategic objective (s) set out under tourism section of the ECO Vision 2025. It should be in line with the ECO Principles for Sustainable Tourism Development and contributing towards sustainable socioeconomic development of the ECO countries focusing on the realization of natural and cultural tourism resources of the region as well as vast unexploited relevant potential of the Member States. | **3. Project Objectives** |
| US$10,000 | **4. Project Budget (US$)** |
| **ECO Secretariat in collaboration with** **IDB** | **5. Project Funding Source** |
| **ECO Secretariat** | **6. Project Coordinator** |
| **ECO Secretariat (Coordinating Agency)****UNIDO (Technical Assistance)****UNWTO (Technical Assistance)****IDB (Financial Assistance)** | **7.International/Regional Partner** |
| **6 Months** | **8. Duration of Project**  |
| **2022** | **9. Project Starting Time** |
| * The Project has been approved by the decision making bodies of the ECO (MM on Tourism & COM).
* Draft ToR of the Project has been prepared by the Tourism Directorate of the Secretariat.
 | **10. Project Progress**  |
| **11. Background:**In the 13th ECO Summit in the first quarter of 2017 all ECO Member States welcomed the ECO Vision 2025 and had agreed to emphasize the need to augment cooperation in the area of tourism as identified in the Vision. Strategic objective of the Vision on Tourism is to establish a peaceful and green tourism destination with diverse products and high quality services in the region. The composite details of this project were considered and approved by the 5th High Level Expert Group Meeting (HLWGM) on Tourism and supported by 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Khujand in 2019. Henceforth, the project concept was as well considered at the level of ECO’s Council of Ministers (COM) where it was endorsed as part of document set by the 24th COM on 8-9 November 2019 in Antalya (Turkey). The budgetary aspects of the project were also approved in due time by the 30th Regional Planning Council Meeting on 11-14 January 2020 in Tehran (Iran), upon which act the project has become part of ECO’s Work Program 2020. The latter Program is currently being implemented. The amount of US$10,000 has been endorsed by CPR to prepare the feasibility study of the project.The Member States’ strategic approach in the tourism sector has been to work together on issues that are of common concern to them in order to strengthen the contribution that tourism can make to their socioeconomic development, while protecting the valuable natural and cultural heritage on which the tourism sector depends. In recognition of the important contribution that tourism could make toward socioeconomic development, especially poverty reduction and conservation of natural and cultural heritage during the preparation of the ECO Vision 2025 tourism was selected as one of the main cooperation areas. Geographical richness, good neighborly relations and a peaceful environment are the natural features of the region on which a solid foundation for sustainable cooperation in tourism can be built step by step. Cultural commonalities and numerous historical and overlapping heritages offer the region enormous potential for bringing together ordinary people in the member states who are passionate about peace and prosperity.The ECO region, with an area of more than 8 million square kilometers stretching from Central to South and Southwest Asia, and a population of more than 500 million, is known for its natural beauty as well as for the diversity of its historical and cultural heritage. In this respect, the region has significant potential to become one of the world's major tourist destinations. The region is one of the richest in the world in terms of historical and cultural heritage, reminiscent of the ancient Silk Road. The Project should also consider the increase of the share of tourism sector in national and regional GDP and economic growth of Member States, taking into account the conservation of region’s cultural and environmental heritage. Moreover, this would further contribute to income-generation, poverty eradication, sustainable use of natural resources, protection of vulnerable groups enhancing life standards of indigenous as well as local communities within the ECO tourism destination. It should also support regional tourism industry and facilitate investment in tourism sector creating a chain of ECO Tourism destinations. This would accelerate the facilitation of tourism activities across the land borders and along the economic corridors, expanding community-based tourism approach to attract locals’ participation in tourism-related supply and value chains. The project would also address the need for raising the skills of tourism public sector at all levels, improving service and hygiene standards among staff in small to medium hospitality enterprises in the ECO tourism destination and enhancing locally generated private sector participation in small and medium tourism enterprise investment and operation.1. Harmonization of National Tourism Action Plan of Member States and increasing synergy in the region on tourism development;
2. Follow up the strategic objective of the Vision on tourism and preparation of a roadmap for implementation its annual program (s);
3. Developing a framework and guidelines for sustainable tourism development at ECO tourism destinations;
4. Increasing capability and quality of regional tourism industry as well as regional tourism institutions, local communities and government institutions to be able to enhance share of this sector on regional GDP and capability to compete with outside tourism industry;
5. Providing coordination mechanisms in all tourism sectors including tour operators, accommodation sector and hotels, airlines, etc.;
6. Preparation the ground for fund raising and credit facilitation for the implementation of the Action Plan.
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| **12. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:**1. A feasibility study of the process of Tourism Policies integration in the region.
2. Establishing a network of Tourism potentials and attractions in ECO region.
3. Assessment of current statuses of the traditional tourisms’ development in the ten ECO Member States, and also, of their legal frameworks set for standardization/accreditation/tourism monitoring mechanisms to be under the ECO framework.
4. Preparing ECO Tourism compendium.
5. Preparing ECO tourism databank.
6. Assessment of capacities of local communities and private sector tourism entities of ECO countries to be potentially involved in regional tourism development under the ECO framework.
7. Holding the Meetings which are related to key areas of Tourism by the Member States.
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| **13. Expected Outcomes of the Project:** * Action Plan for ECO regional sustainable tourism development;
* Introduction of Priority projects at ECO regional level.
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| **14. Current status:**Draft ECO Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development was prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of ECO Vision 2025 and circulated for comments and proposals among the Member States via note verbale on April 17, 2022. So far response was received from the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Azerbaijan. The Secretariat circulated reminders NV No: T/Plan of Action/2022/1459 dated 24/10/2022, NV No:T/Plan of Action/2023/627 dated 15/05/2023 and is still awaiting the response from the rest of the Member States to take further action.The proposals and views of the esteemed Member States would be incorporated in the proposed draft ECO Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development for further enrichment through a consultancy project to develop a more comprehensive Action Plan with the contributions and inputs of the Member States. |

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| **Tourism** | **1. Project Category/Code:** |
|  **ECO Tourism Routes and Packages**  | **2. Project Title** |
| **T/Routes/SPP-2019** | **Project Code:** |
| Main goal is to create an ECO Tourism Package that would be useful for increasing number of tourists and tourism revenues. The final outputs of the Project are as follows:* Achieving a high level of professionalism and developing sustainability in ECO Tourism industry;
* Identification of the best cities of ECO countries in Cultural/ Historical, Scientific, Industrial/Business, Nature-Based, Religious, Health and Mass Tourism separately;
* Improving the relation of industrial and scientific bodies of the Member States such as factories, universities, science and technology parks and study centers in order to attracting the industrial/ scientific tourists from inside or outside of ECO countries;
* Optimizing use of existing resources and capacities in order to have less costly and high quality trips in the ECO region;
* Increasing number of tourists and the amount of tourism revenues;
* Promoting ECO Region as one of the best tourism destinations.
 | **3. Project Objectives** |
| Subject to proposed TOR | **4. Project Budget (US$)** |
| **ECO Secretariat, UNWTO or any other Regional or International Organizations may be explored for full or partial financing of the project.** | **5. Project Funding Source** |
| **ECO Secretariat** | **6. Project Coordinator** |
| ECO Secretariat (Coordinating Agency)UNWTO or any other Regional or International Organizations (Technical Assistance)National agencies/associations of (private) tourism companies/operators/etc. | **7.International/Regional Partner** |
| **8 months**  | **8. Duration of Project**  |
| **2022** | **9. Project Starting Time** |
|  | **10. Project Progress**  |
| **11**. **Background**:The Strategic Objective which was defined for Tourism sector in ECO Vision 2025 is establishing a peaceful and green tourism destination with diverse products and high quality Services in the region. One of the Expected Outcomes of Tourism sector in ECO Vision 2025 is strengthening Private sector and local community involvement in the tourism activities. The unfamiliar situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the rapid spread of the coronavirus around the world has had a massive impact on many sectors of the global economy, of which tourism is one of the most affected. According to an analysis by UNWTO, all destinations worldwide have implemented travel restrictions in response to Covid-19, which is unprecedented. This further highlights the important role of small projects.Before Covid-19 Pandemic, there was another similar project in ECO Tourism sector called “ECO Tours Operators Network” which was approved by the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting of Tourism in Khujand, Tajikistan on October, 2019 as well as the 30th ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC) on January, 2020. Considering the above said main goal on tourism and in order to achieve the best results during the coronavirus crisis, ECO Secretariat decided to review previous projects and define Small Sized Projects in order to adapt them to the current situation. ECO Tourism Routes and Packages project with the aim of introduction main Tourism routes including Cultural/ Historical, Scientific, Industrial/Business, Nature-Based, Religious, Health and Mass Tourism among the ECO countries, is going to focus on different areas of tourism especially on Industrial and Scientific tourism which its desired destination includes industrial sites peculiar to a particular location. The most obvious industrial tourism destinations are cities and regions with a solid industrial base. |
| **12. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:**1. Implementation of the part of ECO Vision 2025 in Tourism sector with respect to strengthening Private sector and local community involvement in the tourism activities;
2. Preparing the required ToR for recruiting an international consultancy team by the Secretariat;
3. Allocation of ECO financial contribution for recruitment of consultant by CPR or COM based on recruitment policy and procedures of ECO;
4. Encourage relevant international organizations to assist ECO Secretariat financially and technically;
5. Gathering the information from Member States about the cities which are famous for having tourist attractions, infrastructures and facilities related to Cultural/ Historical, Scientific, Industrial/Business, Nature-Based, Religious, Health and Mass Tourism and other required information;
6. Sharing data and knowledge among the Member States regarding Tourism related industries.
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| **13. Expected Outcomes of the Project:*** Establishing the Network of Tourism related industries of ECO countries;
* Providing ECO Tourism Routes and Packages in Cultural/ Historical, Scientific, Industrial/Business, Nature-Based, Religious, Health and Mass Tourism by the Network of ECO Tourism related industries;
* Introducing at least 3 main Cultural/ Historical, Nature-Based Tourism Routes among the ECO countries;
* Providing ECO Health Tourism Packages with using the top ECO Medical Tourism Destinations which have health facilities such as equipped hospitals, mineral groundwater resources, clean weather, etc.
* Providing ECO Industrial/ Scientific Tourism Routes with passing at least 3 main Industrial cities of the ECO countries with high level of development and progress in the special part of industry or science.
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| **14. Current status:**The issue of development of the joint tour packages was discussed in the ECO Tour Operators’ Network meetings. The Secretariat is now gathering proposals of tour operators concerning their tour packages in order to initiate joint tour packages for ECO region. |

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| **Tourism****T/Website/SSP/2021** | **1. Project Category/Code:**  |
| **Development of ECO Tourism Website** | **2. Project Title** |
| Main goal is to design a user-friendly specialized ECO Tourism website as a regional tool for sharing and consolidating tourism-related information and generating business and investment opportunities for the private sector in ECO Member States for easy access to information on tourism offerings, programmes and events in ECO Member States and promotion of the region. The portal will complement the national tourism websites by allowing a more systematic process for users to collect and view the information they are looking for. The website will be designed for use by the tourists and the tourism professionals and agencies. The part used by the tourism professionals and agencies will be a tool for linking regional partners and promoting information sharing, including on tourism projects, business opportunities, investment initiatives, investment related information, tourism data and statistics, events, and educational and training resources. The sections of the portal targeting potential and actual travellers will focus on providing information about the countries, regions, and tourism attractions, whilst promoting the services of private sector tourism providers in the region. | **3. Project Objectives** |
| **Subject to proposed TOR** | **4. Project Budget (US$)** |
| **ECO Secretariat, or any other Regional or International Organizations may be explored for full or partial financing of the project.** | **5. Project Funding Source** |
| **ECO Secretariat** | **6. Project Coordinator** |
| **UNWTO or any other Regional or International Organizations** | **7.International/Regional Partner** |
| **10 months**  | **8. Duration of Project**  |
| **2022** | **9. Project Starting Time** |
| **-**  | **10. Project Progress**  |
| **11.** **Background:**The technological innovations and the digitalization of the tourism sector has introduced new business models of tourism suppliers, as well as improved and connected operations along global tourism value chains. It has transformed the expectations and behaviors of the consumers, opening up new and highly creative ways of delivering tourism services to enhance the visitor experience. As the vast majority of tourists internationally now use the Internet as their primary means of research, marketing and promotion through various Internet platforms has become a cost-effective and convenient option for reaching the consumers and promotion of tourism offerings and destinations. ECO region still exhibits a huge unused potential in integration of digital technologies into the sector. With tourists increasingly using digital technologies to search, plan and book travel, it is essential that ECO Member States engage meaningfully to incorporate advanced digital technologies and prioritize accelerating the move to a more seamless and contactless end-to-end travel and tourism experience through new technologies to compete favorably with best-in-class tourist destinations around the world. Integration of advanced commonly preferred digital technologies into the regional tourism activities and portals has the potential to facilitate competitiveness and global reach of the ECO region and promotion of its diverse tourism offerings. As the sector fast tracks this transition globally, the ECO region may enhance the presence and initiatives of the regional tourism sector in digital platforms to expand their market reach and sharpen their competitive edge through a common virtual platform for marketing and promotion of regional tourism destinations, natural, historical and cultural assets and tourism activities for enhancing marketing, promotion of the region in the international arena.A user friendly website is essential to effectively position the ECO region globally, by marketing and promoting ECO region’s assets extensively in the areas of history, nature, religion, archaeology, living culture, cuisine and hospitality. The website can further be availed to generate business and investment opportunities for the private sector. |
| **12. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:**1. Design of ECO Tourism Website as specified in the TOR;
2. Design one part for travelers including data for each MSs Tourism attractions and means to promote the private sector tourism agencies’ initiatives including tour packages, and promotions. A section could be added to incorporate the comments and reviews of the travelers along with links to social media and blogs;
3. Upload all the required data on specialized tourism segments in each Member State, and tourism attractions in collaboration with the Member States and links to national tourism websites, museums and any other tourism resources.
4. Design one part of the website for tourism professionals and tour agencies including data for country wise and regional tourism statistics, tourism investment related information, events, fairs, forums, HRD Training activities
5. Make the Website operational
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| **13. Expected Outcomes of the Project:**1. Preparation of a dynamic and interactive user-friendly ECO Tourism Website that is completely operational
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| **14. Current status:**After the 32nd RPC the Directorate got in touch with some IT companies to initiate the preparations of the website. As the Secretariat and the consultants require the relevant inputs from the Member States, the Tourism Directorate circulated a note verbale asking the Member States to provide the Secretariat information to be displayed on the Website.- information on tourism industry of country (popular tourism destinations, attractions, travel agencies, travel regulations, visa application process, hotel accommodation and booking facilities, food and drinks, public transport, maps and guides and etc.);- calendar of international and regional, as well as national tourism events;- tourism promotion HD videos and images;- information on tourism investment incentives;- links to the Official Tourism Websites.At the first stage all the gathered data is hosted on the Tourism Section of the ECO official website which is accessible at [www.eco.int/tourism](http://www.eco.int/tourism). It will save the Secretariat the cost of consultant and maintenance. The IT section of the Secretariat will handle the technical process.In the second stage of the project, and after consultancy with some web designers and evaluating the proposals a separate website dedicated to regional tourism website will be launched and activated with a more interactive design for travelers and tourism professionals. |

**Completed project:**

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| **Tourism** | **1. Project Category/Code:** |
| **Tour operators chain and connectivity** | **2. Project Title** |
| **T/Operators/SPP-2019** | **Project Code:** |
| Main goal is to establish a network among major tour operators in ECO region for providing ECO Tourism Package that would be useful for increasing number of tourists and tourism revenues. Achieving a high level of professionalism within the tour operator industry, developing sustainable tourism industry in the ECO region, optimizing use of existing resources and capacities in order to have less costly and high quality trips in the ECO region, increasing number of tourists and the amount of tourism revenues, promoting ECO Region as one of the best tourism destinations are the final outputs of the Project.  | **3. Project Objectives** |
| Subject to proposed TOR | **4. Project Budget (US$)** |
| **ECO Secretariat, UNWTO or any other Regional or International Organizations may be explored for full or partial financing of the project.** | **5. Project Funding Source** |
| **ECO Secretariat** | **6. Project Coordinator** |
| **UNWTO or any other Regional or International Organizations** | **7.International/Regional Partner** |
| **18 months**  | **8. Duration of Project**  |
| **2022** | **9. Project Starting Time** |
| **completed** | **10. Project Progress**  |
| **11.** **Background:**The Strategic Objective which was defined for Tourism sector in ECO Vision 2025 is establishing a peaceful and green tourism destination with diverse products and high quality Services in the region. One of the Expected Outcomes of Tourism sector in ECO Vision 2025 is strengthening Private sector and local community involvement in the tourism activities. It seems that making a network among major tour operators in ECO region would be useful. The primary purpose of the project is promoting integrity within the tour operator industry in ECO region. Tour operators network is going to provide professional services by setting up an appropriate platforms of dialogue, cooperation, data exchanges and experience sharing to use all capacities and opportunities in ECO region as a rich area in cultural and historical heritage. Achieving a high level of professionalism within the tour operator industry requires a set of professional standards which include representing all facts, conditions and requirements. Tour operators’ network could include 10 major tour operators from ECO Member States which will introduce at least 3 main Tourist Roads such as Tabriz-Baku-Istanbul.Following the better Tourism and better life, tour operators’ network in ECO region is committed to promote tourism for peace, sustainable development and poverty reduction based on mutual trust and respect, mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.The First Forum of the ECO Heads of Tourism Associations, Unions and other Tourism Stakeholders, hosted by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in virtual format, was held on June 20, 2022. The Forum agreed to set up a Tour Operator Network among ECO Member States as an efficient outcome and nominations of interested tour operators were requested to be shared with the Secretariat for the Secretariat to facilitate the establishment of the network.  |
| **12. Necessary Actions and Assistance Needed:**1. Implementation of the part of ECO Vision 2025 in Tourism sector with respect to strengthening Private sector and local community involvement in the tourism activities;
2. Nomination of Focal Points on industry;
3. Sharing data and knowledge among the Member States regarding Tour operators;
4. Introducing at least 3 main Tourist Roads;
5. Encouraging concerned Member States for actively involvement.
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| **13. Expected Outcomes of the Project:**1. Preparation of Terms of References of establishing a Tour operators network in ECO region
2. Establishment of Networking of the 10 most important Tour operators from 10 MS;
3. Providing ECO Tourism Package.
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| **14. Current status:**The ECO Tour Operators’ Network was established in 2022 and currently unites more than 350 tourism agencies, tour operators and tour guides from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. 1st Meeting of the ECO Tour Operators Network was held on 22nd November, 2022 in virtual format. The meeting decided on the technical matters and infrastructure for establishment of the network. The latest and 5th Meeting of ECO Tour Operators’ Network was held on 15 August 2023 in virtual mode. ECO Tour Operators’ Network ensures an efficient exchange of data and knowledge sharing between the members and provides a discussion platform for the development of joint tourism packages in different areas. Tour operators from different countries are now able to share information about their cities and provinces which have numerous tourist attractions, infrastructures and facilities in the fields of Cultural/Historical, Scientific, Industrial/Business, Nature-Based, Religious, Health and Mass Tourism. Tour operators as representatives of the private sector, now also have the opportunity to cooperate in promoting regional tourism and to establish the relevant contacts from other countries to further strengthen the regional tourism industry. Various activities such as B2B meetings that could bring the participants of the network psychically together to cooperate for joint efforts like combined tour packages are being considered well as the organization of an ECO Tour Operators Forum as the future steps in the context of the project. |