EXPERIENCE THE SILKROAD MINISTERS’ SUMMIT
9 March 2011 at ITB Berlin

CONCLUSIONS & UPDATE
UNWTO Silk Road Ministers’ Summit 2011

PART I

UNWTO SILK ROAD MINISTERS’ SUMMIT

2011

On 9 March 2011, Ministers, Ambassadors and high-ranking officials from over 20 countries met at ITB Berlin at the first annual UNWTO Silk Road Ministers’ Summit to discuss the challenges and opportunities for Silk Road tourism development.

Organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and supported by ITB Berlin, the Summit was an opportunity for key decision makers to share ideas on how to enhance cooperation to promote and strengthen the Silk Road tourism brand.

At the Summit, UNWTO introduced new concepts and initiatives, and sought input from the Member States on the proposed next steps moving forward. UNWTO reiterated the importance of addressing key obstacles that continue to impede tourism growth along the Silk Road, such as visas, border crossing procedures and transnational cooperation issues.

The Summit was attended by representatives from the following UNWTO Member States: Armenia, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, India, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

Presentations from the Summit are available on the website: www.unwto.org/silkroad

ITB Director
Mr. Martin Buck:
‘It gives us great pride that UNWTO has chosen ITB Berlin to host the UNWTO Silk Road Ministers Summit, and what better place to hold such an event. Although it doubtlessly bears an immense potential, the Silk Road initiative is a very demanding and ambitious mission. I wish you all the best in trying to transform the Silk Road into the new success story of touristic travel in the second decade of the 21st century...’

UNWTO Silk Road Ministers’ Summit 2011
Opening Remarks

UNWTO Secretary-General
Mr. Taleb Rifai:
‘The Silk Road Ministers’ Summit at ITB 2011 demonstrated the importance of cooperation and engagement from our Member States in UNWTO’s efforts to drive sustainable Silk Road tourism development. There is much work to be done but importantly, there is a lot of enthusiasm around the table. Let us work together to build a prestigious Silk Road brand that will attract the attention of tourists, media and investors globally...’

UNWTO Silk Road Ministers’ Summit 2011
Conclusions
SUMMIT CONCLUSIONS

The following key points came out of the Summit debate and discussions:

- The **Silk Road brand** is a strong brand with significant potential to drive economic growth, employment and development as well as meet the market demand for experience-based, seamless tourism itineraries.
- There is **strong support and endorsement** from the Member States to advance the UNWTO Silk Road Action Plan.
- **Three key focus areas** for development remain: i) marketing and promotion, ii) capacity building and destination management, and iii) travel facilitation.
- **Social media** will play an important role in promotional activity for the Silk Road, looking ahead.
- The **Silk Road Task Force** is currently being mobilized with 16 Members and UNWTO encourages the remaining countries to nominate their representatives.
- UNWTO will be working closely with sister **UN agencies** in pursuit of its development and capacity building activities.
- While some progress is being made in a number of Silk Road Member States on the issue of **travel facilitation**, much remains to be done as insufficient information on border control procedures and complicated visa processes continue to prevent travel to the regions.
- Preliminary market research on the Silk Road commissioned by UNWTO shows the Silk Road as one of the **most well-known travel routes worldwide**.
- Interregional cooperation for initiatives such as the **Silk Road by Sea** (maritime routes) will help increase Silk Road brand awareness as well as distribute tourist flows across the regions.
- **Public-private partnerships** remain increasingly important, and UNWTO will be engaging private sector partners and sponsors to drive the development of the Programme initiatives.
- UNWTO will continue its efforts to promote the Silk Road as an **overarching brand at international fairs**, with a consolidated programme of activities already established in Europe (ITB Berlin and WTM London), UNWTO is now concentrating on expanding Silk Road presence at Asian fairs.
- UNWTO is seeking donors to support the development of a **comprehensive market research study** on the Silk Road brand and the creation of a professional **brand toolkit** that will assist Member States in Silk Road destination promotion.

Above all, cooperation will be the key to success in all aspects of Silk Road tourism activity.
PART II

UNWTO SILK ROAD PROGRAMME UPDATE

Summary and progress report: July 2010 – March 2011

UNWTO’s mission on the Silk Road Programme is to work in collaboration with stakeholders to achieve the following:

UNWTO SILK ROAD PROGRAMME: OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

To work towards achieving these objectives and outcomes, UNWTO Silk Road Programme focuses on three key areas of activity:

A) **Marketing and Promotion**: Establishing a consolidated Silk Road brand and promoting the implementation of collaborative marketing and PR campaigns globally

B) **Capacity Building and Destination Management**: Cooperative and sustainable development through the sharing of best practices and training, to generate benefits for host communities and stimulate on-going investment

C) **Travel Facilitation**: Addressing the barriers that prevent travel across the region – visa formalities and border procedures – while working towards developing a Silk Road tourist visa
To strategically address these focus areas, the UNWTO launched its Silk Road Action Plan 2010/2011 at the 5th International Meeting on the Silk Road held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in October 2010. The Action Plan outlines a series of collaborative initiatives to be carried out while inviting engagement from the industry.

In short, priority actions planned for 2010/2011 are as follows:

**A) MARKETING AND PROMOTION**

1. *Conduct an in-depth analysis of the Silk Road brand* through market research to determine key strengths and competitive advantages of the brand and how best to optimise these strengths
2. *Develop a brand toolkit* including logo, straplines, disclaimer and guidelines for use, downloadable and accessible for all Silk Road stakeholders, to help promote brand awareness and mainstream brand identity
3. *Establish Silk Road website* providing important information on travelling the Silk Road in one central online platform, while linking the Silk Road countries/destinations under one overarching brand
4. *Enhance Silk Road brand visibility at international tourism fairs* as an on-going process for increasing industry and consumer awareness
Progress on marketing and promotion thus far:

I. Silk Road branding was a key issue addressed at the 5th International Meeting on the Silk Road, held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in October 2010, which was attended by over 250 representatives from 26 countries.

II. Attracted a high level of media participation and attention at the first Silk Road Media Mart at WTM London (November 2010) where destinations had the opportunity to speed network and promote their destinations’ stories to leading travel media.

III. Achieved increased visibility for the Silk Road at ITB Berlin: negotiating for Messe Berlin to brand two of its pavilions The Silk Road, featuring UNWTO/Silk Road logo; held a ‘Silk Road Hour’ at the ITB Cinema daily featuring short films provided by National Tourism Administrations.

IV. Commissioned UNWTO Affiliate Member MDS to conduct market research on 300,000 blogs, chatrooms and forums on the Silk Road to determine share of voice on travel considerations, sentiment, seasonality, trip styles and buzzwords associated with the Silk Road.

V. Initiated discussions with Affiliate Members, educational institutions, major travel websites and search engines regarding the provision of data and market intelligence on the Silk Road brand.

VI. Worked with TripAdvisor, the world’s largest travel website, to develop a concept for a dedicated Silk Road website, with an interactive map powered by Google maps and featuring online forums, viral game and with the capacity for destinations to upload their own content. This concept was presented at the UNWTO Silk Road Ministers’ Summit (ITB Berlin March 2011) and was well received by the Member States. Sponsorship proposal are now underway.

VII. Commissioned a graphic designer to retouch and upgrade the Silk Road logo to make it suitable for usage online and on large signage (e.g. for the pavilions at ITB Berlin).

B) Capacity Building and Destination Management

1. Establish an on-going programme of meetings between Silk Road Member States addressing key issues relating to UNWTO Silk Road Action Plan development and implementation.

2. Develop a framework for capacity building that will enhance destination management, foster increased cooperation between Member States and engage host communities.

Progress on Capacity Building and Destination Management thus far:

I. Established Silk Road Task Force as the key working body overseeing the activity of the Silk Road Programme, and created a communications forum on UNWTO Affiliate Members professional network platma.org. Almost all Member States have nominated representatives.
II. Successfully held 5th International Meeting on the Silk Road, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in October 2010, designed to foster greater cooperation between Silk Road stakeholders and galvanize support for UNWTO Silk Road Action Plan while encouraging participation in the new phase of Silk Road Programme development. Next Meeting to take place in October 2012, host country TBC.

III. Successfully held first annual UNWTO Silk Road Ministers’ Summit at ITB Berlin 2011, with Ministers and high level representatives from over 20 countries; established this event as major fixture for ITB Berlin with arrangements for next edition (2012) already underway

IV. Organised a business to business (B2B) event for Silk Road tour operators at ITB Berlin 2011

V. Commenced work with the Themis Foundation to develop specialised Silk Road educational capacity building workshops, with Tajikistan already expressing interest in becoming the first pilot destination

C) TRAVEL FACILITATION

1. Administer consultations with Ambassadors to discuss travel facilitation issues, particularly addressing visa processes and border control procedures

   Progress thus far:

   I. Travel facilitation issues were a key priority addressed by the UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai at the opening address of the UNWTO Silk Road Ministers’ Summit 2011

   II. UNWTO continues to re-emphasise the importance of improved travel facilitation when meeting with high level delegations, and continues to investigate best practice models both within the Silk Road regions and beyond

   III. Ambassadors’ consultations planned to commence at UNWTO HQ from summer 2011
SILK ROAD TASK FORCE–MEMBER STATES REPRESENTATION

Europe
- Armenia
- Albania
- Azerbaijan
- Croatia
- Georgia
- Kazakhstan
- Tajikistan
- Turkey
- Russian Federation
- Ukraine
- Uzbekistan

Asia & the Pacific
- China
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- Republic of Korea
- Mongolia
- Pakistan

Middle East
- Iraq

*Information correct as of April 2011

All Silk Road Member States have been invited to nominate a national representative for the Silk Road Task Force. A discussion and debate forum has been established on the UNWTO Affiliate Members’ online platform www.platma.org. Pending registrations can be sent to silkroad@unwto.org

NEXT STEPS
Opportunities for Member States and next steps for the UNWTO Silk Road Programme are discussed in detail in the document Next Steps – Priorities for 2011, due for distribution May 2011. Contact silkroad@unwto.org for more information.