



ISLAMIC TOURISM CONFERENCE 2010

The month of July 2010 was indeed a very productive month for the School of Business and Economics (SBE) particularly the Tourism programme. SBE was entrusted to jointly organize an international conference on "How to Successfully Design and Implement Master Plans for Sustainable Tourism Development" with the Islamic Tourism Center (ITC), Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia. This was subsequently followed by an eight days' short training course at the same venue.

The international conference was held on 12-13 July 2010 at the Grand Borneo Ballroom, 1Borneo, Kota Kinabalu, which was officiated by Dato' Norhaidi Hj Che Dan who represented YB Datuk Anifah Aman, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The keynote address was delivered by YB Datuk Masidi Manjun, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Sabah who addressed "Tourism Master Plans: Roles, Opportunities, Issues and Challenges". The ceremony was also witnessed by Datuk Seri Panglima Brigadier General Prof. Dr. Kamaruzaman Ampon, the Vice Chancellor of UMS, Mr Alex Rajakumar, the ITC's Director of Capacity Building representing ITC's Director General, Mr Zainuddin Abdul Wahab and Associate Professor Dr Hjh Arsiah Hj Bahron, the Dean of SBE.

The aim of the conference was to enable participants to understand the general concepts that underpin the implementation of tourism master plans towards successful delivery of outcomes and the importance of linking tourism master plans towards sustainable tourism development. Meanwhile, the aim of the training programme was to train key decision makers on the design and implementation

of tourism master plans in the context of their country of origin. At the end of training, the participants were expected to be able to successfully plan, design and implement country-level master plan, in addition to, critically review and assess existing tourism master plans.

It is a well established fact that tourism is a rapidly growing industry which contributes significantly to the country's GDP. It is also noted that the success of this industry is a global characteristic in which relationships transcending borders, language and culture are needed. Thus, all levels of society, even world communities, must be involved in order to achieve sustainability within this industry. The conference highlighted that the responsibility of implementing the sustainable tourism development agenda does not lie solely with the government. It needs the support of industry players, NGOs, local residents and institutions of higher learning, including Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Therefore, the organising of this conference by UMS, together with ITC, is

UMS's manifestation of its commitment towards sustainable development whereby effective networks and partnerships were also highlighted.

However, the industry will face its own demise if the development of tourism continues to be flawed. Therefore, it is encouraging to see that the conference gained support from the public and private sector and academics and students internationally. International participants were represented from Yemen, Jordan, Syria, Maldives, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Libya, Myanmar, Morocco, Indonesia, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Senegal and Pakistan.

The two-day conference was divided into two sessions, plenary and paper presentations. The plenary session was moderated by the highly acclaimed Prof. Dr. Syed Azizi Wafa Syed Khalid Wafa, of International Business Programme, SBE. The six distinguished panelists discussed on "The Key to Successful Sustainable Tourism Development is Having the Right Master Plan". The panelists were YB Datuk Masidi Manjun (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Sabah), Datuk Dr. Victor Wee (Chairman, Tourism Malaysia), Professor Dr Roselina Ahmad Saufi (SBE), Associate Professor Dr Gary M Jones (Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam), Associate Professor Dr Russell Arthur Smith, (Interim Dean, Cornell-Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management, Singapore) and Mr. Anthony Wong (Group Managing Director, Asian Overland Services).

Then after, the presentations were given by nine eminent international and local experts who presented their views and shared their experiences concerning sustainable tourism development. These were captured on topics such as developmental sustainability, the planning for human capital requirements, minimising social impacts, local governance, issues and challenges in managing World Heritage Sites, public – private partnerships, long-term brand equity and master plan monitoring and controls.

