

## Chiranjeevi Inaugurates UNWTO Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development



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Union Tourism Minister Shri K. Chiranjeevi inaugurated the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Conference on sustainable tourism development at Hyderabad today. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that in the coming years, the Asia and Pacific regions with their vast range of destinations and products can achieve higher growth in tourism by developing synergy to promote tourism products and destinations jointly. He said “Intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation holds the key to the growth of this sector. Further, the tourism industry with its established contributions towards economic growth, employment generation and social integration, will have to be made sustainable for drawing the benefits over a longer period of time”. He further mentioned that while it is important to create platforms for building informed consensus; it is equally important to communicate the importance of sustainability. The Tourism Minister said “The policy makers should establish effective communication channels for sensitizing the masses and taking the

stakeholders along. The local self-governments, the local communities and the youth can be an instrument and the force to take forward the agenda of sustainability. He said India is one of the first countries to have developed guidelines for sustainable tourism and guidelines for hotel classification encouraged the industry to adopt eco-friendly practices.

Speaking as the Chief Guest, The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Shri N Kiran Kumar Reddy mentioned that the city of Hyderabad is now a host to a number of leading conferences. The goal is to attract tourists to visit the city again. He mentioned that travel is now for business and leisure and the world is becoming a global village. He hoped that the discussions in this city of pearls and Nizami culture and heritage will benefit the tourism sector.

Mr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of UNWTO in his opening address referred to Hyderabad as the city of smiles. He mentioned that 2012 was a historical year which saw 1035 million people crossing international borders. While the tourism sector saw a growth of 4% the Asian region saw a growth of 7% and accounted for 25% of world traffic. He predicted a growth of 3.5 to 4% for the tourism sector worldwide and a growth of 5-6% for the Asian region. Such a huge activity leaves imprints. He mentioned that more growth must mean more sustainability. Over the period of 62 years the number of people crossing international borders has grown from 25 million to 1035 million which requires more responsibility, he added.

The inaugural function was attended by about 100 international delegates from 24 member countries, stakeholders from the travel and hospitality industry, senior officials from the central and state governments and representatives from the media.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in collaboration with the State Government of Andhra Pradesh, is hosting the 25th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commissions for East Asia & Pacific and South Asia and the UNWTO Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development in Hyderabad from the 12th to 14th April 2013.

UNWTO and India have been working hand in hand for the cause of developing nations at the global level. India played a critical role in making G-20 Heads of Nations adopt a resolution in Mexico that tourism is a pro-poor activity which can be a major instrument for economic development and employment generation. Both UNWTO and India realise the importance of sustainability and the importance of deriving benefits of tourism for the national development over a longer period of time. During the conference exchange of ideas will take place on the way forward to develop tourism in a sustainable manner.

This initiative of hosting the two international events, taken by the Ministry of Tourism and Government of Andhra Pradesh, no doubt, will go a long way in highlighting India's role in promoting global and regional tourism in a

sustainable manner for economic growth, employment generation and social integration.

