

HIGH LEVEL DISSEMINATION RESULTS – FINAL CONFERENCE FO THE DESTI SMART PROJECT

SPEECH by Mr. Savvas Perdios-Deputy Minister of Tourism

Annabelle Hotel, 28 April 2022, TIME 14.30

Dear Participants,

I am very glad to be with you today, as this event is a very important one, especially for Cyprus and in particular for Pafos. It is a great honour for us to be hosting this event, and I hope that this day has been very fruitful so far and it shall continue to be fruitful throughout the rest of the day.

Concerning the DESTI-SMART project, I wanted to point out that as Ministry we admire it, as it focuses on sustainable mobility, accessibility, and responsible travel within a sustainable tourism framework. It is also very important that this project is fully in line with UNWTO Smart Destinations Initiative, because as you may know Pafos is trying very hard to be a part of this initiative and I think that things will go very well for the city on that front.

Before I say a bit more about Pafos, I would like to inform you on what Cyprus is doing at the moment as a destination and how that falls in line with tourism transition pathway from the European Commission. I believe that what we are doing is fully in line with their framework for the next few years. They talk a lot about sustainability, digital transition, smart transition and I am very proud to say that Cyprus is one of the destinations that is fully on board with this transition pathway.

In particular, a few years before we launched a National Tourism Strategy for the years 2020 – 2030. This Strategy was launched in January 2020, a few months before the pandemic, which made us worried whether this Strategy will be implemented or be withheld. However, this did not happen as we pushed on its implementation. We did that because in this Strategy we had defined the trends we see today, like green transition, spending more time in nature, smart holidays, etc.

Our Strategy is based on five key pillars, and we hope that by the end of 2030 we will be able to convert Cyprus to a year-round, high quality, climate friendly, digitally smart destination, and lastly the fifth pillar is creating a destination where all residents can benefit from tourism. This means that:

1. We are not only focusing on the beach resorts, but also on developing the whole island as a destination.
2. We are making sure that local residents and small local communities are actually being at the heart of our tourism strategy, which very important so as to have locals engaged in everything we are doing.

We are not developing Cyprus as a tourism destination in the traditional sense, meaning we are not doing what we are doing only for visitors from abroad. However, primarily we are focused on the locals. We make sure that the locals are on board with what we are doing, because when the locals are on board if we facilitate their lives first it is absolutely self-explanatory that visitors from abroad will also benefit and will also engage with a community even more.

This was a small introduction so that you can understand a little bit our philosophy, where we are coming from and now let's proceed to Pafos.

To begin with I need to give a lot of credit not only to the Mayor of Pafos but also the Regional Tourism Board of Pafos for their hard work.

Pafos is fully on board with our vision, and this is great to see, because this means that we are heading towards the same direction. Pafos is making a commendable effort to convert itself into a smart destination, but also a year-round destination, a higher quality destination, a climate friendly destination, and a destination where all residents can benefit from tourism. So, they are doing a lot of things to make sure that they are fully in line with what we are doing. Specifically, they focus, in terms of what you are discussing today, has been on improving cycling facilities, smart signage, developing walking tourism, which is something that in Cyprus was not very important in the past.

Another thing that they are focusing on is accessibility of archaeological sites. Pafos is a destination with the most amazing archaeological sites in Cyprus but is not enough anymore to showcase them to people without thinking their disabilities. 20% of the EU population has some sort of disability, whether in movement, in hearing, in seeing. Taking that into account it very important to use smart technology to really make archaeological sites more accessible.

Furthermore, another good practice example is that Pafos has initiated the installation of charging stations for e-vehicles of several types, not only cars, but also scooters.

In closing, I want to commend once again the Regional Tourism Board of Pafos for all these initiatives. They have our full support, they are very open minded when it comes to the schemes that we launch as a Ministry. They are always making sure that they are ready to submit their application to get sponsorship by us to make all these improvements. Thus, I think that Pafos has the chance to be one of the Smart Tourism Destinations of the next few years.

My commitment and the Ministry's commitment to Pafos is that they will keep having our onboard support and to the rest of you I commend you as well for being here for participating in this conference and also for looking at tourism in a different perspective, which we like a lot.

Tourism as the pandemic has shown is no longer is as we knew it before. People want destinations, which are more climate sensitive, destinations which are more inclusive or openminded, and so on. You are all frontrunners to all of this and we are very glad as Cyprus to welcome you here.

That is all from me at the moment and I am sure that you shall discuss all these topics in much more detail, and thus I shall not take any more of your time. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you and wish you all the best.

Rest assured that Cyprus will assist in any way possible to fulfil your vision and have Pafos become one of the best Smart Destinations at least in Europe.

Thank you very much! Have great day and we hope to welcome you soon.