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Press Release

## Kerala revises Responsible Tourism Policy to make it People's Movement



- **Minister Mohamed Riyas announces 2023 Kerala Declaration that stresses on social, economic and environmental responsibilities**

**Kottayam, Feb. 27:** Kerala will implement Responsible Tourism (RT) as a popular programme on the lines of the state's much-successful literacy movement and decentralised planning, the Global Responsible Tourism Summit announced today.





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A Declaration to this effect was drafted on the basis of ideas and proposals that emerged from two days of discussions at the February 25-28 conclave. It serves as an update to 'Kerala RT Declaration of 2008', Tourism Minister Shri P.A. Mohamed Riyas said.

"The focus is on making Kerala a better place with better people," the Minister told the valedictory session of the four-day event in Kumarakom near the city. "RT brought in a new phase of human interaction, enabling us to go deeper into the roots of society."

The 2023 Declaration, which was signed by Kerala Tourism Principal Secretary Shri K.S. Srinivas and Responsible Tourism Partnership & ICRT International Founder Dr Harold Goodwin, speaks on three kinds of responsibilities: social, economic and environmental.

A vital guiding principle will be regular assessment of economic impacts before developing tourism. Preference will be for initiatives that benefit local communities and minimise negative impacts on livelihoods. The declaration calls for maximum economic benefits to the residents around any project by increasing linkages and reducing leakages by involving communities. Tourism will assist poverty alleviation.

As for social responsibilities, local communities should be involved in planning, decision-making and capacity-building. To strengthen gender equality and ensure safe destinations for women as both hosts and guests, the State RT Mission will work with civic bodies and UN Women in all the programmes.

Under environmental responsibilities amid alarming climate change, the RT Mission will accord high priority on reducing green-house gas emissions. "Communities need investment to adapt to the consequences of climate change generated beyond Kerala," it says, urging for sustainable use of resources amid minimal waste (particularly plastic) and optimal consumption. "Reduce, reuse and recycle" will be the mantra, with priority given to the restoration of buildings instead of building new ones.

Kerala Tourism Principal Secretary Shri K.S. Srinivas welcomed the delegates at the summit featuring 70 speakers across 12 sessions at Lakesong resort. RT Mission State Coordinator Shri K. Rupeshkumar proposed thanks at the session that saw a string of felicitation of delegates who totalled 280.

The 2023 Declaration calls for the development of quality products that reflect the spirit of any tourist destination, and complement and enhance its value. Tourism must be marketed in ways that reflect the natural, cultural and social integrity of the destination.





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Also, authorities should adopt equitable business practices, pay and charge fair prices, and build partnerships which may share and minimise risk, besides recruit and employ staff recognising international labour standards. Further, the sector must provide appropriate and sufficient support to small, medium and micro enterprises to ensure tourism-related enterprises thrive and remain sustainable.

To deliver equality of access for differently-abled hosts and guests, the RT Mission will endeavour to deliver equal access for people living with any kind of disability. The current technology should be accessible to all when it comes to tourism activities and experiences. Authorities must assess social impacts throughout the life cycle of the operation (planning and design of projects) to minimise negative impacts.

The Declaration endeavours to make tourism an inclusive social experience and ensure its access to all, including the vulnerable and disadvantaged. The document calls for combating sexual exploitation, particularly of children. "Be sensitive to the host culture, maintaining and encouraging social and cultural diversity," it adds.

The document calls for ensuring tourism's contribution to improvements in health and education, besides promoting innovation in tourism.

Stressing on management and restoration of natural diversity, the document calls upon the need to protect vulnerable ecosystems and avoid disturbing wildlife. Authorities must promote education and awareness among all stakeholders on sustainable development, by encouraging them to follow best practices in consultation with experts.

Overall, work will be carried out with cooperation from other government ministries to develop Kerala as a carbon-neutral destination.

**ENDS**