



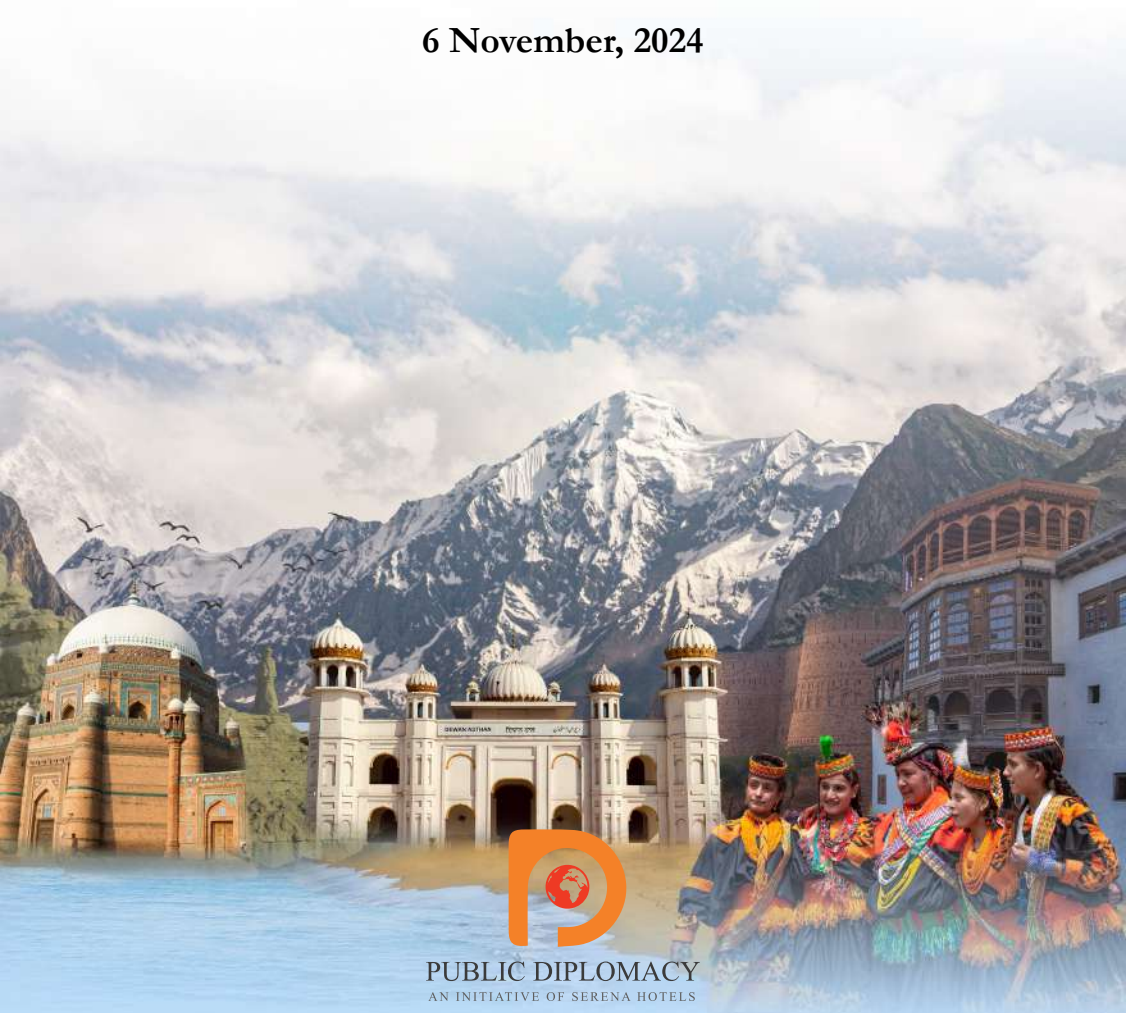
SERENA HOTELS



SANOBER
INSTITUTE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
**TOURISM POTENTIAL OF
PAKISTAN**

6 November, 2024



PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
AN INITIATIVE OF SERENA HOTELS

Concept Note

Tourism has emerged as a dynamic sector in the global economy. Numerous countries of the world have used tourism to promote their positive image as well as socio-economic development. It can bring dividends to a nation's economy and generate employment opportunities. Tourism industry propels the associated economic activity related to transportation, hotels, entertainment, shopping, and food industries. Developing countries can earn substantial foreign exchange from tourism that could boost their sustainable development. Tourism can also help a nation achieve UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), particularly for reducing poverty and inequalities.

Pakistan has all the elements that can make it an attractive tourist destination. Pakistan is home to mighty mountains, revered religious shrines, rich archaeological heritage, and a remarkable coastline. However, the tourism potential of Pakistan remains grossly under-realized. Given the multitude of impediments to developing tourism as an industry, including connectivity issues, lack of hospitality infrastructure, and inadequate visitor services, there is a need to clearly identify the impediments to promoting tourism, and make tangible recommendations to transform tourism into an image-building and revenue-generating industry that can bring socio-economic dividends for the people of Pakistan.

Keeping the above in view, Sanober Institute, in partnership with Serena Hotel Islamabad, is organizing an International Conference on the Tourism Potential of Pakistan, that would bring together notable experts from home and abroad to carry out a detailed overview of the tourism potential of Pakistan, and design a roadmap comprising doable actions to be taken in the public and private sectors to translate the potential into reality.

The International Conference, which will be held on 6 November 2024 at Serena Hotel Islamabad, will focus on the following four themes: Mountain Tourism; Religious Tourism; Heritage Tourism; and Coastal Tourism. A policy paper is being prepared to facilitate discussion by national and international experts and speakers. The recommendations of the Conference would be consolidated as a comprehensive report, which would be widely disseminated for the benefit of the government and all other stakeholders associated with the tourism industry of Pakistan.

Agenda

Inaugural Session

(Time 09:00 - 11:00)

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Mr. Aziz Boolani

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed

Mr Haroon Sharif

PANEL 1

Mountain Tourism

(Time 11:00 - 12:00)

Moderator:

Ambassador
Naghmana Hashmi

Panelist:

Mr. Christian Trommsdorff

Mr. Aftab ur Rehman Rana

Mr Yannick Graziani

Mr Victor Saunders

PANEL 2

Coastal Tourism

(Time 12:00 - 13:00)

Moderator:

Vice Admiral Khan
Hasham Bin Siddiqui

Panelist:

Dr. Rohantha Athukorala

AVM (R) Ijaz Mahmood Malik

Mr. Changez Hussain Khan

PANEL 3

Religious Tourism

(Time 14:00 - 15:00)

Moderator:

Dr Qamar Cheema

Panelist:

Mr. Sardar Jasdeep Singh

Mr. Ramesh Singh Arora

Mr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani

Mr. Attaullah Tarar

PANEL 4

Heritage Tourism

(Time 15:00 - 16:00)

Moderator:

Mr. Raja Amer

Panelist:

Rev. Dato Dr. Sumana Siri

Mr. Imran Shaukat

Ambassador Aizaz

Ahmad Chaudhry

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, with a distinguished 37-year career in Pakistan's Foreign Service, has held pivotal roles, including Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to the United States. After retiring, he led the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad as Director General for over four years, contributing to Pakistan's strategic discourse. He now serves as Chairman of Sanober Institute Islamabad, an independent platform addressing Pakistan's strategic concerns. Ambassador Chaudhry is also a prolific author, with three books, including *Diplomatic Footprints*, and numerous articles published nationally and internationally, underscoring his continued impact on foreign policy and strategic studies.



Mr. Aziz Boolani

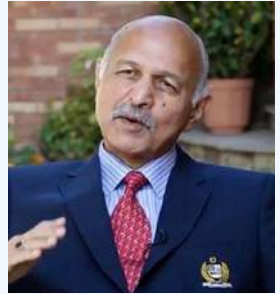
Mr. Aziz Boolani has been a prominent figure in the hospitality industry since 1986, holding various leadership roles, including General Manager and CEO for Marriott, Pearl Continental, and Serena Hotels in Pakistan. Currently, he serves as the CEO of Serena Hotels in South and Central Asia & East Africa and heads the Tourism Department for the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED). His notable achievements include overseeing the commissioning of five hotels and restoring Shigar Fort and Khaplu Palace as National Heritage properties. Awarded the 'Sitar-e-Imtiaz' by the President of Pakistan in 2016 for his contributions to community engagement and women's empowerment through the Karighar vocational training program, Mr. Boolani has also served as Chairman of the Pakistan Hotels Association and is actively involved in various community service initiatives.



Senator Mushahid

Hussain Syed

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed is a distinguished Pakistani politician currently serving as the the Chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute. In these roles, he advocates for national security and defense reforms while fostering strong ties between Pakistan and China. Previously, he served as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, where he played a key role in shaping media policy. Senator Hussain has represented Pakistan in various international forums, emphasizing the country's strategic interests. His extensive experience in both politics and journalism has solidified his reputation as a leading voice in defense and foreign affairs.



Mr. Haroon Sharif

Mr. Haroon Sharif served as the Minister of State and Chairman of Pakistan's Board of Investment from 2018 to 2019, playing a key role in the Prime Minister's economic team. He influenced major decisions on the Economic Coordination Committee and led initiatives in the Joint Cooperation Committee of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), promoting the Ease of Doing Business and establishing Specialized Economic Zones. A global expert in economic policy and international development, he previously served as the Regional Advisor to the World Bank Group. Mr. Sharif holds postgraduate degrees from the London School of Economics and the University of Hawaii, and is a noted speaker and author with several prestigious awards.



Panel 1: Mountain Tourism

The awe and lure of majestic mountains of Pakistan.



Moderator:

Ambassador (R)

Naghmana Hashmi

Ambassador (R) Naghmana Hashmi, with a distinguished 37-year career in Pakistan's Foreign Service, has served in high-profile ambassadorial roles in China, the European Union, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Ireland. Currently, she is a Certified Director and serves as an Advisor at Kestral Trading, Advisor for China Study at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), Independent Director at First Women Bank Limited (FWBL), and Vice Chair at the Council on Global Policy (CGP). An insightful political analyst, she frequently shares her expertise through her books, *Magnificent Pakistan* and *Pakistan-China-All Weather Friendship*, and engages widely on X (formerly Twitter) @AmbNaghmanaHash.



Panelist:

Christian

Trommsdorff

Mr. Christian Trommsdorff, a French-German national raised in the Alps (Grenoble), has crafted a distinguished career in mountaineering, merging his engineering background with a lifelong passion for climbing. An IFMGA-certified mountain guide since 1999, he has led around 50 expeditions across the Karakoram, Himalayas, Andes, and beyond. Based in Chamonix, he has guided globally and served as vice president of the French Guides Association (SNGM) from 2009 to 2016, with ongoing roles in international relations. Since joining IFMGA in 2008, he has advanced the profession globally, including as president from 2016 to 2019. As president of the elite Groupe de Haute Montagne (GHM) since 2008, he has also organized the prestigious "Piolets d'Or" awards for the past 15 years.



Panelist:
Yannick Graziani

Mr. Yannick Graziani, an esteemed alpine guide and passionate mountaineer born in 1973, has dedicated over two decades to high-altitude climbs across remote mountain ranges, especially in the Himalayas and the Karakoram. His minimalist and efficient approach to mountaineering—prioritizing small, skilled teams and pioneering new routes—has shaped his career. A key highlight was his ascent of Pumari Shish in the Karakoram, where he and his climbing partner successfully established the only route to the 7,350-meter summit, capturing the spirit of adventure and teamwork central to his philosophy. His profound connection to the Karakoram has inspired numerous returns to Pakistan, building friendships and honoring the region's mountain culture, which continues to enrich his recent achievements and mountaineering endeavors.



Panelist:
Victor Saunders

Mr. Victor Saunders, a celebrated British mountaineer, writer, and high mountain guide, has dedicated over four decades to pioneering ascents in some of the world's most challenging ranges, including the Himalayas and Karakoram. Known for his commitment to alpine-style, lightweight expeditions, he has earned significant respect for his minimalist and daring approach to high-altitude climbing. Recently serving as president of the Alpine Club (UK) from 2020 to 2022, Saunders brought renewed energy and focus to the world's oldest mountaineering club. Alongside his climbing achievements, he is a distinguished author, capturing the spirit of his adventures and sharing valuable insights from his career in several well-received books.



Panelist:
Mr. Aftab Ur
Rehman Rana

Mr. Aftab Ur Rehman Rana, with over 37 years in Pakistan's tourism and hospitality sector, is the Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation and President of the Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan. He has led projects for USAID, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank, focusing on ecotourism and tourism development across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Balochistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Mr. Rana has authored key tourism policies and writes extensively on Pakistan's tourism industry. His efforts have earned him prestigious awards, including the Commonwealth Asia Award for Excellence.

Panel 2: Coastal Tourism

Pristine Beaches of Pakistan -A delightful treasure.



Moderator:
Vice Admiral (R) Khan
Hasham Bin Siddique

Vice Admiral (Retired) Khan Hasham Bin Siddique, a distinguished leader with nearly four decades in the Pakistan Navy, retired in 2017 as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. Following his retirement, he served as Pakistan's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and as Permanent Representative at the OIC. He later became President of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute from February 2019 to May 2020. Currently, as Managing Director of Bahria Foundation since February 2021, he has driven the organization to new heights. An accomplished scholar, he holds a Master's in Operations Research and an M.Phil in Public Policy, along with several military honors, including Sitara-e-Imtiaz and Hilal-e-Imtiaz. Outside his professional endeavors, he is an avid golfer with a keen interest in sports.



Panelist:
Dr. Rohantha
Athukorala

Dr. Rohantha Athukorala is a highly respected business professional with over 23 years of experience in leading British multinationals like Unilever and Reckitt Benckiser. He currently serves as the Country Head for Clouttrack Software Labs, overseeing operations in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Pakistan. Recently, he was appointed by UNILEVER Sri Lanka to lead a three-year “Lessons Learned” study and tasked by the Government of Sri Lanka to develop the Strategic Plan for 2024-2027 for the University Grants Commission. An award-winning leader, he has received both the ‘Marketing Achiever’ and ‘Business Achiever’ awards and serves as a visiting lecturer in Tourism at Colombo University and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).



Panelist:
Air Vice Marshal (R)
Ijaz Mehmood Malik

Air Vice Marshal (R) Ijaz Mehmood Malik served in the Pakistan Air Force for 34 years and holds a Master's degree in Disaster Risk Management. Since 2017, he has worked as a consultant for Sustainable Tourism Development, contributing to print and electronic media on related subjects. Currently, he is the Founding Managing Editor of "Fascinating Pakistan," a tourism and heritage magazine, and serves as Executive Director of "Discover Pakistan," the first Pakistani tourism channel, as well as "NorthAir Pakistan," a tourism promotion airline. He is also a Patron of the Alpine Club of Pakistan and the Pakistan Hang Gliding & Para Gliding Association, and teaches tourism at universities, including Air University Islamabad and Kohsar University Murree.



Panelist:
Changgaiz Hussain
Khan

Mr. Changgaiz Hussain Khan, recently appointed Chairman of Team Balochistan, is a distinguished social entrepreneur dedicated to transformative welfare work and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in Balochistan. Under his leadership, Team Balochistan has promoted coastal tourism through infrastructure development and cultural heritage preservation, while collaborating on eco-friendly resorts. His humanitarian efforts include disaster relief for the 2022 floods and education programs for underprivileged children. Mr. Khan's contributions have earned him several prestigious accolades, including the National Human Rights Award (Pakistan) and the International Humanitarian Award (UN). He remains committed to empowering communities through sustainable tourism and social welfare initiatives to transform Balochistan into a vibrant region.

Panel 3: Religious Tourism

Pakistan - home to multiple faiths.



Moderator:
Dr Qamar Cheema

Dr. Qamar Cheema, Executive Director at Sanober Institute, is a renowned academic and strategic analyst. Formerly a faculty member in International Relations at NUML Islamabad for 14 years, he has also taught at Quaid-e-Azam University, IIU, NUST, and SZABIST. Specializing in Islamist parties in Pakistan, the Indo-Pacific, and South Asian politics, he frequently appears on major media outlets like DW, Al Jazeera, and CNN News 18. He is a prolific contributor to newspapers and a sought-after speaker at international conferences, particularly in Europe and the United States.



Panelist:

Jasdip Singh (Jesse)

Dr. Jasdip "Jesse" Singh, an Indian-American entrepreneur and philanthropist, is renowned for his compassionate leadership, supporting hundreds of vulnerable seniors and individuals with disabilities. He served as Chairman of the Maryland Governor's Commission on South Asian Affairs for 11 years across three administrations and recently received the Presidential Award from President Joe Biden for his impactful contributions.



Panelist:

Ramesh Singh Arora

Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, Minister for Minorities in Punjab and the first Sikh parliamentarian in the Punjab Assembly, has championed minority rights, interfaith harmony, and cultural diplomacy. Re-elected in 2024, he led the landmark Sikh Marriage Registration Act of 2017 and serves as Ambassador at Large for the Kartarpur Corridor. Honored with the Sitara-e-Imtiaz in 2024, Arora represents PML-N's inclusive values with over 21 years in development and advanced training from Harvard Business School.



Panelist:

**Ramesh Kumar
Vankwani**

Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, Chairman of the Task Force on Gandhara Tourism since 2023, leads Pakistan's efforts to connect with the global Buddhist community by promoting Gandhara heritage. Recently, he organized the International Gandhara Symposium to boost religious tourism and international cooperation. As Patron-in-Chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council, he has advanced reforms like the Hindu Marriage Bill and initiatives to safeguard Hindu sites.



Panelist:
Minister Attaullah
Tarar

Mr. Attaullah Tarar, a prominent Pakistani politician with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), currently serves as Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture. Known for his articulate and impactful public speaking, Mr. Tarar is a key media representative for PML-N, advocating its policies and engaging with public discourse. Recently, he has emphasized the potential of Pakistan's cultural and religious heritage to boost tourism, aligning with national development goals by highlighting Pakistan's diverse landscapes and historical sites as valuable assets for economic growth.

Panel 4: Heritage Tourism

Pakistan's ancient and rich heritage.



Moderator:
Raja Amer

Mr. Raja Amer Iqbal is a seasoned business leader focused on trade and economic policy, currently serving as Vice Chairman of the RCCI Think Tank on Economy and President of the DBOM Punjab Vocational Training Council in Rawalpindi since 2019. Previously, he was President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2016-2017) and Chairman of the CPEC Committee from 2017 to 2020, enhancing trade relations between China and Pakistan. He is also a board member of the Sanobar Institute and the Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies and has authored numerous articles on economic issues. Raja holds an M.Phil. in GPP (NDU Islamabad), an MSc in Economics (QAU Islamabad), and an MBA in Finance (W.I.U London).



Panelist:
Reverend Dr. Sir
Sumana Siri

Reverend Dr. Sir Sumana Siri, a distinguished scholar and Buddhist monk born to Singaporean parents, has made significant strides in his academic and humanitarian pursuits. At 71, he became the first Buddhist monk to enroll at the London School of Economics and Political Science, specializing in Public Policy Analysis. A polyglot fluent in 12 languages, he has traveled to 70 countries and made history as the first person in Singapore to become a Buddhist monk. His academic credentials include a B.A. (Hons) in Buddhist and Western Philosophy from Kelaniya University, two doctorates from the U.S.A. Naturopathy Medical Association, and research in Christian Applied Theology at Oxford University. In 2000, he set a world record by walking the entire Great Wall of China.



Panelist:
Imran Shauket

Imran Shaukat is the “Ambassador on Buddhist Heritage Promotion” for Pakistan for Green Tourism, established under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). He promotes Pakistan's Buddhist heritage by hosting leaders and facilitating key publications, including “The Buddhist Civilization of Gandhara” and “Onward to Gandhara” by Most Venerable Arayawangso of Thailand, as well as the documentary “Tipitaka: The Living Messages – The Man of Gandhara.” Previously, he served as the Focal Person for the Minister of Archeology and Tourism in Punjab and on the Board of Alhamra Lahore Arts Council, and he actively engages with media to promote religious and heritage tourism in Pakistan.



Our Mission

At Sanober Institute (SI), we seek to go beyond mere discussions. We strive to serve as a trusted, non-partisan platform committed to fostering informed dialogue on critical subjects that affect not only Pakistan but the broader South Asian region. Our focus areas include geo-politics, geoeconomics, governance, and environmental issues. Our mission is to turn dialogue into action, thought into policy, and research into impactful solutions.

Our Vision

Our vision encapsulates our essence and drive: “Creative Ideas, Innovative Solutions.” It represents our unyielding commitment to pushing the envelope, questioning the status quo, and pioneering paths less traveled. We believe in the transformative power of innovation and creativity to shape a brighter, more equitable future.

Our Goal

Our goal is rooted in thorough, objective, and non-partisan analysis of key issues. We aim to provide recommendations that can be scaled from macro policy reforms to micro-level interventions. We learn from global best practices and adapt them to the local context. Additionally, we collaborate with various sectors—private companies, academic institutions, practitioners, and the Pakistani diaspora—to bring a multiplicity of voices into the conversation. This ensures that our outcomes are as diversified and comprehensive as possible.

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