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The “Monitoring Centre for Sustainable Tourism Observatories” was inaugurated on the Aegean Islands, the main archipelago of Greece. This first Sustainable Tourism Observatory in Europe under the auspices of UNWTO will monitor the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism in the archipelago and serve as a model to expand the concept to a national level. (5 February 2013)

Established by the University of the Aegean in collaboration with UNWTO and with the support of the Ministry of Tourism of Greece, the Centre will monitor and implement sustainable tourism practices in close cooperation with the tourism public and private sector in the area of the Aegean.

“Greece is endowed with a rich cultural and natural heritage; it is evident that the relationship between tourism and the environment is a central concern for our national strategy”, said the Minister of Tourism of Greece, Olga Kefalogianni. Set in the framework of Greece’s special action programme in collaboration with key environmental partners, such as the Academy of Athens, “any initiative contributing to this purpose finds the active support of the Ministry of Tourism”, she added.

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai stressed that “the establishment of the Aegean Observatory will provide critical information to better manage the advancement of sustainability in one of the prime destinations of the Mediterranean”; adding that “only by better understanding the interaction between tourism and its surrounding, can we improve existing sustainable tourism initiatives and ensure that tourism continues to work for the local population and the destination as a whole”.

The Observatory of the Aegean Islands joins the five existing sustainable tourism observatories established in China under the auspices of UNWTO.

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