Corporate

Dushanbe, Tajikistan, January 24, 2019

**UNHCR AND DUSHANBE SERENA HOTEL**

**LAUNCHED A JOINT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME**

On January the 16th, the Representation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Dushanbe Serena Hotel officially signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) aiming at expanding skills training opportunities in the area of hospitality and basic tourism sector, for both refugees and local Tajik youth.

The Letter of Understanding establishes a framework for running a joint Programme that offers apprenticeship and training opportunities that aim at supporting both refugees and Tajik youth, in enhancing their professional knowledge, skills and employment opportunities in the hospitality industry and basic tourism sector, increasing their competitiveness both in local and global labour markets.

Within the scope of the Apprenticeship Programme, the Dushanbe Serena Hotel will provide professional learning programme for selected apprentices on core aspects of the hospitality industry. The participants to the Programme will be selected based on their knowledge, skills, and capacity for working in the hospitality sector. The programme will run twice per year, while the apprentices will receive classroom and on-the-job training, rotating in different departments to gain a full understanding of hotel operations. Upon completion, apprentices will be receiving an accredited certificate.

The Apprenticeship Programme represents the result of UNHCR’s outreach to the Dushanbe Serena Hotel in seeking to diversify its livelihoods interventions for refugees under the Hotel’s social corporate responsibility. The UNHCR Representation in Tajikistan and Dushanbe Serena Hotel brought in Government partner the Adult Education Center (under the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment) to accredit and ensure sustainability of the programme, and NGO partner Refugees, Children and Vulnerable Citizens (RCVC) to support the operationalization of the programme. It is also believed that the Programme will contribute to the peaceful co-existence and social cohesion between refugees and host communities.

Commenting on the newly established partnership with Dushanbe Serena Hotel, Mr. Vito Trani explained that, *“Nowadays it is imperative that we build new partnerships given the global trend of reduced donor support for humanitarian operations. Also, by further deepening cooperation with the private sector, as is the case with the Dushanbe Serena Hotel, we are taking another constructive step towards improving the lives of our beneficiaries. The training opportunities that refugees and members of the Tajik host community receive through such partnerships will enhance their capacity to generate a sustainable livelihood while also fostering long-term self-reliance”.*

On the occasion of the signing of the LOU, Mr. Philippe Ducler, the General Manager of the Dushanbe Serena Hotel stated that: “*By signing the letter of understanding between Dushanbe Serena Hotel and the UNHCR Representation in Tajikistan we are announcing the start of implementation of exciting and much needed program of internship at our Hotel. The program was designed to fill in the gap in professional skills’ availability in the sphere of hospitality and Dushanbe Serena Hotel, with its extensive experience in training and development, has offered its facilities for on-job training. We are grateful to the UNHCR and Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Tajikistan for giving us this opportunity to make our own substantial contribution into the development of human resources of the country.“*

Tajikistan currently hosts the largest number of refugees in the Central Asian region; some 3000 refugees and asylum seekers arrived primarily from neighbouring Afghanistan reside in Tajikistan. At the same time, above 34,000 persons at risk of statelessness have been identified in targeted districts since the launch of the joint UNHCR and Government national project to address statelessness in the country.

**NOTES**

**UNITED NATIONATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**

The UNHCRin the world is saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. From 1993, the UNHCR in Tajikistan works with the Government of Tajikistan and inter-agency partners in three primary areas: protection and local integration of refugees, leading emergency preparedness for potential of cross-border flows from neighboring countries; and addressing the issue of statelessness in Tajikistan.

**DUSHANBE SERENA HOTEL -** Tourism Promotion Services (TPS), an affiliate of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), seeks to develop tourism potential in an underserved areas of the world, such as Tajikistan. Operating under the “SERENA” brand name, TPS hotels enjoy an established reputation for the highest standards of comfort, service and product, with over 34 properties in nine countries in Africa and Asia. Each Serena property is carefully built to harmonize with local culture and heritage and to reflect the architectural styles of the region so that it promotes awareness of these elements amongst travelers. Serena Hotels strive to contribute to local economies through human resource training and development, the reinvigoration of artisans and craft industries, and through sensitive conservation or development of the surrounding areas.

**ABOUT SERENA HOTELS**

Serena Hotels has established itself as one of the world’s leading hospitality brands offering quality accommodation, unique holiday and conference solutions, cultural heritage and adventure tourism. Its collection of 35 unique hotels, resorts, safari lodges and camps, palaces and forts located in East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Rwanda and Uganda), Mozambique and South Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan) are in some of the world’s most interesting, enchanting, historic and exotic settings.

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