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PolyU Tourism Experts Prompt to Offer Assistance in Sichuan Province Recovery Efforts

The School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University was prompt to offer assistance in the tourism recovery and reconstruction efforts spearheaded by China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and Sichuan Tourism Administration (SCTA) in the disaster stricken areas caused by the devastating earthquake hitting the province of Sichuan in May 2008. It was the School's intention to contribute to tourism revival in the province.

Dr Hanqin Zhang, Dr David Jones and Mr Ben Jiang of SHTM were escorted to visit Jinsha Museum on the day they arrived Chengdu on 30 June 2008. There they were shown the rich heritage and tourism resources of Sichuan Province. Braving difficulties on the road, the team of three inspected Dujianyan, a city which suffered considerable loss and damage during the earthquake. The inspection was completed by a visit to Sanxingdui Museum.

Sichuan Tourism Administration gave a comprehensive briefing to the SHTM team on the latest relief efforts and presented the proposed plan designed for the tourism recovery and reconstruction in the province. The plan revealed that massive efforts were being focused on areas most seriously hit by the earthquake covering some worse-hit counties and districts in Chengdu, Deyang, Mianyan, Guangyuan, Ya'an and Aba. With targeted and concerted efforts planned for three years, SCTA expected that the tourism index of the affected areas would make a rebound to reach 90% of that set in the 11th Five-year Plan. SCTA was also determined to help Sichuan win back visitors' trust and to revitalise the province's profile on both domestic and international levels.

The plan was then thoroughly and carefully reviewed by the SHTM team. Dr Hanqin Zhang shared her observation on the direct and indirect impacts that the earthquake had on Sichuan's hospitality and tourism industry. She also talked about the importance of creating new and positive destination image by means of communication, the importance of human resources in the course of recovery and reconstruction efforts, as well as recommended possible research topics. Dr Jones focused his feedback on marketing Sichuan to the world. He talked about the crisis recovery marketing plan that included hosting of forums, conferences and meetings as well as the full utilisation of human elements native to Sichuan in promoting the province. SCTA should consider working with the renowned tennis player Zheng Jie, diligent tour guides and make positive use of survivors' stories.

"The School is ready to support CNTA and SCTA in their tourism recovery and reconstruction efforts planned for Sichuan Province," said Professor Kaye Chon, Chair Professor and Director of SHTM, "I believe now is the time for us to put our resources and efforts together to help the survivors rebuild their lives. It is encouraging to feel the resilience in these people and it is equally heartening to witness the solidarity among them. We are ready to do everything we can to help put Sichuan back on the map again and win back visitors' confidence."



Dr Hanqin Zhang, Associate Professor of SHTM, talked about the direct and indirect impacts that the earthquake had on Sichuan's hospitality and tourism industry.



Dr David Jones, Associate Professor of SHTM, shared his view on the crisis recovery marketing plan.

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