The United Federation of Travel Agents’ Associations (UFTAA) organised its Mid-Year Forum from July 25-27, 2017, in the city of Salerno, resting on the beautiful gulf of Campania region in Italy. The Forum witnessed deliberations on pressing issues affecting travel agents with representations from associations from across the globe. The forum also coincided with the 3rd UFTAA Board meeting led by President Sunil Kumar R., during which various matters were discussed. UFTAA Vice President Yossi Fatael addressed the gathering on IATA’s New Distribution Capability (NDC), NewGen ISS and other IATA matters. A special interaction with Juan Antonio Rodriguez, Director, FDS, IATA also took place during the Forum.

Addressing the Forum, Kumar revealed that the association is launching a global tourism office in Istanbul (Turkey) in the month of August. "UFTAA Global Tourism Office at Istanbul is a new initiative of UFTAA. At the previous world congress of UFTAA held in Istanbul, we did confirm that UFTAA apart from travel matters will embark on tourism, MICE and education initiatives in a big way and try to create more opportunities in this area. In terms of tourism, a big initiative has been taken by the UFTAA Board of Directors by establishing the UFTAA Global Tourism Office in Istanbul, which will be manned professionally, connecting travel professionals all over the world, encouraging B2B activities and business exchange between UFTAA associations and UFTAA affiliates."

"We are confident that this UFTAA tourism office will also come up with certain systems where we could gift our members certain credibility and status so that when someone sells tourism online, there is a certification from UFTAA which supports such agencies. However, this is a long-term goal. We first need to get members on board, keep the membership active and hope that UFTAA gets new members from different countries around the world," he added. The new Secretary-General of UNWTO has been invited to inaugurate the office in August. He further informed that due to the Qatar crisis, the work on the UFTAA Global Headquarters in Doha has been kept on the back burner and hopefully there will be a headway on the same very soon.

Boasting the strength of UFTAA, Kumar said that the association had four seats in the recent meeting of IATA’s Passenger Agency Programme Global Joint Council, which he believes is an “important strength of UFTAA”. Kumar adds that UFTAA’s biggest strength is its IATA connect.

Welcoming UFTAA members to Salerno, Roberto De Luca, Assessore al Bilancio e Sviluppo (Councillor for budget and economic development), Salerno, said, "Your presence here is very encouraging yet a great challenge for us. We need to learn a lot from you. We spent €250 million in regeneration to leverage this element in tourism and engage renowned architects to give our city an identity. We have our culture, our medieval city and Roman architecture to leverage from. I do think our architectural wonders like the Castello di Arechi, Sea Station, Medical School of Salerno (first medical school of Europe) are marvels to attract tourists. We are trying to leverage more MICE and Bleisure because we have the potential, also we are a good hub between Amalfi Coast, Cilento Coast and the Greek temples."

In a bid to facilitate free flow of tourists across the globe and encourage travel professionals to work together, the United Federation of Travel Agents’ Associations (UFTAA) will be opening a Global Tourism Office in Istanbul, Turkey, by the end of August this year, reveals Sunil Kumar R., President, UFTAA.

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