

## **Response Statement from Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC) to HRW's report published on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC) notes today's publication of the report by New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) on foreign labour employment practices on Saadiyat island.

TDIC rejects the report's unfounded conclusions, which are outdated and based on unknown methodologies even as TDIC has been transparent in its efforts. TDIC is the primary developer for Saadiyat and is constructing a cultural district comprising the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Zayed National Museum. In building such landmark projects, TDIC has endeavoured to ensure that working conditions and practices on Saadiyat meet international standards and comply with UAE labour law. We have established a comprehensive Employment Practices Policy (EPP) outlining the standards required from the companies working on our projects, and laying out penalties for those found to be in breach of any aspect. TDIC has also established the Saadiyat Accommodation Village, a housing facility in which all TDIC contractors and subcontractors must be housed.

Many groups, including British Members of Parliament, museum partners, senior foreign diplomats and numerous others have toured Saadiyat's construction sites and worker housing facilities and have praised both the quality of the conditions and the standard provided. The efforts and processes have led many to single out TDIC as a leader that has set a high benchmark for the region's construction industry and serves as a model for improving labour conditions in the region.

To ensure compliance with the EPP, TDIC has retained international auditing firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to independently monitor the works on Saadiyat throughout the year and release its findings to the public at the end of every year. These findings have helped TDIC spot issues and make modifications where needed. We have also taken action whenever there is a credible complaint, including evicting contractors who have flouted the EPP.

The latest PwC monitoring report, released in December 2014, was based on direct interviews with 1,050 workers, far from the anecdotal examples provided by HRW. In contrast, PwC noted significant achievements, including:

- 100% of workers have access to their passport
- High standard of accommodation, including the provision of food, cleaning and daily laundry services

- The provision of medical insurance to 99% of workers
- A well-established grievance procedure for workers and ease of lodging complaints
- An enforced system of penalties against contractors who breach TDIC's employment policies

TDIC has always been open to engaging in a constructive dialogue around the employment of expatriate labour around the world. TDIC will continue to work closely with its partners and make enhancements where they can be done within its capacity. TDIC is committed to making sure that high standards of worker welfare continue to be implemented on all of its work sites.

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Relevant Links:

PwC 2014 Saadiyat- EPP's Report: <http://ameinfo.com/finance-and-economy/archive/untold-story-saadiyat-workers/>

Recent Video On Saadiyat Construction Workers: <http://ow.ly/3x2oZH>