Second Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group to the Raptors MoU

Information Note for Participants

Meeting date and venue

The meeting will be held from Monday 16 March to Thursday 19 March 2015 in the Centro Yas Island Hotel in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. This venue is located on Yas Island, next to Yas Marina Circuit along the Yas Leisure Drive. By car, the hotel is 10 minutes from Abu Dhabi International Airport, 20 minutes from Abu Dhabi’s Business District and about 1 hour from Dubai. The full address and contact details for the meeting venue are listed below – please also refer to the map at the end of the document.

Centro Yas Island Hotel
Golf Plaza
P.O. Box 131755, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Tel: (+971) (0)2 656 4444, Fax: (+971) (0)2 565 1415
Website: https://www.rotana.com/centrohotels/unitedarabemirates/abudhabi/centroyasisland

Accommodation

Arrangements have been made for sponsored delegates to stay in the meeting venue hotel, Centro Yas Island (see details above).

Non-sponsored participants may wish to take advantage of Standard Rooms in the Centro Yas Island Hotel at the special rate of AED 365 (exclusive of 6% Tourism Fees and 10% Service Charge), which includes breakfast, dinner buffet, WiFi and airport bus transfer from and to Abu Dhabi International Airport.

Kindly note the number of such rooms is limited and will be filled at first come, first serve basis. Non-sponsored participants should contact Dulik Dushantha directly at res5.yasisland@rotana.com to book their rooms – please mention “TAG2 Meeting of the UNEP/CMS Office” upon reservation to obtain the special rate.

Other hotels on Yas Island can be found here.

Arrival and transportation

A bus transfer service has been arranged through the Hotel for delegates staying at Centro Yas Island and arriving at Abu Dhabi International Airport. Please note: Sponsored delegates should ensure they use this transfer, as it is a complimentary part of the Hotel package, and reimbursements will not be made should alternative transport be used.

Sponsored delegates arriving at Dubai International Airport will be contacted individually by email with further information about transport to the venue.
Non-sponsored delegates staying in another hotel are advised to take a metered taxi which can be obtained outside the main terminal at Abu Dhabi International Airport. The estimated cost of a taxi ride from the Airport to the Centro Yas Island Hotel should not exceed AED 70 (ca. USD 20). Likewise, metered taxis can be obtained outside the terminal at Dubai International Airport. The estimated cost of a taxi ride from Dubai to Yas Island Abu Dhabi should not exceed AED 330 (ca. USD 90).

For information on Customs Rules and Airport Regulations, please refer to the United Arab Emirates page of the IATA Travel Centre website. For details of prohibited and restricted items and duty free allowances, please check the information on the Abu Dhabi and Dubai International Airports’ websites:

http://www.abudhabiairport.ae/english/airport-information
http://www.dubaiairports.ae/
http://www.dubaiairports.ae/before-you-fly/procedures/security-customs

Visa requirements

For information concerning which nationals require a visa to enter the UAE, and procedures for application, please visit the immigration information page of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. To facilitate the issuance of visas, the Coordinating Unit will issue formal Letters of Invitation to delegates on request. Note: Please ensure that your passport is valid for a period of at least 6 months beyond the end of your intended stay.

Working language

The Meeting will be conducted in English. Participants will need to possess a good knowledge of English because no simultaneous translation into any other languages will be provided.

On-site registration

Participants are requested to bring an identification document (e.g. Passport, ID card, Driver’s License) which should be shown at the Registration Desk. Participants will receive a badge which should be worn visibly at all times whilst on the premises at the venue, including in the restaurant to avoid being charged for your meals.

The Registration Desk will be located at the ground floor of the Centro Yas Island Hotel. Participants can register on Sunday 15 March from 19:00 to 20:00 or Monday 16 March from 08:30 to 09:30. Detailed information on timings and exact location for registration will be published on the TAG2 page of the Raptors MoU website in due course.

Official opening and formal sessions

The official opening will take place at 09:15 on Monday, 16 March 2015. The formal sessions of the TAG2 Meeting will be held from Monday, 16 March to Thursday, 19 March and run daily from 09:00 to 18:00. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

A full day birdwatching excursion is being planned for Day 3 of the Meeting – details will be communicated to the meeting participants closer to the date.

Documents and internet access

Please note that for environmental and economic reasons, hard paper copies of the Meeting documents will not be distributed during the event.
However, free Wireless Internet service will be available to all delegates throughout Centro Yas Island Hotel at all times during the Meeting. The Coordinating Unit wishes to encourage bringing a laptop or other electronic device with you. Alternatively, you may prefer to print hard copies of the documents before you travel. Participants will also be able to print or photocopy documents at the Hotel Business Centre at their own cost.

Meals

Lunch will be provided free of charge to all participants. Please remember to wear your badge. Likewise complimentary refreshments will be provided during mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks.

Breakfast and dinner buffet will be provided to all delegates staying at Centro Yas Island Hotel daily from 16 March to 19 March 2015, inclusive.

List of participants

A list of pre-registered participants will be available on the TAG2 page of the Raptors MoU website in due course. A list of participants who attended the meeting will be made available as an Annex to the Final Report of the meeting. If any participant does not wish their full contact details to appear on the list of participants, please notify the Coordinating Unit.

Overview of Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi is the capital of the United Arab Emirates and is the sister city to Dubai. Abu Dhabi is the country’s largest emirate with over 1.6 million residents. The capital is a cosmopolitan city consisting of approximately 15% Emiratis (UAE nationals) and 85% expatriates from Asia, Africa, Europe, North America and Australia.

Weather

Abu Dhabi has a sub-tropical, arid climate with average temperatures in March ranging from 17°C to 29°C. The city’s facilities are completely air conditioned, so you might consider bringing appropriate clothing to keep yourself comfortable and warm when inside hotels, malls, offices, etc. The sun can be particularly fierce during the day so also consider bringing along a suitable hat, sunglasses and sun protection cream. Stout shoes will suffice for the birdwatching excursion.

Dress code

Abu Dhabi is generally conservative, but tolerant when it comes to a dress code. The attitude towards attire worn in public is therefore relaxed, however clothing should be modest. Both women and men are advised not to wear excessively revealing clothing in public places, as a sign of respect to local culture and customs. It is respectful for both men and women to cover shoulders and knees when in public.

Working and business hours

The working week in UAE is from Sunday to Thursday. Weekends generally vary according to whether the sector is public (Friday and Saturday) or private (Friday only). Government entities operate from 08:00 to 15:00, banks from 08:00 to 13:00 (excluding banks in malls which may remain open until 19:00). Commercial shops generally operate from 09:00 to 20:00 (a break might be taken during the day from 13:00 to 16:00), whereas shopping malls can be found open until 22:00.
Local time

UAE is four hours ahead of Coordinated Universal Time (UTC +4).

Electricity and water

Electric current is 220/240 V at 50 Hz, utilising 3-pin plugs (see photo). Socket adapters are freely available for sale, and can usually be purchased in hotels.

Tap water in Abu Dhabi is generally considered safe to drink but bottled mineral water is widely available.

Travel and health insurance

All participants are responsible for their own Travel and Health Insurance. It is recommended that all participants take out comprehensive policies before arriving in the UAE.

Medical services and healthcare

Medical facilities are of high quality but are expensive. Private Health Insurance is essential. Pharmacies are well supplied and many pharmacists speak English. Please note: Some prescription and over-the-counter medicines available elsewhere are illegal in the UAE. For further details contact the UAE Registration & Drug Control Department: drugcl.csc@moh.gov.ae. Regarding any possible vaccinations you may require before travel, please contact your physician.

Alcohol

The UAE is a Muslim country; therefore it is a serious offence to drink alcohol or to be drunk in public. Penalties are severe. Alcohol is served only in licensed outlets associated with hotel restaurants and bars, and a few clubs and associations where non-Muslims may legally drink.

Cultural sensitivity

The UAE is generally a tolerant society. However, it is important to show respect for cultural and religious preferences and to bear in mind that it is an offence to swear and make rude gestures in public. For more information, please refer to the website of the UAE Embassy in the USA (click here).

Currency and foreign exchange

The official currency in the UAE is the Dirham (AED). The Dirham is subdivided into 100 Fils. Coins are in 5, 10, 25, 50 Fils and AED 1. Notes are in denominations of AED 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000. The Dirham is linked to the US dollar (USD 1 = AED 3.67).

Banking facilities

The network of banking facilities in Abu Dhabi is extensive. There is also an ATM at the Meeting venue on the ground floor.

Useful weblinks

Note: The content of this Information Note was accurate at the time of writing (19 February 2015).