



ONLINE

CAPACITY BUILDING

DESERT TOURISM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

A KEY BUILDING BLOCK OF THE YELLOW ECONOMY

09 SEPTEMBER 2025

12.00 – 13.30 CEST (GMT+2)



OVERVIEW OF THE YELLOW ECONOMY GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The [Yellow Economy Global Initiative](#) is a **collective effort to reimagine how we build prosperity, resilience, and social justice in desert and arid regions**. Conceived by the **International Labour Organization (ILO) and its International Training Centre (ITCILO)**, it responds to the urgent need for development models that are both ecologically sustainable and rich in decent work opportunities. At its core, the initiative aims to transform deserts from marginal zones into vibrant spaces of innovation, economic diversification, and inclusive growth.

The journey began in **January 2025 with a Design Sprint Workshop in Riyadh**, where policymakers, researchers, private sector actors, and development practitioners came together **to shape a shared understanding of the Yellow Economy**. This inaugural event **directly informed the second edition of Global Labour Market Conference** organized by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Design Sprint **identified key sectors for action**—such as renewable energy, sustainable mining, water resource management, sustainable agriculture, desert tourism, and smart desert cities—and emphasized the importance of protecting workers' rights, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering cross-sector partnerships. The workshop also laid the groundwork for the next major milestones: a **Webinar Series** to deep dive in some of the Yellow Economy domains, as well as the **Yellow Economy Foresight Event**, scheduled for end of 2025.

More than a fixed framework, the **Yellow Economy is an evolving platform for experimentation, dialogue, and joint action**. It is deliberately open, welcoming the engagement of new partners from all regions and sectors—governments, enterprises, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and communities. **Everyone is invited to contribute**: to bring their experience, insights, and aspirations into the conversation.

By fostering spaces for co-creation and mutual learning, the initiative seeks to **connect local needs with global resources, and traditional knowledge with technological innovation**. It promotes **South-South and Triangular Cooperation as powerful vehicles for sharing scalable solutions**. Above all, it recognizes that the transformation of desert regions must be driven by those who live and work in them.

The initiative is the beginning of a **longer-term, participatory process** that evolves through shared reflection and coordinated action. The Yellow Economy Initiative is for everybody, in order to turn the world's arid environments, often **challenged** by economic exclusion or inequality, poverty, climate adaptation, rural exodus into **landscapes of opportunity, dignity, and sustainability**.

THE WEBINAR SERIES

As part of the Yellow Economy Global Initiative, this webinar series is designed to **explore concrete policy options and innovative practices** for fostering job-rich, sustainable development in desert regions. Jointly led by the ILO and ITCILO, the series will convene a growing community of practitioners, researchers, and decision-makers to reflect, exchange, and co-create.

Each webinar will focus on a strategic domain of the Yellow Economy:

1. Desert Agriculture and Just Land Transition – [held on 25 June 2025](#)
2. **Desert Tourism and Cultural Heritage**
3. Water Management and Renewable Energies

To ensure depth and relevance, each session will be co-organized **in partnership with specialized stakeholders and institutions** active in the respective field. These collaborations will help shape the content, identify expert speakers, and spotlight promising experiences from different regions.

The series will build momentum toward the Yellow Economy Foresight Event, scheduled for end of 2025—a global moment to consolidate learning and define future priorities.

Each webinar is an open and participatory space. Join us to share your expertise, connect across sectors, and help shape the next generation of policies and programmes for the Yellow Economy.

THE SECOND WEBINAR: DESERT TOURISM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

As part of the Yellow Economy Global Initiative, this webinar marks the second in a three-part series aimed at deepening reflection and cooperation on sustainable development in desert regions and is organized by **the International Training Centre of the ILO, jointly with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the British Council, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Fondazione Santagata for the Economics of Culture.**

The Yellow Economy envisions a new model of job-rich, climate-resilient growth grounded in the ecosystems, cultures, and opportunities of arid lands. This session focuses on **Desert Tourism and Cultural Heritage, a crucial pillar for community empowerment, economic diversification, and the preservation of identity in desert regions.**

Desert tourism and cultural heritage are not only **sources of identity and pride, but also powerful drivers of sustainable economic activity in arid regions.** These sectors offer unique opportunities to create decent work, strengthen community resilience, and valorise local knowledge and traditions. In the context of the Yellow Economy, they represent a **vital bridge between environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and inclusive growth.** As desert regions seek to diversify their economies, tourism and heritage can unlock **new livelihood opportunities**—particularly for youth, women, and rural communities, while promoting environmental stewardship and intercultural dialogue. Recognizing and investing in these assets is essential for transforming desert challenges into long-term development potential.

The webinar brings together experts, institutions, and practitioners to **share successful experiences, discuss enabling policy and financing frameworks, and explore emerging multi-stakeholder partnerships** that are shaping the future of desert tourism and cultural heritage. It will also contribute to building a shared knowledge base ahead of the Yellow Economy Foresight Event in late 2025.

OBJECTIVES

This session of the Yellow Economy webinar series aims to advance a **multidimensional understanding of how desert tourism and cultural heritage can drive sustainable and inclusive development in arid regions.** Within the broader framework of the Yellow Economy Global Initiative, the session pursues two interconnected objectives:

1. **To showcase how desert tourism and cultural heritage can serve as enablers of job-rich growth and social inclusion.** This includes presenting experiences from the policy level, from integrated development programmes, and from entrepreneurial or community-based initiatives that are creating economic opportunities, especially for youth, women, and rural populations.
2. **To reflect on the long-term value of cultural heritage in desert regions, and the mechanisms needed to preserve and invest in it sustainably.** This includes exploring governance and financing models for heritage management, the role of education and knowledge transmission in protecting intangible assets, and the contribution of cultural cooperation networks to regional resilience and cross-border development.

AGENDA

Time (CEST)	Session	Details
12:00 – 12:05	Welcome & Introduction	Overview of the Yellow Economy Initiative and objectives of the webinar
12:05 – 12:15	Keynote Address: Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the Desert Economy	This keynote explores the economic role of culture, heritage and tourism in desert environments, emphasizing its potential to generate livelihoods, strengthen rural economies, and support diversification strategies that align with environmental sustainability.
12:15– 12:25	Presentation: Nomadic Traditions and Indigenous Knowledge in the Yellow Economy	This intervention highlights the cultural and developmental value of nomadic heritage and indigenous knowledge systems in desert regions. It examines how these intangible assets can be preserved, protected, and mobilized to support inclusive development and intergenerational learning.
12:25 – 12:55	Session 1: Jobs, Entrepreneurship and the Cultural Economy in the Desert	This panel presents successful examples of how cultural heritage and tourism are being harnessed to create jobs, stimulate youth entrepreneurship, and foster economic inclusion. The discussion will span policy-level initiatives, integrated programmes, and community-led business models. Interactive Q&A
12:55 – 13:25	Session 2: Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development – Governance, Community Value, and Cooperation	This session focuses on the strategic management of cultural heritage in desert areas. It will examine governance and financing models for heritage site management, and how to embed cultural assets within local development planning. It will explore the community value of heritage—including its roles in education, capacity-building, and the safeguarding of in-tangible traditions and reflect on existing cultural cooperation networks and how they can be used to strengthen heritage-driven development across arid regions. Interactive Q&A
13:25 – 13:30	Wrap-up and Next Steps	Summary of key takeaways and invitation to third webinar on Resource Management and the Yellow Economy Foresight Event.

LANGUAGES AND REGISTRATION

The webinar is free.

It will be run in **English, French and Arabic**.

Registration Link : <https://oar2.itcilo.org/DSB/E9718977/en>

INFO

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

International Training Centre of the ILO

Catalyst Initiative
Viale Maestri del Lavoro, 10
10127 Turin – Italy

catalyst@itcilo.org
www.itcilo.org