***Press Release***

***15 December 2017***

**15th International Nomads Festival**

*‘This is a very special festival, which bears witness to the strength of attachment of the people of M’hamid El-Ghizlane to their roots and their history and to the better future they desire for their children, here in this spectacular* ***Drâa*** *Valley, at the gateway to the Sahara.” Mondoblog, Radio France Internationale*

The **Association** **Nomades du Monde** announces the 15th edition of the International Nomads Festival, which will take place from 22 to 24 March 2018 in M’hamid El Ghizlane - the last oasis before the Moroccan Sahara, but only four hours’ drive from the international airport at Ouarzazate. The first ever festival to take place in southern Morocco, it has always been a point of reference for cultural diversity and openness.

A celebration of nomad cultures from all over the globe, this free community festival gives both local and international audiences the opportunity to experience nomadic cultures and traditions over three days of music, conferences and debates, markets for local produce and crafts, hockey games and camel races…

Founder and director, **Noureddine Bougrab** states, ‘The festival is a unifying force that not only showcases Nomadic traditions and local Hassani culture, but also supports the economy of M’hamid El-Ghizlane by promoting it as an attractive tourist destination’. A teacher of Classical Arabic in a M’hamid school, he is adamant about the involvement of local young people as performers, volunteers and spectators, in an event which attracted 20,000 visitors and 300 participants in 2017 and is expected to exceed that number this year.

**Music Programme**

Some 20 performances will take place over three days on the Open Air stage in the town centre. This year’s programme will feature both well-known and emerging artists such as the famous Tuareg Tamikrest group, Algerian rising star Kader Tarhanin, Nigerien bluesman Alhousseini Anivolla, Hungary's gypsy group EtnoRom, the legendary gnawa Majid Bekkas, Batoul Al Marouani the ambassador for Hassani song and many other talented artists. Finally, the project "Echos du Sahara" will finish at the Festival of Nomads his musical journey between Budapest and the Moroccan Sahara. As always, there will be appearances by local young bands enabling them to showcase their talents and develop their networks, in the all-important spirit of collaboration which underpins this festival.

**The Nomads Forum**

The annual **Forum des Nomades** will feature debates and workshops focusing on the heritage and history of the Drâa-Tafilalet region. This ancient cultural crossroads was an important stopover on the trans-Saharan trade route: today M’hamid El Ghizlane is still home to a palmery that spreads for 16 kilometres along the River Drâa. But how can nomadism survive in a Sahara that has seen its nomadic population drop by 70% in the last decade as desertification intensifies? National and international speakers will share their vision.

**Crafts and traditions**

Visitors staying on after the festival can browse the weekly Monday souk, an opportunity to buy local produce, suffused with the colours and fragrances of the region: the perfect complement to a visit to the **exhibition of local produce and Moroccan crafts** which will take place throughout the three days of the festival. With festival nights devoted to magical polyrhythms, daytimes will showcase traditional Saharan nomad activities: **desert hockey**, **camel race**, a competition for the best **sand bread**, and a demonstration of **how to erect** **nomad tents**.

**Festival partners**

The festival is a collaboration between the **Association Nomades du Monde** and regional and national partners, including the Province of Zagora, the Moroccan Ministry of Culture, the Region of Drâa-Tafilalet, Office National Marocain du Tourisme, Fondation Banque Populaire, Maison de l’Artisan, Poste Maroc, TUIfly, Afrikayna, ORMVAO, 2M…

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