A session led by moderator Letvia Arza-Goderich (partner, Preston-Arza LLP) during the 2012 ARDA World Convention & Exposition in Las Vegas, an energized group of panelists spoke about Mexico’s successful track record. They focused on key tourism development and how new projects are “full steam ahead” with a firm commitment to promote travel to Mexico worldwide.

Panelists included Enrique Carrillo, chairman of FONATUR, an institution of the Mexican government tourism sector conceived in the 1970s to integrate and develop new integrally planned resorts; Gonzalo Maqueda, vice president of business development for Interval International, Mexico; Jason McCoy, senior vice president, Greg Norman Golf Course Design Company; and Ryan Williams, global business development, TimeShareWare.

“Mexico is currently number 10 in the world when it comes to number of visitors, and our goal is to get to number five. We are number one in archaeological sites and protected places such as those for whales and butterflies and biodiversity,” said Carrillo. “We have many very successful tourism destinations that have been developed such as Cancun and Los Cabos. We have 7,000 miles of coast between the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.”

Other exemplary tourism areas in the country include Huatulco, Ixtapa, Loreto, Mazatlan, and Puerto Peñasco.

According to Carrillo, FONATUR is currently developing two more integrally planned resorts (IPRs): Playa Espiritu in the state of Sinaloa, which was launched by President Felipe Calderon in 2009 and Costacapomo in Riviera Nayarit, to be launched later this year. The IPRs have become true showcases of Mexican excellence for stimulating domestic and foreign investment.

“Congress has already authorized a budget and funds are guaranteed. An agreement has been signed by all parties that the tourism investment will continue, no matter what happens in our country’s upcoming elections,” Carrillo explained.

Maqueda (Interval International) also spoke about the momentum and positive energy ahead for progressing tourism further in Mexico through strong developments and key partners.

“If you want to be successful, you have to have a development strategy to entice private investors and build sales,” he noted. “And use of creativity and flexibility is important with products in our industry such as timeshare, fractionals, and vacation clubs. They all facilitate longer stays, return stays, and consumers spending more in the destinations.”
Within the tourism promotion effort, Maqueda emphasized the need to reach out to new markets such as Brazil, Colombia, China, and even Russia.

“These are also becoming important emerging markets for us for which we need to do our homework and study their travel patterns, and their specific wants and needs,” he added.

A key tourism development partner to help attract visitors in these and other markets are those in golf course development, such as Greg Norman Golf Course Design, which started working in Mexico 16 years ago.

“Our commitment has been strong all these years and it continues,” said McCoy. “We feel a big part of the current golf product in the country and that which is upcoming, too, and we think it helps Mexico stand apart in what it offers golfers and by the number of PGA events in the country as well.”

McCoy believes golf-related tourism in Mexico has worked so well and will continue to do so, due to a very proactive partnership and commitment, rather than one that is reactive.

“I am very excited about the future of golf in Mexico,” he noted.

Williams (TimeShareWare) is just as excited about his industry’s livelihood and partnerships in Mexico.

“The technological aspects of connecting everyone to work together, communicate, and be on the same page is so crucial,” he remarked. “We have a large segment of business in Mexico and we are so excited to be a part of the equation and be a part of progress.”

According to Williams, old systems impede progress and success, so creating integrated solutions and systems is important for everyone to achieve ultimate goals.

Across the board, Carillo, Maqueda, McCoy, and Williams say they have a role and a commitment in ultimately working together to sell the Mexico experience and vacation lifestyle sought out by both returning travelers and those interested in visiting the country for the first time.