

Meet the Secretariat at
ITB Berlin 07
(Page 24)

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Tourism

A newsletter on business and biodiversity by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

DESTINATION BIODIVERSITY

THE T&T INDUSTRY PROTECTS ITS MAIN ASSET

also in this issue:

**THE GEF THINKS PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL TALKS BIODIVERSITY**

- 6 **Oliver Hillel**
When holidays can make a difference
- 7 **Stephen Pahl**
Protecting the reef. Securing a great permit
- 8 **Bruce Poon Tip**
Travelling with ethics
- 10 **Costas Christ**
Goodbye fringe. Welcome global best practice
- 12 **Michael Iwand and Paola Deda**
Conservation partners 'on the move to 2010'
- 14 **Ronald Sanabria**
Helping tourists understand what the seal means
- 16 **T. Meller, J. Sweeting and S. Matus**
Securing the future of the Mesoamerican Reef
- 18 **Jane Ashton**
What sort of holiday will you be taking in 2010?
- 20 **François Rogers**
Seed-uctive destinations
- 21 **Daniel Carmeli and Elspeth Halverson**
Removing poverty from the itinerary
- 22 **Sigrid Hockamp-Mack**
Recovering from tsunamis

- 2 **Mary Shelman**
Stretching the minds of senior execs
- 4 **Monique Barbut**
Deepening GEF engagement with business
- 2 Editorial
- 24 Publications and events

Aerial of Hardy Reef, Great Barrier Reef
Queensland, Australia
Photo © Courtesy of Tourism Queensland

Editorial

With 842 million international arrivals and a 4.5% growth rate, 2006 was another boom year for Travel and Tourism. Often described as the world's biggest industry, it provided 234 million jobs and generated over USD 575 billion in revenues last year.

Natural assets

Tourists are often drawn by the biological and physical resources of a destination. Yet, the stress imposed by tourism activities on fragile ecosystems accelerates and aggravates their depletion. Hotel and tour operators, on the other side, invest heavily in real estate which, by definition, cannot be relocated. There is thus a fundamental link between the sector's continued, long-

term success and one of its core assets: nature itself. This issue of *Business.2010* provides a snapshot of some of the emerging initiatives to address these challenges.

Under the Convention itself, there has been much progress since the adoption, in 2004, of the *CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development*. We provide an update on the latest developments and opportunities for business participation (see page 6).

Many UN agencies have, over the years, actively engaged with the industry. The Tourism Industry Report, for instance, published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2002, framed the

debate on tourism at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. UNEP also launched, with UNESCO and the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), as well as several business partners, one of the sector's most successful platforms, the Tour Operators' Initiative for sustainable tourism development (pp. 18-19). UNWTO is also working with the German government on using the CBD Guidelines for post tsunami planning (page 22).

Products, peers and partnerships

Initiatives led by industry associations, such as the World Travel & Tourism Council (pp. 10-11), indicate that sustainability is no longer a niche issue. Biodiversity, is in-

●●● continued on page 24

B-Schools

Stretching the minds of senior execs



Photo © Nathan Cohen

MARY SHELMAN wrote a case study on the Convention for the 2007 edition of the *Harvard Business School Agribusiness Seminar*. She shares her thoughts on the experience.

In early January, almost 200 senior executives from 35 countries discussed the role of business in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) during the opening session of Harvard Business School's (HBS) annual Agribusiness Seminar in Boston. HBS Professor James Austin, an expert on management in developing countries and founder of the HBS Social Enterprise Initiative [1], led the hour-long exchange. At the conclusion, CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlaf challenged the group to join forces in order to meet the 2010 biodiversity target.

Why were biodiversity and the CBD included in this year's Harvard Business School Agribusiness Seminar?

Our goal in the Seminar, which is in its 46th year, is to inspire business leaders to climb out of their silos and stretch their minds. Each year we develop a series of new cases that convey forward-looking issues in agribusiness around the globe and across the entire value-added production chain. In particular, we look for organizations—either public or private—that are leaders in their respective areas.

Agriculture's very productivity depends upon a healthy environment, so our participants all have a vested interest in biodiversity and sustainable use. It doesn't matter if they are a major seed company, a small tree fruit producer in the Pacific Northwest, a food retailer in India, or a manufacturer of forestry equipment in Finland. But while companies are increasingly talking about sustainability, my informal poll showed that most members of industry do not think specifically in terms of biodiversity. And many have never heard of the CBD or the 2010 target.

So the CBD case was an opportunity to educate, but it also provided a window on a broader question. During the 20 years that I have been involved with the HBS Agribusiness Programme, we have talked about the

idea of a global coordinating mechanism for agriculture. The need is even greater in today's global market, where production can occur in regions far away from consumption. In addition, the enthusiasm for agricultural-based renewable fuels is pulling new land into use and adding to the pressure on the environment. The CBD case gave us the opportunity to consider whether this particular vehicle could fill that role.

Can you describe the CBD case discussion?

All HBS case studies feature a protagonist who is facing a decision. During the discussion, participants are asked to step into the role of decision maker and recommend a plan of action. This method of 'active learning' helps participants to dive deep into tough issues. They really take it to heart, and then it becomes part of their decision-making framework once they leave.

The CBD case, which is set from the point of view of the Executive Secretary, asks how business resources can best be harnessed to help meet the 2010 target. In tackling the question, the discussion moved through three areas: who has the most at stake with respect to biodiversity and why; what could business do to help reach the 2010 goal; and recommenda-

Agriculture's very productivity depends upon a healthy environment, so our participants all have a vested interest in biodiversity and sustainable use

tions to the CBD Secretariat as to how to get business involved.

What specific recommendations did the group have for the Executive Secretary?

The recommendations to the Executive Secretary fell along four main dimensions.

- First, the market for sustainable products should be stimulated wherever possible.
- Second, consumers must be educated about the benefits and value of biodiversity, so that they are willing to pay more for a sustainably produced offering.
- Third, penalties should be implemented to prevent bad behavior and to keep businesses from 'free riding' on the positive actions of others.
- Finally, information about best practices should be widely disseminated.

In terms of involvement in the CBD process

itself, one participant noted that business would become more engaged "when they can see they can make a difference in the process and achieve tangible benefits."

Was this the only time that biodiversity was discussed during the Seminar?

Biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources came up either directly or indirectly during many of the other 10 case discussions. For example, a case on Embra-pa (Brazil's national agricultural research corporation) looked at the introduction of a new integrated crop-livestock rotation system for the Cerrado that has a number of positive benefits for the environment. And the collapse of the Grand Banks cod fishery was discussed in a case on Clearwater Seafoods Limited Partnership (CSLP), a Canadian company that has proactively invested in technology to ensure that harvesting is done at sustainable rates.

Participants returned to the issues of business and sustainability during the closing session, when HBS Professor Michael Porter

presented his current research on the link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Porter urged businesses to see CSR activities as more than an opportunity for positive publicity. Instead, companies should practice what he calls "strategic CSR" by mounting a small number of intensive initiatives whose social and business benefits are large and distinctive [2]. He cited the milk district model used by Société des Produits Nestlé S.A (Nestlé) as an example of strategic CSR, showing how the company's commitment to working with small farmers had helped both the community and the company to prosper.

How can one get a copy of the case?

The case study, titled "Convention on Biological Diversity: Engaging the Private Sector," is available for download from the Harvard Business School Press [3].

[1] www.hbs.edu/socialenterprise

[2] Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, "Strategy & Society: The Link Between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility," *Harvard Business Review*, December 2006.

[3] www.hbsp.harvard.edu

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Deepening GEF engagement with business



Photo © Global Environment Facility

MONIQUE BARBUT spells out her vision for a public-private partnership initiative under the Global Environmental Facility.

I had hoped, along with many others, that the release of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment [1] would provide both the hard data and the shock value to compel policy makers, the public and the private sector into concerted and collaborative action to protect the provision of our planet's environmental goods and services and irreplaceable biodiversity. Apparently, however, that assessment's powerful messages presenting the economic and social impacts of continued ecosystem disruption passed through public consciousness with little trace.

The next climate change

It is my sense that problems have reached such proportions that we must forge new

partnerships to mobilize substantially more resources to protect biodiversity. With the perspective of promoting new partnerships, I have made building initiatives with the private sector one of the priorities for the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Through my many discussions with leaders of major corporations, I have no doubt that the private sector feels significant negative business impacts from the disruption of ecosystem services and accompanying biodiversity loss. In equal measure, no one should question that, when committed to common goals, the private sector brings financial resources, experience and an entrepreneurial approach that can dramatically increase our ability to reverse current trends.

The lessons and warnings so clearly articulated by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment remain as unanswered challenges before all of us. I am committed to the proposition that only through deeper partnership between public institutions and private business will we find enduring solutions to those challenges

Moreover, the public sector has demonstrated its remarkable capacity to build global knowledge, bring technical expertise to bear in solving urgent problems and establish an enabling environment characterized by supportive policies and regulatory framework. For these reasons, I am committed to the proposition that the private sector, when properly matched with public institutions and resources, can play an irreplaceable role in addressing the underlying causes of biodiversity loss.

While there are a growing number of very successful public-private initiatives in the areas of climate change, we have not seen the same type of dynamic response for biodiversity. A number of companies, across many sectors, are making the case, however, for explicitly conserving biodiversity.

Food company Unilever, for instance, mentions that “agriculture provides more than two-thirds of the raw materials for our branded goods. (...) Growing our business - while conserving biodiversity - is a substantial challenge. Protecting biodiversity is central to our agriculture and fish sustainability initiatives” [2].

Likewise, Sir Robert Wilson, former chairman of mining company Rio Tinto, highlighted that “it seems to me that the industry and the conservation movement should recognise that whilst our objectives will never wholly coincide, we have a substantial common interest in managing biodiversity as much as possible, and we would all benefit from the development of land management strategies which are consistent with the principles of sustainable development” [3].

I am sure that as businesses experience the growing financial burden and business disruption of impacts associated with biodiversity loss, increased water scarcity, fragmentation of forests, degradation of soils and disruption of ecosystem services, private sector leaders will take bold new steps to explore ways of deepening collaboration with leading public institutions such as the GEF.

Deeper biodiversity partnerships

However, we cannot wait. We must be at the forefront of launching new initiatives. For this reason, I have given priority to launching a public-private partnership that will proactively work with corporate partners to stop biodiversity loss, address climate change and respond to other forms of ecological disruption. In proposing new ideas for a GEF public-private partnership, our objectives will be to:

- Remove existing barriers for private sector investment in environmental sector products and services. Through financial support and policy dialogue with governments, the GEF can promote the removal of regulatory, legal and policy constraints that limit investment opportunities;

- Provide incentives to draw the private sector into new areas and approaches to managing global environmental problems. Financial instruments such as guarantees, insurance and hedge mechanisms can reduce risks associated with expansion of environmentally friendly markets;

- Encourage strategic planning, design, implementation and adoption of efficient, sustainable production regimes. Underwriting development costs can support formulation of longer-term investment plans, technology development strategies and market expansion initiatives;

- Open market opportunities and access for the poor. Technical and financial support can be directed towards orienting market development opportunities to small-scale, often rural-based entrepreneurs who can provide environmental goods and services to public and private customers.

Shaping green development

Fortunately, prior GEF experiences in partnering with the private sector provide us with important signposts and guidelines for expanding engagement with private actors through these and other activities. Those past experiences underscore the importance the GEF can play in providing incentives to specific economic sectors, such as energy, agribusiness and forestry,

which steer investors into environmentally sustainable activities. Those incentives can induce expansion of environmentally-sound product lines and stimulate technological innovation on degraded lands or in water-scarce countries. Experiences with GEF implementing and executing agencies also underscore the critical role we can play in removing barriers for new market entrants. For example, the GEF can provide support for technical studies, market plans, policy reform and regulatory streamlining for partners in developing countries.

We are using this prior experience as a basis for exploring a wide range of new opportunities with private companies, large and small. We are exploring ways of shaping the development of biofuel production systems so that they will use biomass grown on degraded lands, thus preventing deforestation. Among other initiatives, we are examining ways of pulling smallholder farmers into global carbon markets through agro-forestry practices that will increase incomes and also increase biodiversity. Moreover, we are drawing lessons from the 24 Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) projects supported by the GEF over the past years to identify ways of scaling up similar financing arrangements, developing transboundary PES schemes and providing incentives to draw the private sector into large-scale initiatives.

The lessons and warnings so clearly articulated by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment remain as unanswered challenges before all of us. I am committed to the proposition that only through deeper partnership between public institutions and private business will we find enduring solutions to those challenges. I look forward to working with the private sector to develop practical, far-reaching solutions to those challenges in coming years. Only then will we see a very different picture of the state of our world through the next comprehensive ecosystem assessment.

[1] www.maweb.org

[2] www.unilever.com/ourvalues/environmentandsociety/env_social_report/environment/environmental-issues/biodiversity.asp

[3] www.riotinto.com/documents/Media-Speeches/worldParksCongress160903.pdf

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When holidays can make a difference



Photo © Franz Dujon / SCBD

OLIVER HILLEL provides an update on the CBD Programme of Work on tourism.

Why is tourism on the CBD agenda?

Quite simply, because of its sheer size and impact on biodiversity! This is a global industry which manages the largest human migration every year. It also has a direct interest in safeguarding its core assets, namely nature and natural landscapes.

What has been achieved so far under the Convention?

The CBD has produced *Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development*. These were adopted in 2004, at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). They represent over 3 years of extensive consultations with national governments, business, conservation organizations, indigenous and local communities, tourism experts and academics. The Guidelines translate the objectives of the Convention into 12 steps for planning, managing and evaluating biodiversity-friendly tourism [1]. Through Decision VII/14, which adopted them, the Secretariat is mandated to support implementation of the Guidelines, in partnership with governments, business and civil society, including indigenous and local communities.

How useful can a set of guidelines be?

Guidelines in themselves are not significant. The real story of their usefulness, and their sense, resides in the people, companies and communities that plan, operate and monitor sustainable tourism products all over the world. They are the ones that are changing the way the industry operates. In order to make the guidelines meaningful, the Secretariat, with the support of the German government and in consultation with the Convention's other 190 Parties, has produced a User's Manual to facilitate their

application. We are establishing an online exchange platform, the 'Biodiversity and Tourism Network'. This is being undertaken in collaboration with one of the most significant global platforms on sustainable tourism, the World Tourism Forum for Peace and Sustainable Development [2].

What's the added value of this network?

Members will benefit from the institutional and technical support of the Secretariat and its partners. They will be able to monitor the degree of their compliance with the Guidelines and exchange experiences on how to use them to build successful tourism operations. In a sense, the Network will allow participating projects to benchmark their operations. It will also allow visitors to access case studies, obtain information on the implementation of the Guidelines, gather information about some of the world's most sustainable tourism destinations, and learn about other relevant initiatives.

Guidelines in themselves are not significant. The real story of their usefulness, and their sense, resides in the people, companies and communities that plan, operate and monitor sustainable tourism

Will the results of individual companies be made public?

Corporate confidentiality will not allow us to post individual results, but members will be able to access their previous postings and compare their results with the averages of similar projects or organizations, whereas all visitors will be able to access general averages and quarterly press releases on progress made and milestones. We will also encourage members to share case studies and reports with all visitors, and of course many leading projects will use their results and achievements in corporate or institutional communication materials.

Who can join the Network?

The Network is open to all tourism practitioners willing to apply the Guidelines to their operations. Founding members include the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), through its Consulting Unit on Biodiversity and Tourism for Tsunami Affected Countries; Conservation International's Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB), through its Mesoamerican Reef

Tourism Initiative; the Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Programme of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Lam Dong tourism development plan in Vietnam; and an indigenous tourism network managed in cooperation with the universities of Carleton, Canada, and Montpellier, France.

How are you reaching out to the industry and Parties?

The CBD User's Manual and the Biodiversity and Tourism Network were presented at last year's World Tourism Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil (28 November - 2 December 2006). They will be highlighted again at this year's edition of the world's largest travel and tourism trade fair, ITB Berlin (7-11 March 7) [3]. A training workshop to facilitate exchanges, with a focus on indigenous and local communities, is also planned for 2007. Progress on the implementation of the Guidelines, through the results of the Network, will be the

focus on a side event at COP-9. More information about the tourism Programme of Work can be found on the Convention website. Finally, I am always keen to hear of new avenues for making tourism more biodiversity-friendly and for better aligning policies and practices with the objectives of the Convention.

[1] The Guidelines are available online at www.biodiv.org/programmes/socio-eco/tourism/guidelines.asp

[2] www.desti-nations.net

[3] www.itb-berlin.com

Oliver Hillel is Programme Officer, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Prior to joining the Secretariat, Oliver Hillel was Project Team Leader in Palawan, the Philippines, producing a provincial master plan for sustainable tourism development and building capacity of local governments and business. He was Tourism Programme Coordinator, United Nations Environment Programme (2000 - 2003) and Ecotourism Programme Director, Conservation International (1996 - 2000).

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Protecting the reef. Securing a great permit



Photo © Ecotourism Australia

STEPHEN PAHL describes how a partnership between the not-for-profit organization Ecotourism Australia and the Australian government's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is benefiting local tourism operators as well as helping to protect biodiversity.

As one of Australia's major tourist attractions, the 2,300 kilometre Great Barrier Reef is under pressure from nearly two million visitors each year. These international and domestic tourists sail, dive, swim, snorkel and fish, potentially damaging the complex ecosystem that includes 260 species of hard coral, over 1,500 species of fish, 54% of the world's mangrove diversity and six of the world's seven species of marine turtle.

Securing permits

The government's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) [1] requires all tourist operators and tourist facilities in the area (as well as non-tourist commercial operations) to have a permit, initially issued for one year and then extended for

up to six years.

The partnership between the park authority and Ecotourism Australia enables sustainable ecotourism operators, certified under the Eco Certification programme, to obtain 15-year permits to operate on the Great Barrier Reef.

Making everyone better off

GBRMPA knows that it can rely on Ecotourism Australia's objective certification system, which is a world leader in assessing

'Advanced Ecotourism', qualify operators for a long-term permit. They also require operators to provide interpretation and education, contribute to conservation, to work with local communities and to show cultural respect and sensitivity.

GBRMPA's own Reef HQ [2], the National Education Centre for the Great Barrier Reef is Eco Certified at the 'Ecotourism' level. Reef HQ is the world's largest living coral reef aquarium.

Tourists benefit from a quality-controlled product and informed operators who appreciate the environment in which they operate

environmental and social sustainability of tourism operations. The certified tour operators benefit from a secure permit, allowing them to make business plans for up to 15 years. Tourists benefit from a quality-controlled product and informed operators who appreciate the environment in which they operate. And of course the community and future generations benefit from a better controlled approach to tourism in this fragile World Heritage area.

Ecotourism Australia proposes three levels of certification. All levels require the operators to demonstrate environmental sustainability and ethical operations. The two higher levels, 'Ecotourism' and

The GBRMPA - Ecotourism Australia partnership, which has been in operation since 2004, has resulted in the issuing of 41 15-year permits to 29 tourist operators.

[1] www.gbrmpa.gov.au

[2] www.reefhq.com.au

Stephen Pahl is Chief Executive Officer, Ecotourism Australia.

Ecotourism Australia members include ecotourism accommodation, tour and attraction operators; tourism planners; protected area managers; academics and students; tourism, environmental, interpretation and training consultants; local and regional tourism associations and travellers.

www.ecotourism.org.au

Travelling with ethics



Photo © G.A.P Adventures

What is at the heart of a responsible tour operator? **BRUCE POON TIP**, founder and CEO of G.A.P Adventures, explains.

G.A.P Adventures offers small group adventures, safaris and expeditions on all 7 continents. It is our duty to show respect for the privilege we all have with modern international travel.

Interacting with other cultures

From the start, G.A.P Adventures has been committed to offering low-impact tours that benefit traveller and host alike. We work with local communities, businesses and individuals to develop sustainable tourism opportunities that help local economies while minimizing negative environmental and cultural impacts.

We believe that tourism should be about interacting with other cultures. This could mean travelling in small groups that are less intrusive and offer more opportunity for local interaction, taking a public bus with local people rather than travelling by private tour bus, or staying at a small, locally-owned guesthouse rather than at a large, foreign-owned hotel.

We strive to provide incredible experiences for our travellers and ensure that we protect these fragile environments so they can continue to be enjoyed by visitors and the communities that inhabit them

Our mandate is to respect the communities in which we operate. We do this by acting in a manner that is environmentally, socially and economically responsible. We visit destinations that have unique environments, which are also often located in remote, environmentally and socially

sensitive areas. As part of our commitment to environmental conservation, we strive to limit the negative impacts travel has on biodiversity and operate in a way that encourages our travellers to respect the areas in which we travel so they will return home with a better understanding of regional environmental and social issues.

Exploring and learning

Aboard our ship, the *M/S Explorer*, our passengers have a unique opportunity to learn about some of the most remote and fragile ecosystems on the planet. With lectures, briefings and discussions, the expedition staff cover all aspects of the voyage including ornithology, marine biology, geography, geology, history and the environment.

The *M/S Explorer* also operates on marine gas oil that is cleaner than truck diesel fuel as it offers lower sulfur dioxide emissions. To reduce environmental pollutants, 4-stroke outboard engines have been installed on all of our zodiacs. Since there is no mixing of oil and gas, the exhaust is intrinsically much cleaner.

We also hold full membership status with the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), an organization that advocates, promotes and ensures safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. We donate a portion of proceeds from auctioning our Captain's Sea Chart to BirdLife International's 'Save the Albatross' campaign which works towards the conservation of albatross species through research on trends in threatened populations, interactions between albatrosses and fisheries, and the development and use of sea-bird safe fishing practices.

Giving back

Our non-profit organization, Planeterra - The G.A.P Adventures Foundation was developed to give back to the people and communities we visit on our tours. Our foundation works with several local community projects, non-profit

organizations and international charities around the world that focus on the areas of health, education, community development, environmental conservation and employment skills training. By identifying projects and organizations that specialize in different areas, our travellers and other donors are provided with a variety of worthwhile projects to choose from and support. One particular project that is committed to biodiversity conservation is the Foundation for Nature and Humanity, a Cuban environmental non-governmental organization. Planeterra supports the organization's development of food gardens and the naturalization of schoolyards in Havana elementary schools.

Other projects we support include The House of the People of the Sun in Peru, which is a haven for children and adolescents who live in extreme poverty. Children are given the opportunity to voluntarily drop-in to receive help with homework, a warm meal and participate in a variety of classes and workshops. One of Planeterra's goals is to raise USD 100,000 to purchase a piece of land and build a bigger home in order provide support to more children and families.

G.A.P Adventures groups visit the Ccaccacollo community in Peru where we support a women's weaving project. Travellers have the opportunity to learn about all the stages of the weaving process and are also given the opportunity to purchase high quality textiles directly from the women who made them.

For many people, travelling is about gaining an understanding and appreciation of new cultures. Our volunteer tours in Central America, South America and Africa give our travellers the opportunity to help improve basic living conditions of the local people while gaining an unforgettable cultural experience. For example, our Project Patagonia tour provides participants with the opportunity to visit Torres Del Paine National Park, working alongside local guides, porters and rangers to help restore trails, build sign platforms, and mark trails, plants, trees and mountains with signs made by local artisans. Our Project Costa Rica trip allows travellers to work alongside volunteers to help protect endangered sea turtles.

Through our commitment to sustainable



Playa Matapalo Sea Turtle Project, Costa Rica
Customers spend five days working alongside local and international volunteers to help protect endangered sea turtles. Activities include night patrols along the beach, data collection, monitoring of the baby turtle hatchery, counting baby turtles and releasing them.
Photo © G.A.P Adventures

tourism, our unique style of travel, and our relationship with the local communities in which we travel, we strive to provide incredible experiences for our travellers and ensure that we protect these fragile environments so they can continue to be enjoyed by visitors and the communities

that inhabit them.

Bruce Poon Tip is founder and Chief Executive Officer, G.A.P Adventures. In 2006, he was awarded with the Canadian Entrepreneur of the Year award.

www.gapadventures.com

Goodbye fringe. Welcome global best practice

Photo © Benjamin Mendlowitz



COSTAS CHRIST presents various initiatives of the World Travel & Tourism Council to green the industry, notably the *Tourism for Tomorrow Awards*.

Gone are the days when business could only point to a few ecolodges in South America or a small tour operator in Africa that was demonstrating sustainable tourism successfully. Today's best practice tourism companies represent global hotel groups, major ski resorts and large tour operators whose products span the entire globe. Many of these leading companies are members of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

Setting the agenda

Over the last decade, WTTC has been championing environmental and social issues in the industry. The Council is a forum for global business leaders, representing business in all parts of the Travel & Tourism industry worldwide. The Council aims to ensure that the Travel & Tourism industry

is accountable for the natural resources that it uses and that it is both aware of and responsible for its social and cultural impacts on destinations.

As mentioned by WTTC President Jean-Claude Baumgarten "It is time to ask ourselves - Has the industry fulfilled its

advise the European Commission on the development of this initiative.

In November 2002, WTTC launched its Corporate Social Leadership (CSL) Report encouraging sustainable development and CSL to both private and public sector leaders.

Today's best practice tourism companies represent global hotel groups, major ski resorts and large tour operators whose products span the entire globe

promises? Are we all exemplary world citizens? What are the environmental, social and cultural implications of the continued growth of the industry? How can the public and private sector work together towards a sustainable future?"

In 1994, as a follow-up of the Rio 'Earth Summit', WTTC set up Green Globe [1]. Now an independent private company, it is an Agenda 21-based industry improvement programme. It provides guidance material and a global certification process linked to both ISO standards and Agenda 21 principles.

WTTC led the initiative which culminated in the 1996 Agenda 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development. The European Commission adopted WTTC's Agenda 21 as a framework for sustainable development and is presently working on an Agenda 21 for Travel & Tourism in Europe. As a member of the steering group, WTTC continues to

The following year, at the WTTC Summit in Portugal, the message from industry stakeholders and discussion at the event bore out an overwhelming support for the recommendations of the CSL report and subsequently, the Council's *Blueprint for New Tourism* was formulated. It lies at the backbone of all that the Council does and, at the same time, serves as an affirmation of WTTC's commitment to balancing business and economics with ethics and sustainability.

Tomorrow's tourism

WTTC also agreed to take over the 'Tourism for Tomorrow Awards', originally launched by British Airways PLC in the 1990s. The Council revised the awards, created new categories, established new criteria and a new judging process so as to highlight best practice models of sustainable tourism across the spectrum of the industry, from small-scale businesses to large scale travel and tourism corporations.

The Awards come in four flavours: 'Destination', 'Conservation', 'Investor in People', and 'Global Tourism Business'. The finalists for the 2007 edition were announced in late January (see box) and the winners will be announced on 11 May at the Global Travel and Tourism Summit in Lisbon, Portugal [2].

Aspen Skiing Company is a finalist in the 2007 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. It hosts 1.3 million skiers annually at its four mountain resorts, golf course, two hotels and 15 restaurants. And it does so with 'GREENTRACK', a programme to green operations. This includes the largest purchase of renewable energy in the ski industry. Aspen Skiing Company now offsets 100% of its electricity use with renewable energy sources.

Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, with 44 large

The Finalists, 2007 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

The shortlist of finalists for the four categories, in alphabetical order are listed below. Winners will be announced in May.

Destination Award

Great Barrier Reef, Australia
Greenbox Trading, Ireland
The State of Vermont, USA

Conservation Award

Aqua-Trek, Fiji Islands and USA
Aspen Skiing Company, USA
Caiman Ecological Refuge, Brazil

Investor in People Award

10 Knots Development Corporation, Philippines
Nihiwatu Resort, Indonesia
Sunderbans Jungle Camp, India

Global Tourism Business Award

Lindblad Expeditions, USA and Global
Six Senses Resorts & Spas, Thailand and Global
Wilderness Safaris, South Africa

Oliver Hillel (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity) was on the Finalists' Selection Committee.

The final Judging Panel is composed of Costas Christ (Chairman), Graham Boynton (Group Travel Editor, The Telegraph, UK), Hon John Briceño (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources, Local Government and the Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, Belize), Fiona Jeffrey (Managing Director, World Travel Market, UK) and Hitesh Metha (Director of Ecotourism, EDSA, USA).

scale properties in 8 countries, was a winner in the 2006 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards for their green partnership programme. This is a flagship in the hotel industry that combines environmentally sensitive operations with community outreach programmes and cultural heritage preservation at their hotels.

Lindblad Expeditions, a cruise company and also a finalist in the 2007 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, takes 16,000 travellers each year to some of the world's most spectacular natural areas, from the Galapagos Islands to Glacier Bay, Alaska, on 10 company ships. Lindblad has set a global standard in best practice for cruise ships that contribute to the conservation of fragile nature destinations they visit.

More than putting heads to beds

To illustrate further just how far the tourism private sector has come from early

small scale ecotourism success stories to global best practice models of sustainable tourism in the larger companies responding to WTTC's call for 'New Tourism' [3], consider the words of Marilyn Carlson-Nelson, Chairman and CEO of Carlson Companies, one of the world's largest tourism corporations. Taking the podium at the 2005 Global Travel and Tourism Summit held in new Delhi, India, she said, "Our industry has so much to offer but our responsibility goes beyond putting heads in beds. We must be stewards of the environment and protectors of cultural heritage..."

In 2007, WTTC received more company entries for the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards than in previous years, representing tourism businesses operating in 40 countries, from all corners of the globe and on all seven continents. Of those, the largest number of award entries by far, was in the 'conservation' category. Linking

biodiversity conservation to sustainable tourism development is no longer a fringe element in the global tourism industry but, rather, represents a broad spectrum of businesses from large to small, that are making best practices in tourism a priority.

[1] www.greenglobe.org

[2] www.globaltraveltourism.com

[3] www.wttc.org/blueprint/WTTCCBlueprintFinal.pdf

Costas Christ is Judging Chairman, WTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. He is also a monthly columnist for National Geographic Adventure magazine. He is a founding member, and former Chairman of the Board, of the International Ecotourism Society. He was Senior Director at Conservation International. In 2005, he launched the Adventure Council.

www.tourismfortomorrow.com



Conservation partners 'on the move to 2010'

Photo © TUI AG and CMS



MICHAEL IWAND and PAOLA DEDA explain the rationale behind the partnership between a multi billion tourism company and multilateral environmental agreement.

Since 2004, TUI AG, a European market leader in the tourism sector and a leading player in the global market for container shipping, has partnered with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

As part of its commitment to sustainable development, TUI founded the Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Development (TOI), in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It has also established the Econsense Forum for Sustainable Development of German Business and is an active member of the German Sustainability Leadership Forum.

TUI was also heavily involved in the drafting of the CBD *Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development*, in collaboration with the German Government.

The TUI - CMS partnership aims at achieving a tangible contribution to the conservation of endangered animals, which 'travel' regularly and internationally as part of their natural lifestyle. TUI is also a member of 'Friends of CMS', a non-profit association of German business and eminent personalities, which is raising project funds for the Convention's work, especially in developing countries. In that sense, the partnership has played an important role in furthering the objectives of the Convention.

The company's commitment to the conservation of wildlife is being demonstrated as a source of inspiration for travellers, tourists, political decision-makers and other corporations.

Watching wildlife

A major area of collaboration has been on tourism based on wildlife watching. A study on wildlife watching and tourism was launched at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Curitiba, Brazil) in March 2006. The study revealed that many wild animals are worth far more alive than dead. Well-planned and effective management is therefore needed to protect wildlife resources in tourist destinations and to ensure that wildlife watching is carried out in ways that do not cause damage to the animals and environments that people want to see.

The number of tourists taking short wildlife watching excursions is growing steadily. Such excursions are a significant and increasingly important feature of mainstream tourism, and the market for specialist wildlife watching holidays continues to expand. The numbers of visitors who took whale watching tours more than doubled between 1991 and 1998, and they spent over USD 1 billion a year on this activity, benefiting 495 communities around the world.

Only with the understanding and enthusiasm of many cross-bordering tourists for migratory species will their conservation become not only an environmental but also an economic priority, thus contributing to the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target

This form of tourism can certainly make an important contribution to wildlife conservation by raising awareness of the animals observed and their habitats, by creating revenue for public conservation, and by creating jobs for local communities. However, achievement of such benefits is not guaranteed: wildlife watching activities need careful preparation and management by both the tourism sector and conservation managers, in order to avoid adverse effects on wildlife and local communities.

We decided to explore this tourism niche market, to identify advantages and limits of the activity and set some principles

and guidance for the sector. The publication provides a balanced account of success stories and case studies pointing out limits, risks and adverse effects on wildlife and habitats that need urgent attention. It contains concrete guidelines for visitors, drivers and divers [1].

A year for dolphins

With the 'Year of...' campaigns, CMS raises awareness of threats faced by migratory animals and contributes to the 2010 target. Each year, CMS will work with partners to increase awareness and outreach on a particular species or group of species. 2007 is the Year of the Dolphin (YoD).

YoD is being mounted to communicate and stop the various threats to dolphin survival such as by-catch, the degradation of habitats through marine pollution, and the depletion of food supplies due to over fishing.

Activities promoted through this partnership include the publication of information on dolphins in brochures and travel catalogues, in-flight magazines, a dedicated website [2] and the development of a 'dolphin diploma' for children. TUI will assist with the organisation of an important meeting in the Canary Islands in late 2007 to develop an international agreement for the conservation of small cetaceans in Macaronesian Islands (Azores, Canaries,

Cape Verde, Madeira), West Africa and adjacent Atlantic waters.

In November 2006, YoD was launched in Kenya, a country that is both a Range State of dolphins and popular holiday destination. A seminar was also organised by World of TUI for boat operators and Kenya Wildlife Service Rangers at Wasini Island in December 2006.

TUI was also able to get its partners in TUI Sports Diving on board: ORCA Reisen, the product partner; PADI, the world's biggest diving instructor organisation; and Aqua Lung, the leading producer of diving gear.



Dolphin Watching off La Gomera, Canary Islands, Spain
Photo: Christian Ritzner/AGEF C.T.

These organisations will be promoting the initiative on their respective websites and in their mailing campaigns to customers, members and specialist outlets.

Other organisations have also joined the initiative, including the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) and CMS specialized Agreements on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS). A manual will be drafted by WDCS and CMS as a contribution to the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. It will be distributed to children in holiday destinations and, with the help of TUI destination managers, to local schools. The manual will be also shared with the UNESCO school-network and with interested countries.

Conservation teamwork

In terms of outreach, the benefits of our collaboration are clear. TUI can touch sev-

eral million customers, more than CMS would ever be able to on its own. TUI's potential to lobby for environmental and social issues in the sector is also enormous. The benefits of this teamwork are to be measured against the comments of UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner who mentioned that "for too long, economics and the environment have seemed like players on rival teams. There have been a lot of nasty challenges and far too many own goals. We need to make these two sides of the development coin team players, players on the same side".

The type of collaboration we have engaged in is, we believe, essential for the success of the Convention. Only with the understanding and enthusiasm of many cross-bordering tourists for migratory species will their conservation become not only an environmental but also an economic priority, thus contributing to the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target.

Biodiversity proves to be a strategic core

issue for globally operating tourism corporations such as TUI. Projects and campaigns undertaken through partnerships, such as that established with CMS, create opportunities for conservation and help reduce existing and potential business risks associated with biodiversity loss.

[1] www.cms.int/publications/pdf/CMS_Wildlife-Watching.pdf

[2] www.YoD2007.org

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Photo © Oficina de Visitantes y Convenciones de Cancún

Securing the future of the Mesoamerican Reef

Photo © Patricia Ramirez and Conservation International



THOMAS MELLER, JAMIE SWEETING and **SELENI MATUS** report on the progress made by a multi-stakeholder initiative to overhaul industry practice in a mass tourism destination.

In the state of Quintana Roo, in the Mexican Caribbean, unprecedented tourism growth overlaps with rich biodiversity. In less than 30 years, the coastal zone of northern Quintana Roo

has developed from a region of laid-back fishing villages and coconut plantations into the number one tourist destination in Latin America and an important holiday getaway for millions of North Americans and Europeans. Miles of uninhabited beaches and untouched mangroves have been replaced by tourism and residential developments.

Mass development

Cancún, the main tourism destination in the Mexican Caribbean, has grown over the past three decades from a village of 12 families to a city with over half a million inhabitants and 150 hotels with more than 28,000 rooms. It receives over 3 million visitors annually. The Riviera Maya, located 60 kilometers south of Cancún, has seen an even faster rate of tourism growth. In the past decade, more than 350 hotels with 30,000 rooms were built along the Riviera Maya's fragile coastline. The island of Co-

zumel, 14 kilometers east off the coast, is the world's second most visited cruise destination after Miami. It receives almost 3 million passengers annually. On a given day, cruise passengers make about 2,000 scuba dives in and around the fragile coral reefs that surround Cozumel.

This mass tourism development has resulted in a wide range of pressures on the unique local ecosystems that include the largest underground river and cave system in the world as well as the Mesoamerican Reef which is the largest barrier reef system in the Western Hemisphere. The key threats from tourism are: (i) destruction of coastal habitat caused by poorly planned tourism developments; (ii) contamination of the aquifer, the prime potable water source in the area, as a result of inadequate treatment of solid waste and waste water; and (iii) marine habitat destruction caused by direct visitor impacts.

This is where the Mesoamerican Reef Tourism Initiative (MARTI) focuses its efforts. Launched in October 2004 by Conservation International (CI) with the support of The Summit Foundation, MARTI is a six-year initiative which seeks to address the major threats that mass tourism poses to the Mesoamerican Reef. It engages directly with the key sectors of the tourism industry – tourism developers, hoteliers and cruise lines – as well as state and local government.

Engaging all agents

Through MARTI, CI is working with Amigos de Sian Ka'an, a Cancún-based conservation organization, and a network of partners comprised of more than 30 private-sector businesses and trade associations, international and local NGOs, and government agencies. It aims at, firstly, changing the way new hotel developments are sited, designed and constructed, thereby ensuring that hotel developments in the Mexican Caribbean occur in a manner that incorporate sustainability and environmental issues. A second focus is on large-scale improvements in the hotel industry's environmental performance that will bring about measurable reductions in natural resource consumption and improvements in solid waste and waste water treatment and management. Thirdly, the Initiative is working towards improved destination-level management of cruise passenger visitation impacts in major cruise ports of call in the Mexican Caribbean.

Gabriela Rodríguez Gálvez, Secretaria de Turismo, Quintana Roo, México says "in the Mexican Caribbean, the State Ministry of Tourism and civil society jointly promote the Mesoamerican Reef Tourism Initiative. This initiative is geared towards the conservation of the biodiversity of the largest coral reef in the Western hemisphere, encouraging the adoption of sustainability as a form of life and providing for the sustainable development of tourism activities in the state".

To accomplish these results, MARTI is working with key local 'change agents' to promote the integration of sustainable hotel siting, design, and construction guidelines into the existing legislation - such as zoning plans, environmental impact assessments, and building regulations - through active participation in various on-going legislative formulation processes and participatory planning workshops with public and private sector representatives. Simultaneously, the Chambers of Architects and Engineers will help raise awareness of developers, architects, and building companies, about the new policies and good

practices for sustainable hotel development through targeted outreach as well as training. Furthermore, the Initiative is directly engaging developers in order to secure the commitment of a handful of 'champions' willing to apply sustainable hotel development guidelines in all phases

The integration of environmental best practices in the daily operation of every hotel offers an economic benefit for every business. Applied to over 30,000 hotel rooms in the Riviera Maya, the initiative helps us to secure the future of our destination

of their planned resort development in the Mexican Caribbean. MARTI aims to have at least one, ideally more, fully operational sustainable hotel development demonstration sites within the next four years.

MARTI is also working with the hotel industry to reduce the environmental impact caused by the daily operation of over 50,000 hotel rooms in the Mexican Caribbean. In 2007, the Initiative will work with 120 members of the Riviera Maya Hotel Association (AHRM) to introduce environmental management and encourage widespread adoption of environmental good practices for conserving water and energy, treating and managing wastewater, reducing solid waste, and managing chemicals. CI and Amigos de Sian Ka'an are expecting that, over the course of five years, MARTI's environmental performance improvement programme will be extended to all Hotel Associations throughout the Mexican Caribbean.

Changing practices

Martin Ruiz, Director, Asociación de Hoteles de la Riviera Maya mentions that "the integration of environmental best practices in the daily operation of every hotel not only contributes to the conservation of our natural attractions that are unique in the world, but also offers an economic benefit for every business. Applied to over 30,000 hotel rooms in the Riviera Maya, the initiative helps us to secure the future of our destination".

MARTI will also work with Cozumel's local government to bring cruise industry stakeholders together to develop and implement a practical and feasible cruise passenger management plan that will help the local cruise tourism industry to more effectively manage the environmental impacts of cruise passenger visitation. Two high-priority conservation projects will be identified from the planning process, and

CI will work with the cruise lines and Cozumel's local Cruise Committee to implement them. In addition, CI and the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) will assist marine recreation operators servicing the cruise lines in Cozumel to integrate operating practices for environmental sustainability

into their businesses, and encourage the cruise companies to create business incentives that will encourage their marine recreation providers in Cozumel to adhere to these good practices.

MARTI is the first initiative of its kind in Quintana Roo that offers Mexico's most important tourist destination the opportunity to direct the State's tourism development towards a sustainable path. It is a good illustration of how CI engages with tourism industry leaders to reduce tourism's ecological footprint and to promote conservation of environmentally sensitive tourism destinations.

It is CI's and Amigos de Sian Ka'an's hope that this initiative will help to significantly reduce the negative environmental impacts of tourism and contribute to achieving lasting conservation outcomes in the Mesoamerican Reef ecoregion to ensure that the very qualities that draw so many tourists to this biodiversity hotspot are maintained, and thus to demonstrate that biodiversity and human society can co-exist harmoniously.

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Cotacachi volcano, Ecuador
Photo © Lucia Barrio



Helping tourists understand what the seal means



Photo © John Murillo

RONALD SANABRIA reflects on strategies for the tourism industry to grow hand in hand with environmental responsibility.

Tourism appears to be virtually undisputed as the potential saviour of developing countries that are travel destinations. At the same time, unchecked growth of the industry undermines its long term contribution to development by threatening habitats.

Attracting clients, boosting profits

The Rainforest Alliance, an international non-profit conservation organization, works to maintain the cultural identities of local populations and conserve natural resources. It provides businesses, ranging from modern hotels to community cooperatives, with training and technical assistance, for instance through seminars and workshops.

Tensie Whelan, Executive Director, the Rainforest Alliance explains “although tourism can generate serious negative impacts for local populations and the environment, when it is developed and managed appropriately it also has the potential to provide incentives for conservation and the well-being of local communities”.

By adhering to a comprehensive set of standards for environmental and social responsibility, these companies can earn an

eco-label, which promotes improvement of its social and environmental management practices and will likely attract more clients and boost profits.

“We are all focused on best management practices, but they have to eventually drive us to get certified,” observes Carlos Jiménez, owner of the small Guatemalan tourism company Explore. The ‘Green Deal’ certification of his company allows him to land deals with other local and wholesale tour operators. “I run great local tours because I am from the area and know it well,” explains Jimenez. “But I am not a marketing specialist. The certification seal and marketing efforts of Green Deal and the Rainforest Alliance have gotten me clients that otherwise wouldn’t have known that we existed or what we stand for.” Jimenez also explains that after his business received certification, he realized that he needed to lead by example and



with listings both English and Spanish. It thus fills a void in the tourism industry in Latin America by informing both English and Spanish speaking travellers about sustainable vacation options. It also allows small and medium-sized businesses that may not have websites in English, or resources to advertise internationally, a way to connect with environmentally conscious businesses.

If people are unable to differentiate between the various certification programmes that exist, certification loses its effectiveness

To be included, an establishment must either be certified by a sustainable tourism certification programme or recommended by a conservation organization that verifies its practices. Website users can tailor their searches using criteria including destination, type of accommodation, features and activities.

Going global

After consulting dozens of organizations and stakeholders, the Network approved a list of baseline certification criteria that reflect indicators found in most of the member certification programmes. This standard enables the Network to promote certification as a way to improve tourism's economic, environmental and social impacts. It also helps certification programmes better evaluate their effectiveness.

The Network will next share knowledge and experiences with relevant organizations and certification programmes in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Europe. With the latter, it also hopes to establish a Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council to assess and accredit the dozens of sustainable tourism programmes that exist worldwide.

make some changes in his own life, and did so by turning his 413 acre (167 hectare) farm into a private nature reserve. "The certification is not just a piece of paper; it is a personal commitment."

Getting the real thing

While certification can be a valuable conservation tool because it provides an external, independent endorsement, certification programmes also need to be reliable, consistent and rigorous standards. If people are unable to differentiate between the various certification programmes that exist and do not know which are real and which represent a cosmetic 'green wash,' certification loses its effectiveness.

To help tourists understand what the seals mean and ensure that certification programmes are both accountable and effective, the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas, hosted by the

Rainforest Alliance, brings together over 70 sustainable tourism initiatives, certification programmes, public and private entities that promote certification and other environmental, tourism-related and academic organizations. This allows the sharing of information, outreach, identifying training needs and defining market strategies.

Connecting with green travellers

For the millions of travellers now using the internet to plan their trips, the Eco-Index of Sustainable Tourism [1] offers a database of sustainable tourism businesses that conserve biodiversity and help local communities. This lets responsible travellers choose destinations that are not only beautiful but also beneficial to the surrounding areas.

The Eco-Index of Sustainable Tourism includes a searchable database of exclusively sustainable tourism alternatives

[1] <http://eco-indextourism.org>

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What sort of holiday will you be taking in 2010?



Photo © First Choice Holidays PLC

JANE ASHTON reviews some of the key activities put in place to tackle sustainability issues at First Choice Holidays PLC.

Starting this month, First Choice Airways will encourage the customers of its 30,000 annual flights to offset their carbon emissions. This will be, I believe, the largest leisure airline carbon scheme to be ever put in place. As part of this 'opt-out' scheme, we will be matching every pound contributed by customers, for holidays taken from Winter 2007 onwards. Once the scheme is in full swing, this should allow us to offset the totality of the carbon we produce as a result of our customers' flights.

In order to identify suitable carbon offset projects, we have teamed up with a number of organizations, including Climate Care

The Tour Operators' Initiative

The Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI) was established in 1999 with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

TOI convenes tour operators that have committed to incorporate sustainability principles into their business operations and work together to promote and disseminate best practice.

In addition to First Choice, TOI members include: Accor (France); Atlas Voyages (Morocco); Aurinkomatkat-Suntours (Finland); DiscoveryInitiatives (UK); Dynamic Tours (Morocco); FreeWay Adventures (Brazil); Hotelplan (Switzerland); KEL 12 (Italy); REWE Touristik (Germany); Sahara Tours International (Morocco); Settemari (Italy); Studiosus (Germany); Thomas Cook (France); Travel Walji's PVT (Pakistan); TUI Group (Germany); VASCO Travel (Turkey); and Viaggi del Ventaglio (Italy).

For more information, visit www.toinitiative.org or contact Cristina Civili (ccivili@unwto.org).

Ltd [1]. Projects will include clean energy investments, for example a hydropower project in Zambia. With Cool Earth.org [2], we are looking into opportunities to invest in 2,000 hectares of rainforest in South America.

We believe that our carbon scheme, combined with our other Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, can work in making a real difference. As an integral component of our CSR strategy, we are also addressing specific biodiversity issues.

Making the business case

As illustrated by the challenges posed by climate change, the most pressing areas of concern for our future, I believe, is the impact our holidays have on the environment and places we travel to. This is why First Choice Holidays PLC has decided to confront these environmental issues head-on.

grating sustainability into our business is clearly emerging. Put simply, people's expectations of business are changing. Our stakeholders are calling for robust policies, improved performance, openness and transparency on sustainable development. Let us be clear, this is no longer just environmental campaigners and governments that are taking a keen interest. The investment community, our employees and customers are also expecting leadership on these issues.

Careful management of environmental resources is central to the smooth running of our business. Ultimately, like all businesses, we depend on a healthy environment to operate. As mentioned by Peter Long, Chief Executive, First Choice Holidays PLC "as leaders in forward thinking, we recognise that the success of our business goes hand in hand with the way we treat our

Our sustainability journey is not one that we want or can do alone. We need to work with our customers as well as our suppliers and peers in the industry

First Choice Holidays PLC is a company with global operations, transporting eight million customers to over 200 destination countries. With a market capitalization of GBP 1.2 bn, it operates from 17 source markets with over 80 different brands.

The Group operates in four sectors. 'Mainstream Holidays', the largest sector in terms of size, profit and employee numbers, operates an airline and a network of 300 retail outlets. The 'Specialist Holidays' sector comprises of tour operating companies in Europe and Canada. Companies within our 'Activity Holidays' sector focus on taking individuals or small groups on tours with experienced guides showing them aspects of life or regions that would not be possible to experience in large groups. The 'Online Destinations Services' sector specialises in providing services in destination, for instance accommodation online, transfers, excursions and tickets as well as specialised cruise line services and event management. It manages a bedbank of more than 25,000 hotels and apartments in 2,500 tourist areas across 900 destinations.

I believe that a 'business case' for inte-

natural environment and the people we work with and affect. Our vision is to enable people to explore and enjoy the world without harming it based on a commitment to sustainable development."

In order to better understand and develop the business case, we are working closely with Forum for the Future [3]. This will help us ensure that our commitment towards the environment and people is integrated into our core business strategy. Testimony to the importance of this process, the members of the Group Management Board have been involved throughout.

Sustainability in the supply chain

Our sustainability journey is not one that we want or can do alone. We need to work with our customers as well as our suppliers and peers in the industry. We have, for instance, developed with other airlines and sectors across the aviation industry, including airport operators and engine manufacturers, a strategy towards sustainable development of UK aviation [4]. Launched in June 2005, this represents the first national joint strategy committing players across the industry to shared objectives. At the international level, First Choice has

been a member of the Tour Operators Initiative since 2001 (see box). This contact with like-minded global corporate players, and UN institutions, allows us to exchange lessons and experiences that will leverage our scope and influence dozens of millions of travellers and decision-makers.

Hotels and other types of accommodation are typically owned and managed by suppliers to First Choice. Many of them are also suppliers to other tour operators. Encouraging accommodation suppliers to work on environmental and social responsibility is thus best done as an industry. With this in mind, we have been working with the Federation of Tour Operators to develop a Supplier Sustainability Handbook for accommodation suppliers [5]. This covers environmental management, employee rights and local sourcing of products.

The Handbook, released in September 2006, explicitly covers biodiversity. We are currently finalizing an audit of our top 150 hotels against these best practice guidelines. Once the audits are completed, we will use the information to help hoteliers make changes to their business, and highlight best performers to our customers.

Several of our Activity Holiday Sector companies also actively address sustainability through their supply chains. Trips Worldwide, for instance, checks that each of their ground handlers operates a sound environmental policy and also that holi-

days organised by other operators and sold through the travel agency operate a sound environmental policy. Exodus has contracted its operators to agree to abide by its responsible tourism policy. The Adventure Company has developed a tool to audit the sustainability of all trips.

Sunsail, also an Activity Holidays Sector company, operates boating holidays and watersport beach clubs around the world in Australia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Seychelles and Thailand. In many locations around the world, Sunsail works closely with national governments and industry-wide initiatives to conserve coral reefs, manage waste fuel, oil and batteries.

A force for good

There is no doubt that overseas tourism is and can be a force for good. The challenges of operating sustainably remain significant. We are delighted to be headline sponsor of the Responsible Tourism Awards for the third time in a row. The awards, which are organised in association with online travel agent responsibletravel.com, and media partners The Times and Geographical Magazine, as well as World Travel Market, serve to showcase inspiring examples of companies and individuals who have achieved this tricky balance. An unusual feature of the awards is that nominations are made by tourists.

The 2006 winners included the Ol Malo eco-

lodge in Northern Kenya which focuses on the eradication of Trachoma, an infectious and preventable disease. The Orchid, a business hotel based in Mumbai, is the only hotel in the world to be certified to both Ecotel and ISO 14001. The Wakatobi dive resort, in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, employs 150 people from local communities to establish and protect reef sanctuaries. The Napo Wildlife Center in Ecuador conserves over 80 square miles of rainforest. Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, South Africa, has successfully managed reintroduction programmes as well as being involved in Fair Trade Tourism.

Over the past months, we have seen an increased interest and engagement in sustainable tourism amongst our own colleagues as well as across the wider industry. Clearly, this is no longer the domain of just niche markets. Mainstream businesses such as ours have many opportunities to actively respond to these increased expectations.

[1] www.climatecare.org

[2] www.coolearth.org

[3] www.forumforthefuture.org.uk

[4] www.fto.co.uk/assets/documents/SSH%20Sept%2006.pdf

[5] www.sustainableaviation.co.uk/doc/Sustainable-Aviation-full-document.pdf

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First community-run Marine Protected Area, Anjaudobaka, Madagascar
(2005 Seed Award Winner)
Photo © Blue Ventures

Seed-uctive destinations



Photo © IUCN

FRANÇOIS ROGERS provides a sneak preview of the Seed Awards 2007. Two tourism projects are on the finalist list.

The Tiwi Island Gola Forest, in Southern Sierra Leone is a health centre in the middle of a wildlife sanctuary. It provides traditional and allopathic healing, serves organic food provided by local communities, and provides a rich source of revenue for rural development in an area destroyed by recent war.

A travel agent proposes a unique voyage into the heartland of the Amazon. Travelers can spend some time in a small village on the banks of this magnificent river, living on fishing and hunting, learning about local customs, traditions and knowledge. By taking this trip, they are also helping secure the livelihoods of this vulnerable community and their environment.

These are just two of ten locally driven, business partnerships that are among the ten finalists of awards-based incentive scheme, the Seed (Supporting Entrepreneurs for Environment and Development) Initiative.

Jointly run by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the governments of Germany, Netherlands, South Africa, United Kingdom, the United States of America and Swiss Reinsurance Company (Swiss Re), it is a global partnership which seeks to facilitate bottom-up

Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, commented “the Seed Initiative is again offering inspiring examples of local entrepreneurs in all parts of the world who are setting up new partnerships and using global/local networks to address sustainable development challenges with a business-case approach”.

This year’s finalist initiatives come from Brazil, Ecuador, India, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Sierra Leone, Suriname, Tanzania and Viet Nam. They were selected from more than 230 applications from more than 70 countries representing close to 1,100 organi-

Setting up new partnerships and using global/local networks to address sustainable development challenges with a business-case approach

development through a hands-on approach based on knowledge transfer and local involvement.

Seed endows its winning partnership projects with strategic, targeted support and expertise by drawing on the institutional strength of its partner organizations. Research enables the Initiative to gain a clear understanding of needs and create possibilities of replicating and adapting successful models.

Announcing the ten finalists at the World

sations from business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women’s groups, labour, public authorities and UN agencies.

The five winners will be selected and announced at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in New York, during the second week of May 2007.

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Removing poverty from the itinerary

DANIEL CARMELI and **ELSPETH HALVERSON** review how past Equator Prize recipients have helped local communities take ecotourism to the next level.

The Equator Prize, established as part of the UNDP Equator Initiative, honours best practice in community-based biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction within the equatorial belt. Since 2002, the Prize has identified exemplary ecotourism ventures in Africa, Asia and Latin America that demonstrate principles of economic and environmental sustainability. With tourism revenues put back into the community, these initiatives are designed to and successfully benefit the lives of its constituents.

Saving biodiversity before lunch

There are few places in the world where you can find ten species of primates, nine different species of hornbills, and a spattering of rare birds - all before stopping for lunch. Sabah, Borneo Malaysia where the Batu Puteh Community Ecotourism

Beyond ecotourism

Set in the lush Peruvian Amazon, Ese'ija is surrounded by a natural beauty and splendor that is nothing short of enchanting. Yet, unsustainable agriculture, logging and mining practices were threatening this tropical paradise and the traditional lifestyle of the Ese'ija people. In 1996, Rainforest Expeditions teamed up with the village to build the Posada Amazonas lodge, as part of a larger piece of land designated as a wildlife preserve. The lodge has given community members better lives as well as a chance to continue to embrace their unique heritage. Trained locals now educate residents and tourists on macaws and giant river otters. A secondary school as well as a medical post have been established. Higher incomes have provided the freedom for at least one member of each family to continue their traditional practices. By 2016, complete management and ownership will be transferred to the community.

The Il Ngwesi Group Ranch is situated on the northwest edge of the Lewa Wildlife

The lodge has given community members better lives as well as a chance to continue to embrace their unique heritage

Co-operative (KOPEL Bhd.) is located, provides just that. The co-operative offers lodging, guided tours, river sightseeing, exposure to local culture and crafts, as well as a forest restoration programme for international students. Work has also been done to eradicate *Salvinia*, an invasive and ecologically devastating weed, from nearby Tungog Lake. A micro-credit loan programme has allowed improvements in hygiene, household water and electricity supplies, and roofing. The communally operated site has attracted tourists from far and wide, stabilized the local ecology, and improved the overall welfare of the community.

Conservancy in northern Kenya. Nestled between mountain peaks and vast plains, the scene is dazzling to the eye. Lakes and rivers flow amongst the sprawling grasslands and forests. Large savannah animals graze right at the ranch's doorstep. This was not always the case. Poaching, illegal logging, and over-grazing were endangering much of the wildlife prior to the establishment of the ranch. The local community was empowered to stop this trend. Revenues from the ranch, fully owned and run by the community, have enabled to open a primary school and three nurseries, as well as to improve water maintenance and health schemes.



Photo © UNDP

Blending capital

The Equator Initiative has, over the years, helped to uncover a number of commercially sound, community based, biodiversity businesses. Building on this experience, the Initiative has been exploring new avenues to further support these businesses. The partnership with Conservation International to run Equator Ventures is a clear illustration of the Equator Initiative going beyond a prize. Equator Ventures, which is entering its second year, provides long term support in the form of blended capital (grants and loans) to small and medium sized businesses. For instance, Equator Venture recently provided grant funding to an ecotourism project in Mozambique that is going beyond safaris by finding ways to enhance the environment and livelihoods of the people of Ibo Island.

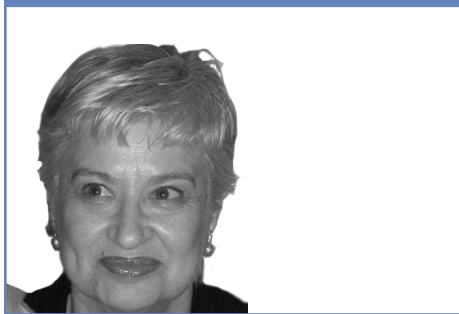
A focus on conservation as well as on local people has marked these efforts as promising signs of a bright future for biodiversity, communities, and tourists alike.

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Recovering from tsunamis



SIGRID HOCKAMP-MACK highlights a partnership between the World Tourism Organization and the government of Germany to provide a range of consultancy and advisory support to tsunami affected countries, based on the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development.

The 2004 tsunami in South-East Asia affected areas that play an important role in international tourism. These countries have thus temporarily lost a significant source of income. Tourism activities had damaged

ecosystems before the tsunami through, for instance, deforestation of mangroves, over-exploitation of coral reefs, unregulated and inappropriate building activities in costal zones.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of tourism infrastructure offers a unique opportunity to maximise sustainable design and construction, benchmark key performance areas such as energy, water conservation, minimise pollution, ensure adequate land use planning, and enhance ecosystem conservation.

Such a process needs to be participatory, involving consultation among all stakeholders within that landscape. It should build on traditional knowledge available on the management of natural and managed ecosystems within local communities.

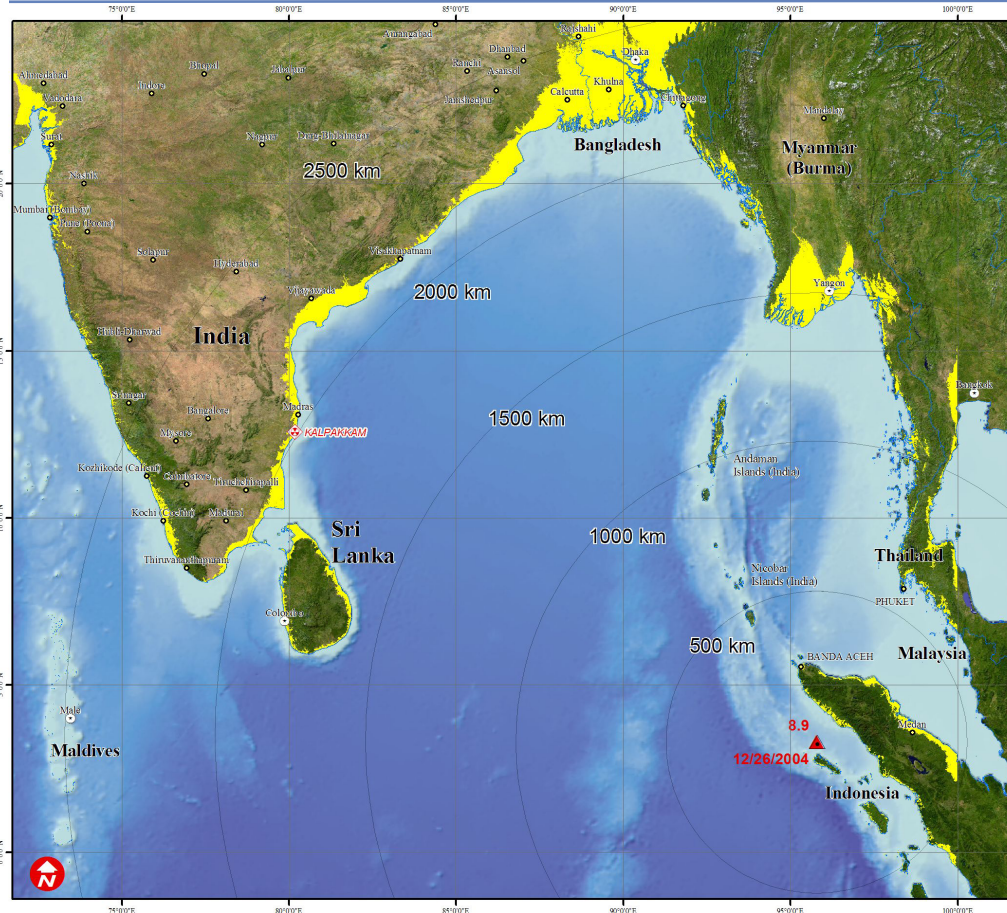
The CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, adopted in 2004 by the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, constitute an internationally

recognized instrument for sustainable tourism development.

Against this background, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the government of Germany have decided to work jointly on the integration of the Guidelines in decision-making processes at national and local level. We believe that this will guarantee a sound tourism redevelopment of tourism in the tsunami affected countries.

We will provide consultation and assistance to national and local governments. Focus will be given to improving capacity, knowledge sharing and participation processes to develop sustainable tourism practices. This collaboration will help demonstrate that tourism development and biodiversity can be mutually supportive.

Sigrid Hockamp-Mack is Coordinator, UNWTO Consulting Unit Bonn on Biodiversity and Tourism for Tsunami Affected Countries.
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Regional Map of Tsunami-Affected Areas

28 December 2004

This map illustrates coastal areas under 20 meters in elevation, as shown in bright yellow. This low-lying coastal zone is not a direct indication of areas affected by the 26 December 04 Tsunami—only those areas which may have suffered damage. For example, although Bangladesh is almost entirely under 20m in elevation, extensive swamps and limited settlements along the coast resulted in few casualties.

- Capital
- Large Town
- ▲ Epicenter
- ⊕ Nuclear Power Plant
- ▭ International Border
- Elevation under 20m

Disaster Type: Tsunami
 Disaster Date: 26 December 2004
 Data Source: GLCF, NASA, USGS
 Sensors: Modis-Terra mosaic
 Elevation Data: SRTM30/ETOPO2
 Resolution: 1km
 Scale: 1:12,000,000 for A3 Prints
 Datum: WGS-84
 Projection: Geographic coordinates
 Map Produced: 28 December 2004

The depiction and use of boundaries, geographic names and related data shown here are not warranted to be error-free nor do they necessarily imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Map courtesy of UNOSAT - www.unosat.org

This map was produced for the UNOSAT project headed by UNITAR and executed by UNOPS. UNOSAT is a UN-private consortium providing satellite imagery and related geographic information to UN humanitarian and development agencies, and their implementing partners. Please see www.unosat.org for additional information.

The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters aims at providing a unified system of space data acquisition and delivery to those affected by natural or man-made disasters through authorized users. Since 1 July 2003 the Charter is available to support the UN with satellite imagery. Please contact the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs for further information (oosa@unvienna.org).



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Upcoming events

4 March, Boston, USA. Social Enterprise Conference 2007, www.socialenterpriseclub.com/conference

●● **6-9 March**, Brussels, Belgium. World Biofuels Markets Congress, www.greenpowerconferences.com/wbm/index.html

●● **7-8 March**, London, UK. Business-NGO Partnerships, www.ethicalcorp.com/engagement2007

●● **8-9 March**, Bangkok, Thailand. OECD/UNDESA/UNESCAP workshop on developing sustainability strategies in Asia, www.oecd.org/document/40/0,2340,en_2649_37425_37922664_1_1_1_37425,00.html

●● **26-27 March**, London, UK. Corporate Responsibility 2007: Sense and Sustainability: The Limits and Reach of Corporate Responsibility, www.chatham-house.org.uk/index.php?id=5&cid=110

●● **29-30 March**, Paris, France. FEDERE 2007, http://conferences.lesechos.fr/fr/conferences/presentation99.html?code=wbcsc_federe_2007

●● **19-21 April**, Singapore. Global Business Summit for the Environment (B4E), www.unglobalcompact.org/NewsAndEvents/upcoming_events.html

●● **24-26 April**, São Paulo, Brazil. Second Ibero-American Conference on Sustainable Development, www.sustentavel.org.br

●● **30 April - 11 May**, New York, USA. 15th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/policy.htm

●● **2-4 May**, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Agribusiness Seminar: A Latin American Offering, Harvard Business School, <http://www.exed.hbs.edu/programs/agbo>

●● **7-11 May** 2007, Almería, Spain. Protected Area Categories Summit, www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/theme/categories/summit/summit.html

●● **9-10 May**, London, UK. The Responsible Business Summit 2007, www.ethicalcorp.com/europe2007

●● **10-12 May**, Lisbon, Portugal. 7th Global Travel & Tourism Summit, Lisbon, www.global-traveltourism.com

●● **14-16 May**, Oslo, Norway. The Global Ecotourism Conference, www.ecotourismglobalconference.org

●● **2-5 June**, Ottawa, Canada. Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC) Conference 2007: 50 Years of Leadership in Management, <http://asac.management.uottawa.ca>

●● **5-17 June**, Waterloo, Canada. International Conference of the Greening of Industry Network: Sustainable Social and Ecosystem Stewardship, www.greeningofindustry.org/june2007.htm

●● **5-6 July**, Geneva, Switzerland. UN Global Compact Leaders Summit 2007, www.unglobalcompact.org/NewsAndEvents/Leaders_Summit_2007.html

●● **8-10 July**, Guangzhou, China. Heritage and Tourism: Community, Enterprise, Government & Tourists, www.geog.nau.edu/igust/China2007

●● **3-8 August**, Philadelphia, USA. Academy of Management 2007 Conference: Doing Well By Doing Good, <http://meeting.aomonline.org/2007>

●● **26-28 September**, Madison, USA. 2007 North American Conference on Ecotourism, www.ecotourismconference.org

●●● continued from page 2

creasingly embedded in product offerings (pp. 8-9) and a business case for biodiversity is clearly emerging (pp. 18-19).

Tackling biodiversity issues head-on has often been achieved through collaboration with industry peers and other stakeholders. Examples include government agency permits linked to certification schemes developed by conservation groups (p.7); multi-sectoral platforms convening business players, local authorities and non governmental organizations, such as the Mesoamerican Reef Tourism Initiative (pp. 14-15); as well as partnerships between global operators and multilateral environmental agreements (pp. 12-13).

Companies have also recognised the need to actively engage with suppliers (pp. 18-19). At the other end of the spectrum, consumers also need to better understand what lies behind eco-labels so as to make informed decisions (pp. 16-17).

Many schemes are in place to recognise innovative ideas (p. 20). The Secretariat was part of the judging panel that nominated the finalists of the 2007 Tourism for Tomorrow Award (pp. 10-11). The Secretariat was also closely associated with the United Nations Development Programme 2006 Equator Prize which seeks, in particular, to promote outstanding community-based tourism operations (p. 21).

Travel and Tourism has emerged as one of the world's most competitive industries. Mergers and acquisitions have concentrated decision making in many areas - notably air carriers, hotel chains and tour operators. At the same time, new and upcoming businesses can significantly challenge established markets.

The industry is changing fast, and effective management on all fronts is needed to ensure that these changes are mostly beneficial. The threat to biodiversity reduces the capacity of ecosystems to provide essential services to the industry: from health to water supply, and from food and nutrition to climate change adaptation.

From Berlin to Bonn

We wish you a pleasant stay in Berlin, if you are attending ITB, and look forward to welcoming you in Bonn in May 2008. COP-9 will provide a major opportunity to profile biodiversity initiatives and tools for the Travel and Tourism industry. In the meantime, *Business.2010* welcomes your feedback and suggestions.

NB, OH, GL

Last words

The 'business and biodiversity' scene remained extremely vibrant over October-February. UNEP Finance Initiative, for instance, approved at its AGM, in November, the creation of a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Workstream (and the Secretariat is delighted to serve on its advisory group). The World Business Council for Sustainable Development is set to establish a Focus Area on Ecosystems [1]. The Global Environment Facility is also looking at taking its engagement with business to a whole new dimension (this issue, pages 4-5).

The European Triple Presidency included in its biodiversity agenda a chapter on business and, as part of this, a major event is scheduled for the 3rd quarter of 2007, in Portugal [2].

The Secretariat engaged with the mining industry (on the use in Canada of the ICMM *Good Practice Guidance for Mining and Biodiversity* [3]); participated in discussions regarding the involvement of business in the protected area category system (as a preparation to the IUCN Categories Summit in May); and explored options for business participation in the revision of the Japanese biodiversity strategy (to be reported in the next issue).

The Secretariat also continued its dialogue with business schools. In January, the HBS Agribusiness Seminar featured a case study on the Convention (pp. 2-3). With McGill University, the Secretariat continued to work with the BCom and MBA programmes. It also participated in the McGill Business Conference on Sustainability.

Coverage in the business press has also remained strong, notably regarding biofuels (e.g. the 26 February edition of *Forbes* dedicated its cover story to "Eco Mania"). A recent leader of *The Economist*, mentioned that "Five years ago corporate America was solidly against carbon controls. But the threat of a patchwork of state regulations, combined with the opportunity to profit from new technologies, began to shift business attitudes. And that movement gained momentum, because companies that saw the competition espouse carbon controls began to fear that, once the government got down to designing regulations, they would be left out of the discussion if they did not jump on the bandwagon. So now the loudest voices are not resisting change but arguing for it" [4].

Our next issue will, appropriately, focus on business, climate change and biodiversity. We look forward to your contributions.

NB

[1] *Sustain*, issue 27, January.

[2] www.bmu.de/english/nature/downloads/doc/38254.php

[3] www.icmm.com/library_pub_detail.php?rcd=195

[4] "The greening of America", 27 January.

Coming next

The next issue will focus on climate change and biodiversity and will be published on 22 May, as part of the International Biodiversity Day celebrations. Contributions should reach the Secretariat by 13 April.

Subsequent issues will focus on the ecosystem approach; technology transfer; and the financial services sector.

Please contact Nicolas Bertrand, Secretariat Focal point for business, for additional information (nicolas.bertrand@biodiv.org).

Meet the Secretariat at ITB Berlin 2007

The Secretariat will be represented at the stand of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, in the 'Deutschlandshalle'.

A press conference will be held on 9 March to launch the two main achievements related to the *CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development*: (1) the *User's Manual for the Guidelines* and (2) the Biodiversity and Tourism Network, a web-based network of tourism players, in partnership with the World Tourism Forum for Peace and Sustainable Development.

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Comments and suggestions for future columns are welcome and should be addressed to the editor.

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