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SUSTAINABLE USE, INCLUDING TOURISM

Tourism and the sustainable use of biological diversity: a survey of ongoing international activities

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its fifth meeting, the Conference of the Parties will consider the question of sustainable use, including tourism, as one of the three themes for in-depth discussion. In preparation for this discussion, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), at its fourth meeting, considered the development of approaches and practices for the sustainable use of biological resources in the context of tourism and developed recommendation IV/7 with special emphasis on the interlinkages between tourism and biological diversity. Annexed to that recommendation is an assessment of the interlinkages between biological diversity and tourism, which SBSTTA proposes the Conference of the Parties should transmit to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its tenth session.

2. SBSTTA also recommended that the Conference of the Parties accept the invitation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as contained in its decision 7/3, to participate in the Commission's work programme on sustainable tourism development, with a view to contributing to international guidelines.

3. The present note has been prepared in consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to provide background information on ongoing international activities of relevance to the theme of tourism and sustainable use of biological diversity. Section II describes ongoing activities relevant to sustainable tourism development and biological diversity, section III presents summarized and updated information on the

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process on sustainable tourism under way within the framework of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and section IV sets out a number of further considerations that the Conference of the Parties may wish to take into account in its discussions and decisions on the theme of sustainable use, including tourism.

II. ONGOING INITIATIVES

A. UNEP activities on sustainable tourism

4. The goal of UNEP is to ensure that environmental issues affecting the tourism industry are taken into consideration in the decision-making process of central and local governments, the tourism industry and other stakeholders.

5. To this end, UNEP:

(a) Promotes the use of environmentally-sound practices in government and tourist industry;

(b) Focuses on the development and management of tourism in sensitive areas, such as national parks, protected areas and coastal zones;

(c) Supports the implementation of UNEP conventions related to tourism, such as the regional seas conventions and the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(d) Works in partnership with all stakeholders, in particular with:

(i) Relevant United Nations and intergovernmental organizations, especially UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization (WTO);

(ii) The tourism industry, and in particular with industry associations, such as the International Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA) and the International Hotel Environment Initiative (IHEI);

(iii) Non-governmental organizations, such as The Ecotourism Society and the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe, Conservation International, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, and the Centre for Tropical Conservation (RARE).

6. To attain these goals, UNEP has proposed a set of "Principles for implementation of sustainable tourism". In developing these principles, UNEP first surveyed the guidance for sustainable tourism presented by a variety of groups and organizations. In doing so, it identified the following most frequently cited elements of sustainable tourism:

(a) Putting sustainable development into practice in the development, management and integration of tourism with the wider economy, society and the environment;

(b) Protecting biodiversity, the environment and natural resources;

(c) Consulting with all stakeholders, particularly local communities on tourism; and ensuring that local communities have an equitable share in benefits resulting from tourism;

(d) Siting tourism operations and development appropriately to avoid damage to biodiversity and the environment;

(e) Operating within capacities of the environment, and available infrastructure;

(f) Using resources efficiently, and preventing pollution and waste.

7. UNEP then consolidated these guidelines into a set of draft principles. By promoting agreement on a consolidated set of principles, UNEP is seeking to encourage a movement from debate to more widespread action and adoption of sustainable tourism practices. The draft principles are a framework for issues to be covered in relation to tourism at the regional and ecosystem level. They address the key question of how to put sustainable development into practice in tourism activities - from mass tourism to nature-based and specialist tourism.

8. The full text of the proposed principles may be found at http://www.uneptie.org/tourism/draft_principles.html.

9. UNEP is also developing activities in partnership with other organizations. These activities include publications, workshops and conferences covering best practices for the tourism industry; the development and management of tourism in sensitive areas; and voluntary initiatives in the tourism industry. Many of these activities are undertaken with international and regional partner organisations.

10. Some examples of UNEP's publications on best practices in the tourism industry include:

(a) Environmental Action Pack for Hotels (1995), produced in cooperation with the International Hotel Association and the International Hotel Environment Initiative;

(b) Environmental Good Practice in Hotels: Case Studies (1997), published in cooperation with the International Hotel and Restaurant Association;

(c) How the Hotel and Tourism Industry Can Protect the Ozone Layer (1998), published in cooperation with the UNEP OzonAction Unit.

11. Forthcoming publications include:

(a) A manual to assist inclusion of environmental training in the curricula of hotel schools, and further publication of case studies of good environmental practices in hotels, in cooperation with the International Hotel and Restaurant Association;

(b) A manual on waste management practices in the tourism industry, produced in cooperation with the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA/LBA);

(c) A manual on technologies for renewable energy and eco-efficiency practices in the tourism industry, produced with the support of the French Ministry of Environment.

12. With regard to development and management of tourism in sensitive areas, UNEP carried out the following activities:

(a) Organization of meetings:

- (i) A regional workshop on sustainable coastal tourism (1995) with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP);
- (ii) An international conference on sustainable tourism in small island developing States and other islands (1998), held in Lanzarote, Spain, in cooperation with the World Tourism Organization;
- (iii) Regional workshops to evaluate the feasibility of introducing the Blue Flag scheme in the Asia-Pacific region (August 1999) and in the Caribbean region (December 1999) in cooperation with the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe, the World Tourism Organization, the UNEP GPA/LBA, the UNEP Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit and the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST);

(b) Publications:

- (i) Tourisme et environnement en Méditerranée (1995), published with the Blue Plan for the Mediterranean;
- (ii) Awards for improving the coastal environment: the example of the Blue Flag (1996), in cooperation with the World Tourism Organization and the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe. The objectives of the Blue Flag scheme are to improve understanding of the coastal environment and to promote the incorporation of environmental issues in the decision-making processes of local authorities and partners; and
- (iii) Coastal tourism in the Wider Caribbean Region: impacts and best practices (1997), and a CD-ROM Towards sustainable coastal tourism (1999), prepared as part of the UNEP/United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Caribbean Environmental Network (CEN) project.

13. Forthcoming activities relating to the development and management of tourism in sensitive areas include the publication of:

(a) An update of the 1992 guidelines for development of national parks and protected areas for tourism, in cooperation with the World Tourism Organization and IUCN;

(b) A manual on tourism management for World Heritage Site managers in Asia, in cooperation with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre;

(c) An information booklet on ecotourism, with The Ecotourism Society;
and

(d) The Blue Flag Feasibility Evaluation Kit, in cooperation with the
UNEP GPA/LBA, and the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe.

14. More information can be collected at the Division of Technology,
Industry and Economics, Division Office at <http://www.uneptie.org/>.

B. Tour Operator Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development

15. The Tour Operator Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development is
designed to address community and industry concerns about the impact of
tourism on the environment, as well as social, economic and cultural impacts,
and to improve the sustainability of the tourism industry.

16. This initiative has been developed for tour operators with the support
of UNEP, UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization, who are also full members
of the initiative. Under this international umbrella, tour operators are able
to respond to international agendas while creating a platform to develop ideas
and projects to address the environmental, social, economic and cultural
aspects of sustainable development within the tourism sector. The relation
between biodiversity and tourism is strongly embedded in the Initiative.

17. Through active participation in the Initiative and its activities, tour
operators are able to share information and develop skills that can lead to
significant economic, social and environmental benefits, as well as to
improvements in their businesses.

18. Members of the Initiative aim at incorporating best practice in
sustainable tourism into their businesses, in their internal company
operations and in the design of tours and external business relationships with
partners, suppliers and subcontractors. The Initiative focuses on action to
facilitate development and implementation of new tools, information and
practices to put sustainable tourism into practice.

19. Tour operators joining the Initiative undertake commitments to:

(a) Introducing environmental policy and management systems into their
operations;

(b) Monitoring and reporting on progress in implementing sustainable
tourism practices;

(c) Promoting sustainable tourism to suppliers, contractors and
customers.

20. More information and the application package can be obtained at UNEP
DTIE at unep.tie@unep.fr. For more information on the Initiative:
www.toinitiative.org.

C. International Coral Reef Initiative

21. The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) is an informal mechanism
that allows representatives of over 80 developing countries with coral reefs
to participate in equal partnership with major donor countries and development

banks, international environmental and development agencies, scientific associations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to decide on the best strategies to conserve the world's coral-reef resources, and to implement chapter 17 of Agenda 21, and other international conventions and agreements for the benefit of coral reefs and related ecosystems.

22. The ICRI Renewed Call to Action of 1998 notes that the deteriorating condition of coral reefs around the world continues to be a source of grave concern. Furthermore, improved monitoring data and detailed predictive studies presented at the International Tropical Marine Ecosystems Management Symposium indicate that, in the four years since the publication of the first ICRI Call to Action, the state of coral reefs and associated marine ecosystems has worsened significantly, partly due to tourism. Consequently, coral reef monitoring and conservation in relation to tourism activities need more attention and priority.

23. The ICRI network is supported by a global secretariat, which is currently hosted by the French Ministry of the Environment.

24. The agenda for ICRI has been expressed at two ICRI international workshops, held in 1995 and 1998, and seven regional workshops, held between 1995 and 1997. These have provided the ICRI partners with a clear listing of global and local problems facing reefs and a broad range of actions required to reverse damaging practices (see ICRI Action Plan at <http://www.environnement.gouv.fr/icri>).

25. A series of operational networks have been established to achieve progress on the ICRI Action Agenda. These include the ICRI Monitoring Network, ICRI Information Network (ICRIN) and the ICRI Tourism Network.

26. A strategy for an ICRIN information and awareness-raising campaign is being developed through ICRIN. Tourism was chosen as a pilot issue for the campaign, to be developed further by the ICRI secretariat in cooperation with the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics.

D. UNESCO and sustainable tourism

27. UNESCO hosts the World Heritage Convention. The objective of the World Heritage site management plan is to promote an intersectoral dialogue among stakeholders in tourism. Besides providing expertise for drawing up World Heritage site management plans, UNESCO supports specific projects such as the "tourism management in heritage cities" network, which seeks to stimulate information exchange on managing tourist flows and presenting heritage.

28. In addition, UNESCO is developing different sustainable projects for tourism, protecting fragile habitats from the negative impacts of tourism. These projects include:

(a) Sustainable tourism in the Sahara;

(b) The Slave Route and Silk Road initiatives in partnership with the World Tourism Organization;

(c) Multidisciplinary projects in Gabon and the Gulf of Guinea countries, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo;

(d) The Philippines Palawan Province project, which started with a series of workshops with local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and residents in the area to ascertain what they wanted from this development, the types of tourism most suited to the area and its outstanding natural resources, and the impact that such development could have on the environment and the various communities there.

29. The intergovernmental Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme of UNESCO promotes research and international cooperation on tourism activities that are biodiversity-friendly and benefit local cultures and economies. Through the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, which includes 368 sites in 91 countries recognized from their contribution to biodiversity conservation, sustainable development based on local participation and international cooperation, MAB national committees and the MAB secretariat conduct and support a number of practical field projects related to sustainable tourism and ecotourism. MAB also supports more theoretical studies on tourism and biodiversity, including cooperation with the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) and the private sector.

30. Lessons learned include the importance of consultation with all stakeholders concerned and of transparency as vital ingredients in any plan to develop sustainable tourism.

31. More information on UNESCO activities related to sustainable tourism can be obtained on the World Wide Web at <http://www.unesco.org>.

E. Other ongoing activities on tourism management and development

32. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), a global coalition of 75 Chief Executive Officers from all sectors of the travel and tourism industry, including accommodation, catering, entertainment, recreation, transportation and travel-related services, has undertaken to convince governments of the strategic and economic importance of travel and tourism, to promote environmentally compatible development and to eliminate barriers to the growth of the industry in accordance with the objectives of Agenda 21.

33. The objectives of the Marine Ecotourism Guidelines Project are to promote and provide guidance for more sustainable tourism activity in marine and coastal areas, and to encourage research and the networking of institutions and individuals interested in marine ecotourism. These guidelines are being prepared by The Ecotourism Society in conjunction with UNEP.

III. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

34. By paragraph 69 of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted at its special session for the purpose of the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 (resolution S-19/2, annex), the United Nations General Assembly the Commission on Sustainable Development to develop an action-oriented international programme of work on sustainable tourism in cooperation with the World Trade Organization, UNEP, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant bodies.

35. Accordingly, at its seventh session, in April 1999, the Commission, in its decision 7/3, adopted an international work programme on sustainable

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tourism development, to be reviewed in 2002. One element of that work programme is that Governments are urged to consider the ratification or adoption, and promote the implementation and enforcement, as appropriate, of standards or guidelines relevant to the travel and tourism industry. In the same decision, the Commission invited the Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity to contribute to the international guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development in vulnerable terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems and habitats of major importance for biological diversity and protected areas, including fragile mountain ecosystems.

36. During the first meeting of the ad-hoc open-ended informal working group on Tourism (WGT) held in Heredia, Costa Rica, on 20-21 January 2000, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity was designated as lead agency for "considering an exchange of experience and best practice on sustainable tourism development and biological diversity". As lead agency, the Secretariat would:

(a) Provide to WGT ready-made reports, data, information or any other inputs that could serve the objectives and tasks assigned to WTG members;

(b) Indicate the practical and realistic steps that could be taken by WGT members in order to make some progress towards the achievement of the objectives and for the accomplishment of the WGT tasks;

(c) Indicate an appropriate budget for undertaking tasks; and

(d) Identify possible sources of funding for each task.

IV. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

37. Taking into account SBSTTA recommendation IV/7 (including its proposal to transmit to the Commission on Sustainable Development its assessment of the interlinkages between biological diversity and tourism), the existing guidelines and ongoing initiatives described in section II above, and the points noted below, the Conference of Parties may wish to consider what further action, if any, should be taken in the light of the designation of the Secretariat as lead agency for the task noted in paragraph 36 above, and how the Convention process can provide inputs to the development of guidelines on sustainable tourism that are focused on the issue of biological diversity, in line with the ecosystem approach.

38. With respect to the tasks listed in paragraphs 36 (a)-(d) above, transmission of the SBSTTA assessment of the interlinkages between biological diversity and tourism would represent a contribution under subparagraph (a). The provision of case-studies by Parties, as recommended by SBSTTA at its fourth meeting would provide further useful information.

39. The following steps have been identified in response to the task referred to in paragraph 36 (b):

(a) Analysis and understanding of the sustainable use issues that need to be considered, and how they affect or are affected by tourism;

(b) Identification of the roles and responsibilities of each of the key stakeholders for successful implementation of programmes and actions on sustainable use;

(c) Development of practical guidance, backed up by case-studies, on ways to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and for benefit-sharing, in the context of tourism; and, in particular,

(d) Description of experiences and best practices on sustainable tourism development and biological diversity predominantly in vulnerable terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems and habitats of major importance for biological diversity, including fragile mountain systems.

40. In carrying out these activities, it is important to bear in mind that tourism involves diverse stakeholders, including: (i) the tourism industry, consisting of the tour operators who bring tourists to their destinations, the operators in destinations who provide accommodation, and tourism developers; (ii) local communities; (iii) local authorities in destinations; (iv) governments and (v) tourists themselves as consumers. To make effective progress toward sustainable tourism, all relevant stakeholders need to be involved.

41. In view of this, careful consideration needs to be given to the magnitude and resources required to carry out the tasks referred to in paragraphs 36 (c) and (d) above.
