International Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development

Tourism for sustainability

Are we tackling the challenges of tourism and climate change?

How to change unsustainable patterns of producing and consuming tourism services? How to raise awareness among tourists and professionals about the global impacts of tourism? What can we do to increase the economic benefits of tourism (especially for local communities) without harming the fragile environmental and social balances and, instead, using them as an opportunity for further development?

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The Marrakech Process

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation signed by all governments at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 called upon governments to “change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production”. The Plan specifically called for governments to promote the development of a 10-Year Framework Programme (10YFP) in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

The Marrakech Process, which was named after the city where the First International Expert Meeting on the 10YFP took place in 2003, refers to the international collective effort to develop the 10YFP. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) are the joint coordinators for the Marrakech Process and the development of the 10YFP.

What are the Task Forces?

To support the implementation of concrete activities, and to focus on specific themes of SCP, Task Forces have been created with participation of experts from developing and developed countries. The Marrakech Task Forces are voluntary initiatives led by countries that, in co-operation with other partners, commit themselves to carrying out a set of activities that support the implementation of specific projects of the Marrakech Process.
Why a Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development?

**Tourism is a major sector with global development impacts.**
Tourism is a significant economic and social force in the world, whose current scale and likely future growth have serious implications for local and global environments. Although this may bring opportunities for economic development and poverty alleviation, it will also introduce environmental and social impacts of tourism to areas which may have been unaffected by tourism development.

**Tourism depends on and affects the environment and society.**
Tourists are increasingly looking for attractive, unpolluted places to visit, and involvement with tourism can also make local people more aware of the need to conserve the environment. At the same time, in many tourism destinations, environmental, cultural and social impacts have become apparent, demanding policies, strategies and tools that can make tourism a more viable development option.

**Tourism has an enormous demonstration effect.**
Tourism and leisure are increasingly attractive. While on vacations individuals tend to learn from other cultures, be more sensitive and aware of global environmental issues, and also return home with elements of the lifestyles they experienced at host destinations.

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**Sustainable Tourism**
The term ‘sustainable tourism’ - meaning ‘tourism that is based on the principles of sustainable development’ - refers to a fundamental objective: to make all tourism more sustainable. Sustainable tourism development is not related only to specific market niches (e.g. ecotourism); as UNWTO defines “Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments”.

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**The French Initiative**
Committed to the Marrakech process and willing to lead a task force, the French government chose the sustainable tourism issue. Indeed France, the first tourism destination in the world, is granted with a unique natural and cultural heritage and a very diversified offer of tourism. For example France has developed rural tourism based on its rich “terroirs” as well as tourism relying on the exceptional biodiversity in the tropical forests and atolls of its overseas territories. Conservation of this heritage is a challenge, but first and foremost a chance to attract visitors and develop diversified tourism services. Meanwhile, the demand for a more sustainable tourism offer is growing among the French population.

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**Main tourism figures**
842 million international tourists in 2006; 1,5 billion the forecasted number of international tourists for 2020; 231 million jobs supported by travel and tourism; 10,4% the contribution of travel and tourism economy to global GDP (direct and indirect impact).

*Sources: WTTC and UNWTO*
Objectives and programme of work

The role of the Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development is to encourage participants in the Marrakech Process to implement actions that promote sustainable tourism, such as providing support tools and presenting existing initiatives that may inspire pilot projects and good practice in other countries. The following lists the focus areas of the Task Force:

- Increase awareness of the links between tourism and climate change. On the one hand to anticipate the impacts of climate change on tourist destinations, and on the other to give the tourism sector a sense of responsibility about its contribution to the greenhouse effect.

- Increase awareness of the impacts tourism has on the environment and biodiversity, and focus on prevention initiatives, notably in protected areas and ecologically sensitive areas.

- Protect and showcase the world’s cultural and natural heritage by promoting the sustainable management of resources on such sites and fostering employment within tourist destinations, particularly in developing countries.

- Local governance: there is a need to address all the parameters of local development related to tourism and their implications for all stakeholders.

Work in Progress

The Task Force has been officially created at the UNEP Governing Council in Dubai (in February 2006). Two high level meetings have been organised so far (September 2006 and March 2007, Paris) and a third meeting should take place in the fall of 2007. During those meetings almost 80 participants discussed the projects being developed and to be developed under the Task Force’s Programme of Work. Morocco and Costa Rica have already offered to organize some of the next meetings of the Task Force.
Within this framework, the work programme of the Task Force includes a number of projects and actions under the following activity areas:

- **Policy tools.** Work related with policy initiatives, standards and certification processes, international financing mechanisms, governance issues and policy tools.

- **Good practices.** Collection, classification and dissemination of good practices on sustainable tourism development.

- **Education and capacity building.** Development and dissemination of training manuals and e-learning tools focusing on the main stakeholders of the tourism value chain.

- **Strategies and pilot projects.** Work on CSER related issues; frameworks for national and regional sustainable tourism development strategies.

- **Information, communication and networking.** Dissemination of information, collaboration between websites, networking activities, sharing of good practices, and awareness activities.

How to manage tourism flows within the constraints of historical sites?

Travel for fun and shopping. Shouldn’t sustainability be an issue everywhere?
Examples of projects and activities

**Communication Campaign on Sustainable Holidays**

Tourism cannot truly become more sustainable unless consumers (tourists) consistently favour more sustainable destinations and activities in their purchasing decisions. Consumers play a direct and indirect role in supporting environmental conservation goals and in linking tourism to poverty alleviation. An increasing demand for more ‘sustainable’ tourism services and facilities can influence the performance of the private sector. Within this context, the communication campaign on sustainable holidays aims to raise awareness on responsible behaviours in holiday-making choices through a global campaign. The project is being developed by UNEP in partnership with the Brazilian Ministries of Tourism and Environment with the support of the French Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning. The expected outputs of the project include:

- A web site for the global information and communication campaign on responsible holidays
- Development of communication material to raise awareness for responsible holidays in a specific destination. Pilot project implementation in Brazil.

**Promoting Natural and Cultural Heritage as assets for Sustainable Tourism Development**

The heritage-based tourism development is a knowledge-intensive process that depends on the capacity of local actors (public authorities, business and the civil society) to design and manage sustainable tourism products. Within this framework the project is focusing on sharing of innovative experiences, and building capacity for both the private (especially small and medium enterprises) and the public sectors (local, regional and national level) for promoting natural and cultural heritage as assets for sustainable tourism development. The project is a joint initiative between UNEP, Costa Rica and the Central American Integration System (SICA) with the support of the French Ministry for Ecology, and Sustainable Development and Town and Country Planning (Regional Development). The expected outputs include:

- Training material
- A 3-day seminar in Costa Rica to educate trainers from the public and private sectors
- The establishment of a network to further disseminate the training material
Sustainable tourism in coastal areas

The world’s coastal regions are densely populated and environmentally vulnerable. They are subject to increasing pressure from many sources, including industrial development, urban expansion, the exploitation of marine resources and tourism. In many destinations unplanned coastal tourism development is the leading cause of the loss of many ecosystems and wetland habitats with significant but often unrecognized amenity values. Within this context, the project builds on the need to promote sustainable development of tourism in coastal areas through a participatory management approach that enriches the operational capacity of organizations, governments and individuals on sustainable tourism development and coastal area management. To this end, the project aims to provide practical tools to decision makers on planning and managing sustainable tourism in coastal areas.

The outputs of the project include:

- Implementation of the manual on a pilot project in a coastal destination.

The International Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development is chaired by the Interministerial Delegate for Sustainable Development. At the national level, the Marrakech process was an opportunity for France to create a national committee aiming at developing sustainable tourism issues in the national agenda. Led by the administration in charge of tourism, this multi-stakeholder committee implies relevant ministries and public agencies as well as representatives of the private sector, associations and academics. One of its first tasks is to compile a set of best practices. We hope more countries will create such national committees.

- French committee on sustainable tourism development

“Sustainable tourism is the only option for tourism development”.

- Carlos Benavides, Minister of Tourism, Republic of Costa Rica
  September 2006

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

- UNWTO
The Task Force at a glance

- 18 countries
- 17 International organisations, business associations and NGOs

Task Force Participants

18 Countries

Chair
France

Members
Bahamas Brazil Cape Verde
Cambodia China Costa Rica
Croatia Germany India
Madagascar Mali Morocco

Partner countries
Australia Jordan UK USA

International Organisations

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- European Commission (EC)
- The Central American Integration System (SICA)

NGOs

- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
- Rainforest Alliance
- The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)
- Tourism Concern
- ECOTRANS
- IUCN

International Business associations and companies

- International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)
- International Hotels and Restaurants Association
- Federation Universelle des Agences de Voyage
- Bureau International du Tourisme Social (BITS)
- Tour Operators Initiative (TOI)

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http://www.veilleinfotourisme.fr/taskforce