

**WTO/UNEP International Conference 'Sustainable Tourism in the Islands of the Asia-Pacific Regions'**

**Hainan Declaration – December 8, 2000**

Islands differ greatly in size, climate, terrain, biodiversity, access, and in human history, habitation, culture, land tenure, legal systems and economic activity, including tourism. For many islands of the Asia-Pacific Region, tourism is the main economic activity, in terms of both income and employment generation. Due to their relatively small size, islands are quite vulnerable from both an environmental and a social point of view. This vulnerability may put at risk the long-term sustainability of tourism-based economic development of the islands, if tourism is not appropriately planned, developed and managed.

The Conference on Sustainable Tourism in the Island of the Asia-Pacific Region, as the previous one held in Capri, Italy, for Mediterranean Islands in May 2000, was intended as a regional follow up to the WTO/UNEP Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Small Island Developing States and Other Islands, held in Lanzarote, Spain 1998.

The aim of the Conference was to examine the various aspects that need to be considered by governments and the private sector if they wish tourism to contribute to the overall economic, social and environmental sustainability of their territories. This means developing a tourism infrastructure and a tourism industry that are sustainable in the long term, maximising the social and economic benefits and reducing the negative impacts on the environment.

**The Hainan Conference was convened from December 6 to 8, 2000, in the Gloria Resort in Sanya, organised by WTO and UNEP, and with the support of UNESCO, the China National Tourism Administration and the Hainan Provincial government. Over 100 participants from 23 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and representatives of 7 inter-governmental organizations, agreed to the following conclusions, as:**

**Critical Issues for Sustainable Island Tourism Development in the Asia and Pacific Region:**

1 - There is no other economic activity that cuts across so many sectors, levels and interests as tourism. There is a vital need, therefore to **integrate planning for tourism with national development and resource management plans.**

**Stakeholders:**

2 - Sustainable tourism in Asia-Pacific islands requires effective **partnerships** between the governments, tourism industry, landholders and land managers, and local communities.

3 - **Governments** play a critical role through their institutional leadership, guaranteeing stakeholders' participation. The Governments' role is also essential in the establishment of regulatory and policy frameworks, ensuring their enforcement, the application of appropriate economic instruments (including the removal of environmentally perverse subsidies), and monitoring environmental quality.

4 - The **private sector** provides the expertise to establish, market and operate economically sustainable tourism enterprises. The tourism industry has a critical role in the development, promotion and adoption of environmentally appropriate technologies,

management practices, planning and land use (including site selection), marketing (including eco-labeling) and the education of the tourists. When planning tourism, consideration should be given to cater for each particular group/market segment that is considered appropriate for the type of products offered. Where necessary, promotional brochures should allocate reasonable space to producing information about the country's social, cultural and environmental resources.

5 - **Landholders, protected area managers and environmental NGOs** maintain the environmental integrity of the natural resource and natural attractions.

6 - **Local communities** maintain cultural identity and social fabrics, and provide local cultural opportunities for tourists and local economic opportunities for residents. One of the failures of tourism planning in the past has been the lack of attention given to local populations who are not consulted regarding decisions which have long term direct impacts on their lives and futures.

7 - It is important therefore that **local people** understand that they are the primary stakeholders in the expansion and maintenance of a successful tourism industry. That understanding will require ongoing community participation and educational programmes at all levels that explain the role of tourism vis-à-vis the environment and the economy. More importantly, it is the direct knowledge that they are participating in the environmental conservation of the country (and globally) and benefiting economically from tourism.

**Sensitive areas:**

8 - Particular conditions apply for tourism in World Heritage and other protected areas. Tourism in these areas should occur only in compliance with a **management plan** which recognises the conservation of heritage values as the primary land management goal, and which includes environmental assessment, effective monitoring of environmental as well as social and economic indicators, and continuous assessment of the success or otherwise of visitor and resource management tools and actions.

9 - As a further tool for resource management, **zoning** within these areas can indicate where tourism may be permitted and physical development located and, even more important, where it may not be located.

**Other issues:**

10 - **Responsible energy and water use** is fundamental to sustainable development and a sustainable future. A broad range of those sustainable technology and management alternatives is available – tourism planners in developing countries in the Asia Pacific Region need more access to it. One way of achieving this technology transfer is through web based **networks and exchange mechanisms**.

11 - A global programme of '**greening**' **tourism accommodation and facilities** needs to be expanded. This will ultimately result in substantial cost savings for the hotel sector and will contribute to better awareness of the public in general of environmental measures which can, and hopefully in the future will, be taken to attain sustainable tourism development.

12 - As tourism is an information-intensive industry, its success depends on the educational level of host communities. Improving access to, and the quality of, **basic education** in destination areas should therefore be a priority. Likewise, extensive investment in **professional training and capacity building** at local level is essential to ensure equitable distribution of its benefits to local populations.

13 - Improving and building on existing information and understanding is an important aspect of resource management for sustainable development. A comprehensive and multidisciplinary **scientific research programme** in all aspects of tourism, supported by well-established and globally linked institutions, is part of any sustainable tourism development plan. **Evaluation and review** also are essential parts of the cycle of monitoring programmes. This helps to keep programmes 'on track', allow adjustments to be made in light of changing circumstances, and help to guide the efficient and effective use of both the public and private sector resources.

14 - Sustainability **indicators** are useful tools. They are helpful in linking monitoring programmes with the evaluation process and, when linked to targets, they provide criteria by which to judge progress.

15 - The conference endorses the proposed **UNEP "Principles for Implementation of Sustainable Tourism"**, the **WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**, and the **Dakar Principles for Tourism in World Heritage Areas**.

16 - The underlying message of the conference therefore is that a viable, diverse and competitive tourism industry cannot be developed, and certainly not sustained, without giving full attention to the above three subject areas. **Improving the quality of life** and developing an **economically viable and sustainable nature, heritage and community-based tourism industry** are, in fact, mutually dependent upon, and supportive of, **protecting the Region's resources**.

17 - As societies develop, our 'window' to the world is becoming larger. If we are to live together in the same global community of the future we must learn to accept each other's differences, be tolerant of each other's beliefs, become knowledgeable about each other's values. Through tourism we can promote interaction, friendship, increase awareness of environmental protection and promote the future prospects of **world peace**.

18 - Finally, the Conference recognised that Hainan Province has a wide spectrum of tourism resources that can be converted into sustainable tourism products, benefiting a large proportion of the local population. It also noted the opportunity offered by the forthcoming **Hainan Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development** to be executed by the World Tourism Organisation, and the need to implement its recommendations.

19 - The Conference participants expressed their thanks to WTO, UNEP, UNESCO, the Hainan Provincial Government and the Chinese Tourism authorities for the excellent hospitality and facilities given to make this Conference a success.