

WTO/UNEP International Conference on Sustainable Tourism in the Islands of the Asia-Pacific Region
Sanya, Island of Hainan, China, 6-8 December 2000

The Hainan Conference was convened from December 6 to 8, 2000, in the Gloria Resort in Sanya, organised by WTO, UNEP and with the support of UNESCO, the China National Tourism Administration and the Hainan Provincial government. It attracted over 100 participants from 23 countries and 7 inter-governmental organizations.

The conference, 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.

Three specific subjects were discussed during the Conference, considered to be the fundamental building blocks of the tourism industry for small islands and states in Asia and the Pacific. These were:

1. The application of regulatory and voluntary frameworks for the sustainable development and management of tourism - policies, laws, regulations, eco-labels, certification schemes, environmental management systems, codes of conduct.
2. Environmentally sound building design and operational technologies - management of water and energy resources, treatment of solid and liquid waste, combining traditional construction materials and techniques with modern technologies, land use planning and landscaping of tourism facilities.
3. The socio-cultural issues of island tourism, considering the role of local communities – the involvement of local communities in the decision making process, community based tourism, human resources development, the preservation of local culture and identity.

The **opening ceremony** began at 9 am on December 6, 2000. Mr. He Guangwei, Chairman of the China National Tourism Administration, opened the event and welcomed all participants, highlighting the importance of the conference and the commitment of CNTA to support the island's initiative to improve as an international destination. Mr. Francesco Frangialli, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), in his opening speech, thanked all conference partners, recalled the main conclusions of the previous two conferences, and announced the signature of the Tourism Master Plan for Hainan Province, also referring to the WTO Global Code of Ethics as a reference for the next day's events. In sequence, Mr. Yoshihiro Natori, Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), called attention to the various important other organizations attending, such as the World Health Organization, ESCAP, and the

Hong Kong Hotel Association. He reminded participants of the impressive growth in tourism arrivals in Asia/Pacific, specially in Malaysia, Vietnam, Korea and Japan, and he raised the issue of tourist education, especially at World Heritage sites, recalling that Asia and the Pacific are also important outbound tourism sources. Mr. Wang Xiaofeng, Governor of Hainan Province, then expressed his thanks for the impressive number and qualifications of attending specialists. Calling attention to the fact that Hainan is the first national Ecological Province, he stated his belief that the province will be a successful model for sustainable tourism in the 21st century, and invited all attending to enjoy the island's scenery and folk customs.

In the **first plenary session** on December 6, Mr. Eugenio Yunis, WTO's Head of the Sustainable Development of Tourism program, listed the reasons why islands can be considered extremely sensitive environments for tourism development, and the context under which Hainan province in particular stands. He highlighted the need for specific strategies and solutions, and concluded by explaining the conditions for achieving sustainable tourism in islands of the Asia-Pacific region. Mr. Oliver Hillel, Tourism Programme Coordinator for UNEP's Division of Industry, Technology and Economics, then proposed UNEP's Principles for Implementation of Sustainable Tourism as complementing guidelines to WTO's Code of Ethics, mentioning guidelines for integration of tourism into overall policy, listing policy tools, management procedures, and conditions for success. He also called the participants' attention to further action needed by governments and industry. Mr. Ryuji Yamakawa, Chief of ESCAP's Tourism Unit in the Division of Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development, provided a global overview of the tourism industry, and outlined ESCAP's Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Asian and Pacific region, as well as its relations to the Network of Asia-Pacific Education and Training Institutes in Tourism (APETIT). The Hainan province's Vice-Governor, Mr. Li Dongsheng, then proceed to outline the conditions that allowed Hainan to become the outstanding destination it is, and the main challenges ahead, stating clear guidelines for its sustainable development. At this point, a brief interlude allowed attending authorities to sign the commitment to produce the Hainan Province Tourism Master Plan.

The **second plenary session** consisted in presentations by the four invited experts:

- Mr. Ralph Buckley, of Australia's Griffith University, WTO consultant, presented a broad list of tools for regulatory and voluntary frameworks for sustainable tourism development in islands. Policies, legislation and regulation were illustrated with examples of customs, planning instruments and EIAs, pollution control, and protected areas regulations. Illustrations of voluntary activities, such as audits, labels, and codes were shown.
- Prof. David Harrison, from the University of North London and UNEP's consultant, outlined portrayed the complex social, political and cultural environments in which sustainable tourism has to be set up. Decision-making mechanisms within an organization framework were discussed at national and local levels, and a case study in Turtle Island, in Fiji, was shown.
- Mr. John Robinson, presented the rapid changes within sustainable tourism, as a global "virus". He compared two hypothetical islands, A and B, with differing levels of local participation and involvement, highlighting the importance of factors such as planning participation and performance for success as a tourism destination.

- Finally, Mr. Francois Martel provided participants with a clear example of successful use of sustainable tourism as part of a conservation plan, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Income generation, capacity building and awareness raising were incorporated into a 7-year strategy where ecotourism is an essential part in at least 7 villages presented.

Delegates then departed for two optional hour-long **technical visits** to Ya Long Bay, the Shell Museum and Butterfly Valley, ending the day at a welcome reception with cultural performances at Gloria Resort's gardens.

Day 2, December 7, 2000

The second day was reserved to presentations and discussions about three of the conference themes: 1 and 2 in the morning, and 3 in the afternoon. Presentations for 1 and 2 were merged, as cases about frameworks for sustainable tourism management were largely combined with product design and operational technologies.

- Mr Ismail Firag, Deputy Director of Planning and Development of the Maldives Ministry of Tourism, presented a paper on "Tourism Industry in the Maldives", a broad and well-prepared outline of the challenges and accomplishments of this island nation's progress in sustainable tourism, ranging from statistics for tourism, to land tenure issues and management directives, legislation and management measures.
- Dr. Sang-hoon Oh, Executive Director for the Organizing Committee for Korea's World Festival for Island Cultures on Jeju Island, spoke about the importance of this festival, in economic and cultural terms. He also called attention to the results obtained in the first version in 1998, to renovate the island as a destination, and to foster cultural exchange between indigenous cultures. As the island prepares for its second version in 2001, sustainability becomes a central concern.
- Mr. Alberto Lim, from El Nido Resort in the Philippines, outlined the social and environmental contributions of these two unique small-scale resorts (Miniloc and Lagen Island), set in a haunting scenario of limestone cliffs. Operationally and in terms of outreach through its El Nido Foundation, Mr. Lim presented several aspects of best practices, which have granted these operations several awards.
- Dr. Omar Al-Saghier, from BirdLife International, in the Republic of Yemen, presented the case of Socotra Island, where tourism planning happened within the framework of the GEF-funded Socotra Biodiversity Project. Zoning, extensive species inventory, land use planning and an analysis of tourism potentials were described, as well as the role of the government and private sector, ending with a brief summary of the challenges ahead.
- Dr. Eckhard Weissflog of GFR Consulting in Germany spoke about Waste and Sewage Recycling in large Hotels and Tourist Resorts, outlining a concept for integrated waste management systems. With a case study in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, and the partner's experience, Mr. Weissflog explained in basic technical terms how reduction and recycling of waste output, even if large resort areas, can be achieved, inviting destination managers in the Asia-Pacific region to consider these technologies at the planning stage of major developments.
- Mr. Jean-Marie Leclerc, Manager of the Nikko Hotel and representing the Hong Kong Hotel Association, spoke about his career in sustainable hotel management, and the results achieved by the cooperation between the Hong Kong Hotel Association and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Environmental

Management Systems for Hotels, assessment procedures, and certification using the ISO 14000 system were described in practical terms, and the significant experience of these partners was offered for exchange to participants.

- Mr. Ronaldo Tiotuico, Regional Region III) Planning Director of the Department of Tourism of the Philippines, outlined a strategy for community-based tourism in Sta. Juliana, Capas, Tarlac, where proximity to a volcano (the well-known Mt. Pinatubo), with serious consequences in previous eruptions, was actually converted into a tourism attraction using the local population's creativity, with the support of the Filipino government.
- Ms. Monina Flores, Enterprise Coordinator for the USAID Coastal Resource Management Project in the Philippines, presented the evolution of the award-winning ecotourism product "Olango Birds and Seascape Tour", a community-based initiative in Cebu. From participative planning to distribution negotiations and full ownership and marketing links, the case is a valuable reference for other practitioners.
- Prof. P.P Wong, from the National University of Singapore's Department of Geography, spoke about the case of Gili Islands in Lombok, Indonesia, a network of small-scale operations, comparing facilitating and restrictive factors for each island. Lessons learned in the process were summarized, such as gradual domination of outsiders, and the role of external parties, ending with the conclusion that small-scale tourism has a strong potential as a tool for sustainable development under these circumstances.
- Mr. William Wong, lecturer at the Macau Institute of Tourism Studies, highlighted the strengths and challenges in tourism education in this island under Portuguese administration until 99, when it joined China. Mr. Wong outlined the conditions involving competition among higher education institutes, the cultural component of student behavior, and the creative ways in which the Institute addresses the limitations, such as international links to the EU, project-oriented training, and public awareness campaigns.
- Dr. Yurie Kaizu, from the Japan Ecotourism Society, spoke about the case of Iriomote Island in Okinawa, where the local Ecotourism Association supported a process of community activation and empowerment, through the recognition and awareness of the value of tourism resources for locals, and the role of locals in monitoring impacts.
- Dr. Geoffrey Wall, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Studies from Canada's Waterloo University, presented an overview of tourism in Hainan. As the island has unique natural and cultural attractions, and as major steps towards sustainability are concretized, some challenges still remain to be tackled to generate an enabling environment for sustainable tourism. Among them, clarification of concepts and measurement standards, involvement of private sector, the role of ethnic minorities and addressing the needs of international tourists.
- Mr. Ary Suhandi, Conservation International's Ecotourism Coordinator for Indonesia, outlined the case of the Togeian Island ecotourism product in Central Sulawesi, another award-winning destination where community involvement was achieved with the support of international NGOs, working in partnership with local business networks, the tourism industry and local government. Specific results, milestones and statistics were shared with participants on economic, social and environmental indicators, as well as a discussion on methods used in this case.

- J.K Patterson-Edward, from Sughanti Devadason Marine Research Institute in Tamil Nadu, India, described the case of Rameswaran, an island in the Southeast coast, discussing the evolution and the roles of several partners such as indigenous groups, guides, hotel owners, local commerce and fisher communities involved in this product, as well as the socio-economic circumstances and cultural consequences. Recommendations for sustainable tourism development in this case were shared with the audience.
- Finally, H.E V. Radha Krishnan, Minister of Tourism of Sri Lanka, briefly told participants about the trends and challenges of tourism development in the Central province, outlining the processes and mechanisms his government is putting in place to support sustainable development.

Day 3, Friday 8 December , 2000, was reserved to presentations about management of visitation to World Heritage sites in the Asia-Pacific region. A broad outline of World Heritage principles and mandates, the World Heritage Convention and the threats before the various partners addressing this issue was presented by Feng Jing, Programme Specialist for East Asia at UNESCO's World Heritage Center. In sequence, Mr, Neil Clifton, conservation specialist of the World Commission on Protected Areas in New Zealand, presented an overview of the situation of the 125 sites in the region, highlighting the need for management plans, monitoring programmes, local population involvement procedures and capacity building at the local level, among others. Several case studies followed:

- Ms. Zuo Xioaping, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Construction, and Mr. Yang Rui, Deputy Director of the Tsinghua University's Institute of Resources and Tourism Development, spoke about issues and solutions in tourism development at Mt. Taishan National Park;
- Ms. Sri Andajani, from the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, Directorate General of Nature Protection, compared the cases of Komodo, Ujung Kulon and Lorentz National Parks, discussing visitor management, development strategies and industry partnerships;
- Mr. Nguyen Thi Kim Hoa, from Ha Long Bay World Heritage' management department, told the audience about the challenge of managing a conservation site in a vigorous economic development zone. Urbanization, facilitated access, infrastructure development and increased tourism demand put added pressure on site managers as they try to develop partnerships with industry and other stakeholders.
- Prof. Juanita Liu of the University of Hawaii's School of Travel Industry Management discussed a Tourism Management Information System developed to support decision making in the island, as part of which several tools such as resident opinion surveys, and tourist attractivity and travel motivations assessments were developed and tested.
- Finally, Mr. Nelson Eddie Paulias, Executive Officer of the East New Britain Tourist Bureau in Papua New Guinea, described strategies and results obtained in his administration, under the circumstances of this unique region. Guidelines for popular participation, as well as training and external assistance needs, were discussed.

The **closing session** consisted of summaries of main points raised in the three days, and a statement named the "Hainan Declaration" was read and approved with minor additions, already incorporated in the attached version. Closing remarks were made

by Mr. Han Lixin, Deputy Director of the Hainan Provincial Tourism Administration, WTO's Secretary General, Mr. Francesco Frangialli, and UNEP's Tourism Program Coordinator Oliver Hillel. In the afternoon, participants enjoyed **a visit to Nanshan Cultural Zone**, a cultural and religious theme park and event center receiving thousands of international and Chinese visitors, having been awarded the first ISO 14000 certificate as a tourism demonstration area. At the site, a **dinner with cultural performances** was enjoyed by participants as a farewell gift.