
General Assembly



Dist.: General
18.June 2003
Original: English
Word count: 7353

Fifty-eight session

Item 12 of the Provisional Agenda.

Report of the Economic and Social Council

**Assessment of the results achieved in realizing aims and objectives of the
International Year of Ecotourism**

Note by the Secretary General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits to the members of the General Assembly a report prepared by the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/40 of 30 July 1998 and General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/200 of 15 December 1998.

Executive Summary

The following report was prepared by the World Tourism Organization in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/40 and General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/200. It outlines the activities undertaken by States members and major international organizations in preparation for, and during the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE). The report presents, in its first part, all the activities carried out by WTO, UNEP and other international organizations in preparation for and during the IYE. In a second part, this report synthesises the activities undertaken by governments in the framework of the International Year of Ecotourism. This information is structured according to six main themes: national policy, activities and publications, stakeholders participation and support, awareness, regulation and cooperation. The last part of the report provides detailed information on follow-up activities and outlines recommendations for further action.

A. Introduction

1. This report responds to the request made to WTO by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution A/RES/53/200) and the Economic and Social Council (Resolution 1998/40). It concerns:

- “(a) Programmes and activities undertaken by Governments and interested organisations during the International Year of Ecotourism;
- (b) An assessment of the results achieved in realising the aims and objectives of the Year, particularly in terms of encouraging ecotourism in developing countries;
- (c) Recommendations to further advance the promotion of ecotourism within the framework of sustainable development.”

Background of the International Year of Ecotourism

2. The United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution A/RES/53/200, proclaimed the year 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. The 7th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-7) held in New York in April 1999 gave a mandate to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to assume responsibility for the IYE, and adopted a resolution inviting Governments, the UN and NGOs to organise activities in preparation for the IYE.

3. The text proclaiming 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism referred specifically to Agenda 21 adopted in Rio in 1992. All states were invited to contribute to the IYE by discussion papers and own activities, in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of ecotourism as a contribution to sustainable development, and in particular for the less developed countries.

4. In the preparation of and during the International Year, WTO and UNEP aimed at involving all the actors in the field of ecotourism, with the following four objectives in mind:

- (i) Generate greater awareness among public authorities, the private sector, the civil society and consumers regarding ecotourism’s capacity to contribute to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in natural and rural areas, and the improvement of standards of living in those areas.
- (ii) Disseminate methods and techniques for the planning, management, regulation and monitoring of ecotourism to guarantee its long-term sustainability.
- (iii) Promote exchanges of successful experiences in the field of ecotourism.
- (iv) Increase opportunities for the efficient marketing and promotion of ecotourism destinations and products on international markets.

5. The Official Launching Ceremony of the International Year of Ecotourism 2002 took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 28 January 2002. The event

was attended by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Fréchette, WTO Secretary-General, Francesco Frangialli, UNEP Executive Director, Klaus Töpfer, Simone de Comarmond, the Seychelles Minister of Tourism and Transport who chaired the session, Leticia Navarro, the Mexican Minister of Tourism, and Megan Epler Wood, then President of The International Ecotourism Society. It also involved the participation of several government ministers, representatives of intergovernmental organisations, members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the UN, and representatives of leading industry associations and non-governmental groups.

B. Activities undertaken by WTO, UNEP and other international organizations

6. The World Tourism Organization undertook various activities in preparation for and during the IYE at different levels. These activities are the following:

(i) WTO recommendations:

In line with the first three objectives, WTO recommended its 139 Member States, in September 2000, to undertake activities at the national and local levels, such as:

- (a) define, strengthen and disseminate as appropriate, a National Strategy and specific programmes for the sustainable development and management of ecotourism;
- (b) provide technical, financial and promotional support for, and facilitate the creation and operation of small and medium size firms;
- (c) set up compulsory and/or voluntary regulations regarding ecotourism activities, particularly in what refers to the environmental and socio-cultural sustainability;
- (d) establish national and/or local committees for the celebration of IYE, involving all the stakeholders relevant to this activity;
- (e) inform the WTO Secretariat of the activities planned for 2002 requesting, if appropriate, whatever support they deem necessary.

7. During 2001 and 2002, more than 50 Member States sent information on their national activities, published in the WTO IYE 2002 website. The second part of this report gives details on these activities.

(ii) Regional conferences

8. Ten regional WTO conferences were successfully organized between March 2001 and April 2002 to exchange experiences, examine problems, promote cooperation nationally, regionally and internationally, and identify future challenges. These conferences were structured according to the same four themes of the World Ecotourism Summit:

Theme 1: Ecotourism planning and product development: the sustainability challenge

Theme 2: Monitoring and regulation of ecotourism: evaluating progress towards sustainability

Theme 3: Marketing and promotion of ecotourism: reaching sustainable consumers

Theme 4: Costs and benefits of ecotourism: a sustainable distribution among all stakeholders.

9. These preparatory meetings were held in Mozambique for Africa, in Brazil for the Americas, in Kazakhstan for CIS countries, in Austria for Europe, in Greece for Mediterranean Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, in the Seychelles for island destinations, in Algeria for countries with desert areas, in the Maldives for the Asia-Pacific region, in Moscow for Russia and neighbouring countries and in Fiji for South Pacific islands.

10. In total, over 3,000 stakeholders, representing public sector tourism and environmental authorities, non-governmental organisations, ecotourism businesses, academic institutions and independent experts, participated in these preparatory meetings, where some 200 case studies were presented.

11. WTO also organised, jointly with UNEP, a Web-Conference on Sustainable Development of Ecotourism during April 2002, in which nearly 1,000 people from 88 countries participated. The prime objective of the conference was to provide easy access for a wide range of stakeholders involved in ecotourism to exchange experiences and voice comments, especially for those who had not been able to attend the regional preparatory conferences that had taken place previously.

12. In order to contribute to the preparation of the World Ecotourism Summit, UNEP organized or participated in preparatory events involving over 3,000 stakeholders. These meetings were held in India for NGO and grassroots organizations (with Ecological Tourism in Europe), in Belize for Central America (with The International Ecotourism Society - TIES), in Seychelles for Small Island Developing States and other small islands (with WTO), in India for South Asia (with TIES), in Peru for South America (with TIES), in Thailand for Southeast Asia, (with TIES), in Kenya for East Africa (with TIES), in Sweden for the Arctic Circle (with TIES), and in Austria for Europe (with WTO).

13. The experiences and results from all these regional meetings and the Web-Conference were used as a base of discussions at the World Ecotourism Summit in Quebec, Canada on the 19-22 May 2002.

Note: All final reports and conclusions of these conferences and seminars are available on the IYE Web page:

<http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE/events.htm>

(iii) The World Ecotourism Summit

14. The Summit was the principal event to mark 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism, and the culmination of one-and-a-half-year long preparatory process. It was an initiative of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP). It was hosted by Tourisme Québec and the Canadian Tourism Commission.

15. It was successfully held in Quebec City, Canada from 19 to 22 May, 2002, with the participation of 1,169 delegates from 132 different countries, representing public, private, NGO, academic and research institutions, intergovernmental, national and international development and aid agencies, as well as local and indigenous communities and individual experts. Among the participants, there were 30 Ministers of State and senior officials from WTO, UNEP, UNDP, UNCTAD, UNESCO, CBD, ILO, GEF, Inter-American Development Bank and the European Union.

16. The main outcome of the Summit is the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism, a document that was prepared through wide consultation at the Summit and contains general guidelines, as well as stakeholder-specific recommendations for the sustainable development of ecotourism. The final version of the Quebec Declaration and a comprehensive Final Report, including the summaries of the regional, thematic and stakeholder-specific sessions of the Summit, was published in print and is also available in the Internet (www.ecotourism2002.org). These publications have been submitted to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, as official documents. More than 10,000 copies of the Quebec Declaration have so far been distributed at numerous events, including WSSD.

(iv) Other activities:

17. In line with objective 4, the World Tourism Organization took part in various fairs and published a set of market studies on ecotourism.

(a) Ecotourism activities at Tourism and Trade Fairs

18. Besides all the preparatory conferences and seminars and the World Ecotourism Summit, WTO participated in special ecotourism activities or workshops at various tourism and trade fairs:

- *Reisepavillon* (Hanover, January 2002): WTO, jointly with the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) convened the Forum International with the participation of public authorities, ecotourism companies and experts. WTO and GTZ subsidised the participation of more than 50 small suppliers of ecotourism products and services from 20 developing countries.
- *FITUR* (Madrid, February 2002): WTO organised a special Session on Ecotourism for Latin American Member States. FITUR, since its beginning, represents a meeting place for public and private organisations of Latin American countries. Ecotourism development and management is a key factor to assure a sustainable development of tourism in Latin America, and this region is a major supplier of ecotourism products and destinations for the European outbound ecotourism market. The special relevance of this meeting was also confirmed by the high number of tourism professionals (approximately 200) who participated in it.

- *International Adventure Travel and Outdoor Sports Exhibition* (Chicago, February 2002): The IATOS exhibition is a specialised tourism event that attracts professionals and public interested in the adventure travel, ecotourism, outdoor sports and other related tourism activities. WTO supported the event, participated as exhibitor and delivered a presentation at a parallel ecotourism conference.
- *ITB International Tourism Fair* (Berlin, March 2002): In connection with the International Year of Ecotourism, 2002, the 2002 edition of ITB included a special “Sustainable Travel Exchange - Travel with Sense” exhibition, at which WTO participated. It featured a wide range of initiatives and tourism attractions that emphasize environmental and social sustainability. Visitors found initiatives by international tour operators and smaller suppliers too, as well as model tourism products from over 50 countries.
- *EXPO-ECOTURISMO 2002, Ecotourism Exhibition and Trade Show* (10-11 September 2002, Caracas, Venezuela): WTO supported the event, participated as exhibitor and delivered a presentation on the results of the World Ecotourism Summit.

(b) Ecotourism Market Study Series:

19. In order to evaluate the trends and size that characterise the main ecotourism generating markets, the World Tourism Organization published seven pioneer country reports on the following markets: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK and USA. This is a comparative study; therefore, in each country a common definition of ecotourism and a similar methodology have been used.

(v) Other special publications for the IYE

(a) WTO Publications

20. In order to contribute to the dissemination of good practices world-wide and of existing recommendations related to ecotourism, WTO prepared or contributed to special publications for the IYE:

- *Compilation of Good Practices in the Sustainable Development of Ecotourism: 55 case studies from 39 countries*, presented in a systematic form, drawing lessons that can be applied at other destinations. It is the second volume within the series of Good Practices published in the area of Sustainable Development of Tourism. The sustainability aspects are further detailed according to specific elements of ecotourism such as: conservation, community involvement, interpretation and education, as well as environmental management practices.
- *Guidelines for the Sustainable Development and Management of Tourism in National Parks and Protected Areas* (revised edition, jointly with UNEP and IUCN). These guidelines aim to build an understanding of protected area tourism, and its

management. They provide both a theoretical structure and practical guidelines for managers.

- *International Ecotourism Guidelines* (WTO sponsored and contributed to this publication by The International Ecotourism Society). This book incorporates the latest research and techniques available, providing guidance from the day that an idea is conceptualized to the time when the ecolodge is built and operating. This book is an invaluable resource for anyone associated with ecolodges or other nature-based accommodations and facilities
- *Final Report of the World Ecotourism Summit*. This publication contains the summaries of the preparatory conferences, the conclusions of all Summit sessions, the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism and other technical documents presented at the event.
- *Compilation of Good Practices in Small Ecotourism Businesses*. Published in 2003, this third volume within the WTO series of Good Practices contains 64 case studies from 47 countries.

(b) UNEP Publications

- *The UNEP Manual for the International Year of Ecotourism*, containing orientation for interested parties to collaborate with the Year. The Manual has been posted on UNEP website.
- A double issue of the “*Industry and Environment review*” on Ecotourism, including articles presenting successful ecotourism experience from all parts of the world.
- A handbook: “*Ecotourism: Principles, Practices and Policies for Sustainability*”, with basic background data and references for governments and practitioners, jointly produced with TIES.
- A CD-ROM, published jointly with WTO, distributed at the World Ecotourism Summit, with all preparatory conference reports, keynote addresses and 72 presentations from delegates.

(vi). WTO Website

21. A special page has been created on the WTO Web-site for IYE related activities:

<http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE-Main-Menu.htm>

22. This page, regularly updated, contains all the material regarding the activities related to the IYE.

(vii) WTO events

23. WTO has also supported several international, regional and national ecotourism events during 2001 and 2002, in which WTO representatives delivered technical presentations. In the national conferences that have taken place after the Summit (in Sri

Lanka, Bulgaria, Hungary, Spain, Venezuela, Rumania, Brazil, Portugal) WTO has assisted governments in adapting the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism to the particular conditions of each country, and thus helped to implement the Summit's recommendations. In the following regional and international events WTO promoted the application of the IYE results to specific ecotourism-related issues and programmes:

- ECOAQUA - International Conference on Ecotourism in Water Areas
16-19 October 2002, Mondariz-Balneario, Galicia, Spain
- 2002 Ecotourism Association of Australia International Conference (with UNEP)
21-25 October 2002, Cairns, Tropical North Queensland, Australia. This was the closing event for UNEP's activities. The Cairns Charter on Partnerships for Ecotourism seeks to support the establishment and operation of ecotourism partnerships.
- VIII Conference of the Parties of the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands
19 November 2002, Valencia, Spain
- IATOS Conference on Ecotourism and Adventure Travel
19-20 February 2003, Chicago, USA
- Symposium on Natural Resource Conservation and Economic Development in the Congo Basin: The Role of Ecotourism
21 February 2003 Washington D.C., USA
- Workshop on ecotourism development at the National Park and World Heritage Site of Ahaggar and Tassili
10-11 March 2003, Djanet, Algeria

(viii) Other global projects linked to the IYE

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as part of its mandate within the international programme on sustainable tourism development under the Commission on Sustainable Development process, has developed a set of international guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development. The draft guidelines, together with a booklet containing their main features, were presented at the World Ecotourism Summit in May 2002. Afterwards, the guidelines have been tested through three case studies for their applicability and effectiveness. The draft guidelines will be transmitted for adoption, as well as recommendations for future work to be undertaken on this issue, to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will take place in Kuala Lumpur in April 2004.
- The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has been engaged in various initiatives that are linked to ecotourism; such as the Corporate Social Leadership in Travel and Tourism, and the Tourism Industry Report prepared for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, among others.
- The Ecotourism Databank (<http://tourismdatabank.colorado.edu/>), established by the Centre for Sustainable Tourism at the University of Colorado, supported by UNEP, WTO and by the US Forest Service, is a searchable online library on ecotourism, containing relevant documents and presentations on ecotourism.
- The Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council, managed by the Rainforest Alliance through the support of the Ford Foundation, is proposing a global accreditation body for sustainable tourism and ecotourism certifiers.

See <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/sv/stsc-monthly-activities.html>

- The World Legacy Awards (<http://www.wlaward.org/awards.htm>) managed by Conservation International and the National Geographic Society.
- The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF International) published in July 2001 the *Guidelines for community-based Ecotourism Development*. These guidelines are available online at:
http://www.wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/community_based_ecotourism.pdf

C. Activities undertaken by Governments

24. Before and during the International Year of Ecotourism, numerous countries organised special events, put in place new policies and developed inter- sectorial and international co-operation, and many other activities.

25. The information for the following analysis has been obtained through a specific worldwide survey conducted by WTO among National Tourism Authorities between January-May 2003, as well as from the communications of WTO Member States reporting on ecotourism-related activities throughout the IYE and the WTO Tourism Market Trends 2002 survey, which included a specific section on ecotourism aspects.

26. 93 governments informed the World Tourism Organization on the activities carried out during the International Year: 19 from Africa, 18 from Americas, 12 from East Asia and Pacific, 27 from Europe, 10 from Middle East and 7 from South Asia. A list of responding countries can be found in the Annex, and summaries of country reports are available in the following website:

<http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/iyе/results>

27. The information received on national and local activities carried out in the framework of the IYE has been carefully examined and is summarized in this report according to the following themes:

1. National Policy
2. Activities and Publications
3. Stakeholders Participation and Support
4. Awareness
5. Regulation
6. Co-operation

1. National Policy

1.1. IYE National Committees

28. Following the recommendations of WTO, 47 national and local tourism authorities established committees for the celebration of IYE, involving all the stakeholders relevant to this activity; 14 in Africa, 12 in the Americas, 4 in the Middle-East, 5 in Europe, 6 in East Asia/Pacific and 6 in South Asia (*see Annex p. 21*).

29. Most of these committees include similar stakeholders at different levels, such as:

- National Tourism Authorities, normally as initiator and president of the Committee
- Other ministries or government agencies: principally for culture and heritage, environment, foreign affairs / co-operation, economy / trade / development or the forest department, but also for communication, agriculture, decentralisation, scientific research, biodiversity, meteorology, mines and geology, and sport.
- Foundations or NGOs (environment, ecotourism, development, co-operation)
- Private Sector: tour operators, travel agents, hotel owners and their trade associations
- Local or regional authorities (mainly tourism officials)
- Tourism boards
- National bodies for protected areas
- Local community representatives
- Environmental or ecotourism associations
- Universities / academicians
- Tourism trade organisations
- Hotel trade national federations or chambers
- National representatives of international conservation organisations (e.g. Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, WWF)
- Media

30. Some committees include also other stakeholders like national social economic councils, intergovernmental organisations, funding institutions, tourism observatories, national funds or councils for tourism promotion, national indigenous agencies, etc.

31. Some countries without national ecotourism committees for the IYE, developed other mechanisms to undertake ecotourism activities during 2002: e.g.:

- Zimbabwe and Slovenia have a National Committee for Sustainable Development, which deals with ecotourism among other activities.
- In Georgia and Colombia, ecotourism activities focused on protected areas. Thus, national parks' authorities were in charge of organising such activities.
- In Samoa the government set up a National Biodiversity Strategic Action Planning Committee that covers ecotourism matters
- In Hong Kong SAR and in Oman, various ministries worked together to promote ecotourism.

32. In general, a large majority of the IYE national committees were established to develop and organise activities for 2002. However, in order to support ecotourism

development in the future, most countries decided to maintain their committee and pursue its activities. Some countries, like Azerbaijan or the Czech Republic, have not set up any national ecotourism committee so far, but are planning to establish one in the future.

1.2. National Strategy for Ecotourism

33. While the establishment of national ecotourism committees aimed at undertaking activities in this field, setting up national strategies for ecotourism reflects a deeper involvement of these countries toward ecotourism.

34. 48 countries defined, or are currently defining, a national strategy/plan for ecotourism development in their territories (8 in Africa, 12 in the Americas, 8 in East Asia and Pacific, 13 in Europe, 3 in the Middle East and 4 in South Asia – see Annex p.21). There are of course differences in the way these strategies are established in these countries:

- Around a third of them have clearly developed a separate strategy for ecotourism, focusing on different aspects¹.
- Some others have included ecotourism as one of the main segments of a more general Tourism Strategy (Rwanda, Haiti, Cambodia, Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan, Ecuador, Sweden or Uruguay, for example), of the tourism chapter within the National Economy Development Strategy (Lithuania), of the Nature Tourism Strategy (Portugal) or of a Rural Tourism Strategy (Morocco).

35. Ecotourism policies in some countries (Spain, Georgia, Argentina) are mainly managed by bodies in charge of protected areas. Some countries (Syria) make reference to an expansion of green areas or to a greening programme for tourism areas (Mauritius). Others (Bangladesh, Egypt, Jamaica, Oman) have no national plan but refer to regional or local strategies or programmes for ecotourism. Other countries (Madagascar, Lebanon and Panama) are not currently setting up any ecotourism strategy, but will present a project of such strategy in the future. Yet, other countries (Bolivia, Russia, and Hong Kong SAR) have a general strategy for sustainable development of tourism, which applies to ecotourism issues as well.

2. Activities and Publications

36. The development of national committees and/or strategies for ecotourism was generally conducted in parallel with the organisation of various events and the production of publications relating to ecotourism management.

2.1 Activities and events organised for the IYE

¹ For instance, Greece's National Ecotourism Strategy, which foresees the elaboration of a Master Plan which puts the emphasis on the following points: 1) Priorities – choice of regions, 2) Description and plan of activities, 3) Constitution of a National Ecotourism Co-ordinator (Agrotourist S.A.), 4) Definition of criteria of ecotourism development, 5) promotion campaign for ecotourism, 6) Pilot applications, 7) Publications and events, 8) Exchange of know-how and experience with other countries.

37. In order to contribute to the international debate on ecotourism during the IYE, many national governments organised events at the international, national, regional or local levels. The regional distribution of these events worldwide is quite homogenous, even if Africa, Americas and Europe have witnessed more activities. Typical activities undertaken include:

- National or regional congress, seminar or workshop
- International seminar or conference
- Launching of ecotourism project or programme
- World Tourism Day celebration on ecotourism
- Launching ceremony for the IYE
- Exhibitions (photo, painting, etc.)
- Sport events (e.g. cycling or trekking tours)
- Local workshop or celebration
- National or international fairs
- Conference in national parks and other protected areas (including inauguration of a new national park)
- Regional, national or international festivals (food, music, traditional arts, etc.) related to ecotourism
- Ecotourism or nature tourism award ceremony (national or regional)
- National public debate
- Good practices contest

38. Participants represented all types of stakeholders, including other international or intergovernmental organisations like WTO, TIES, IUCN, UNEP, UNESCO, etc. The themes frequently associated with ecotourism in these activities were: mountain tourism, rural tourism, agrotourism, protected areas, community-based tourism, cultural tourism, traditional handicraft conservation, nature conservation, ecolodge, sustainable tourism, poverty alleviation, etc.

39. The IYE was also the occasion to develop partnerships: Some events were celebrated jointly with the International Year of Mountains 2002, and a few of them were co-organised by two bordering countries (i.e. Guinea with Senegal). Besides, many States, whether they organised ecotourism activities or not, have mentioned that they participated at conferences and seminars prepared by other countries, and also at the World Ecotourism Summit in Québec. They also supported many events organised by NGOs and associations. Some countries mentioned they already plan to organise other ecotourism events in 2003 or beyond.

2.2 Publications

40. States produced various types of publications in the framework of the International Year. According to the information sent, Europe has been the region with more written outputs, followed by the Americas. As it could be expected and in view of the numerous activities undertaken world-wide, final reports and other outputs (announcement, declarations, charters, etc.) represent an important part of the publications produced during the IYE.

41. Other IYE outputs published by different countries around the world can be summarised as follows:

- Inventory of the principal ecotourism sites, facilities and attractions
- Publication of national ecotourism guides (included sometimes in a more general tourism guide)
- Publication of national or regional ecotourism strategies, plans or programmes (as a whole or summarised)
- Guidelines on ecotourism development (focussing on the specificity of the country: desert areas, wetlands, etc.) for communities, for local bodies or for business operators i.e. ecolodge
- Guidelines for tourists on responsible tourism (i.e. on diving, trekking, adventure, etc.)
- Publication of the proceedings of national ecotourism conferences, seminars and workshops
- Special promotional posters, CD-ROM, videos (on national parks for example), Web sites, etc.
- Articles on ecotourism in ecotourism or related magazines or in the national press
- Market research on national or regional ecotourism markets (also on rural tourism)
- Regional maps with ecotourism attractions (among others)
- Publication on ecotourism development in national parks
- National speeches presented at the WES or other international conferences
- Ecotourism impact studies

42. The IYE was the occasion for some governments to commission special studies on ecotourism (market, feasibility or consultancy studies at national level or for certain regions, etc.) to be published in the near future. They also supported universities' publications, like thesis dealing with specific aspects of ecotourism development. Some of the IYE outputs from governments were prepared in order to be distributed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

43. Tourism authorities (ministries or tourism boards) were usually associated with other bodies for these publications, sometimes through the national committees they have formed: universities, research centres, other ministries (economy, environment, culture), national parks authorities, nature associations, institutes of geography, etc. Ecotourism

was often dealt in association with other themes like environmental protection, agrotourism or rural tourism, mountains, poverty reduction, etc., thus demonstrating its many linkages.

3. Stakeholders Participation and Support

3.1. Stakeholders participation

44. The United Nations system in general, and the World Tourism Organization in particular, has always encouraged national authorities to develop participative mechanisms in their activities. The creation of national committees for the IYE was certainly a most important tool for this purpose: many countries mentioned it as the main consultative organ on ecotourism questions. Nevertheless, more actions regarding stakeholders' participation were conducted before and during the International Year.

45. Some countries (Botswana, for example) made extensive efforts to ensure that all stakeholders, government agencies, communities, NGOs and the private sector were given the opportunity to express their opinions at each phase of the preparation of the national strategy/plan for ecotourism. Participation of communities is considered not only necessary in ecotourism policy construction, but as its main justification. Workshops, intended for regional or local authorities and indigenous/local communities, seem to be quite regularly used, while a few countries, like Georgia and Iran, used a mail consultation. In some cases, workshops are only organised at local levels for the dialogue between local authorities and their communities. Otherwise, these local bodies and communities are invited to participate in national or international events to express their opinion (events can be specially designed for enforcing upward flow of information from civil society to national authorities, like in Mexico for example with the "Ecotourism Community-based Enterprises National Encounter" or in Australia, where the Aboriginal Tourism Australia was one of the main IYE partners).

46. Nevertheless, consultation about ecotourism questions can be more restricted according to the context and can be limited to:

- Contacts with experts and NGOs at national level
- Consultation of local communities for a specific local ecotourism project. As a result of this consultation are that local communities are highly involved in the project management. In some countries, the execution of an ecotourism project needs the approval of the local communities.
- Consultation with indigenous and other stakeholders in national reserves
- Trans-ministerial consultation
- Contacts with private sector
- Dialogue with indigenous national associations
- Support to NGOs and private foundations that work with communities
- Part of a consultancy or feasibility study on ecotourism development

47. Some countries (like Puerto Rico) recognised that such consultative mechanisms are still limited, but are in a process of strong improvement. Others, like Thailand, say that consultative bodies have been formed, but have not properly been used so far. In general, very few States consider that regular democratic mechanisms are enough for ecotourism questions.

3.2 Support to ecotourism private sector

48. One of the recommendations made by WTO during the IYE was for the National authorities to provide technical, financial and promotional support for, and facilitate the creation and operation of small and medium size firms. Indeed, ecotourism has to be built rather on a dense network of small businesses than on the big concentrations that often characterise the global tourism market.

49. States, principally those from the Americas and Africa, which seem to consider tourism in general, and ecotourism in particular, as a strong component of their economies, responded to this recommendation using different methods:

50. Technical assistance to small enterprises and local communities (advice, feasibility studies, capacity building, etc.) comes before a direct financial support, which often is directed to local bodies and businesses working for specific ecotourism projects or destinations (i.e. focused on protected areas). Since some national governments, like in Botswana, did not have enough funds to finance projects, they facilitated contacts between ecotourism project developers and development partners (NGOs, funding agencies, banks or donors). They also developed administrative and market facilities for local ecotourism businesses, for example, setting up positive discrimination for national businesses, fiscal exemption, loans with low interest and other commercial incentives (provided businesses comply with some conditions on environment or community participation).

51. A few countries have set up national funding programmes for tourism enterprises (like in Malaysia, or for young entrepreneurs in Greece). Others have organised national financing plans for small businesses in general, within a sustainable development programme (for equipment and environmental improvement, training and research, etc.). These global plans also benefit ecotourism small size firms. For example, in Greece, in the framework of the Operational Programme for Competitiveness, the Ministry of Development provided financial support for “Infrastructures for the attraction, management and targeted information dissemination for visitors” (pathways, observation posts, etc). Besides, 2002 was also the occasion to start new programmes focused on nature tourism or ecotourism: in Indonesia, for example, the Ministry responsible for tourism has already planned for 2003 to give financial and technical support for communities who lived around ecotourism destinations. States like Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Bangladesh and Yemen mentioned they have not undertaken support actions so far, but they plan to develop such mechanisms.

52. As far as promotion is concerned, ecotourism businesses could enjoy certain advantages from national promotional campaigns, especially when these focused on the natural heritage, like the one in Chile for example. In the framework of these campaigns, national tourism authorities or boards directly issued promotional material (postcards, posters, logo, etc.). An interesting experience was undertaken in Hungary, where the government organised study tours in national parks for the media. Besides, part of the technical and financial support accorded to small businesses described previously, was dedicated to promotional purposes (Web-sites creation, publication of advertising brochures, setting up of ecotourism business networks, ecotourism stand in foreign fairs, shouldering costs for the participation at IYE events, etc.).

4. Awareness

53. In addition to the activities described in 2.1. and the setting up of national ecotourism committees, which contributed strongly to developing awareness among ecotourism stakeholders, governments conducted other actions to raise the awareness among their population and the tourists themselves.

54. Around 20% of reporting countries mentioned the setting up of global awareness raising campaigns on ecotourism or responsible tourism. These campaigns took place sometimes within a national ecotourism promotion operation or in a general campaign on environment. Besides, in these or other countries, awareness actions for local operators were conducted, principally focused on environmental training for tourism employees and guides, by means of special workshops or leaflet distribution (including the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism). Similar processes have been used for local communities, especially those living within or close to protected areas (training, guidelines for ecotourism business development, etc.). Schools and universities were also subject to particular attention from some governments, which set up special information campaign for teachers and students. Special attention has also been paid to state employees (police officers, national parks' agents, etc.) and to elected members through awareness meetings.

55. For the general population, the following actions were undertaken: environmental public march, cycling or hiking (Hong Kong SAR), clean up campaigns (mountains, beaches,), tree-planting activities, special IYE lottery draw (Ecuador), free guiding services on ecotourism sites (Sri Lanka), open days in national parks for the World Tourism Day (Hungary), etc. Governments also supported or facilitated the work undertaken by associations (for environmental protection, responsible tourism or community-based tourism). In general, various means were used to spread the information: leaflets, posters, maps, videos, radio or TV programmes, exhibitions (photography contests in Chile, exhibition on environment friendly technologies in Jamaica), ecotourism festivals, special pages in Web-sites, documentation during flights (Colombia), national or foreign specialised press (special supplements on protected areas), edition of special stamps (Senegal), code of conduct for tourism and environment (Cyprus, in preparation in Dubai), etc.

5. Regulation

5.1. Legislation

56. This report has indicated that various countries set up national strategies in order to plan ecotourism activities. Nevertheless, a scarce minority of them voted special legislation on ecotourism. Only three countries, from the ones that reported their IYE activities to WTO, mentioned law texts concerning ecotourism: Ecuador, Puerto Rico and Philippines (executive order on ecotourism). A few others (Colombia, Mexico, Cambodia, Spain and Bangladesh) have legislation mentioning the concept of ecotourism.

57. However, around 20% of reporting countries declared they foresee the preparation of such legislation. Furthermore, there is one case of trans-border legislative document for ecotourism activity in the Caucasus region currently being negotiated between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Besides, many countries without specific ecotourism legislation stated that ecotourism activities are regulated by various existing acts and laws. Firstly, national laws on environmental protection or national parks ordinances determined tourism and ecotourism development and management. Secondly, some countries already have tourism legislation that includes natural heritage protection and land planning, even a specific law on sustainable development of tourism (e.g. Czech Republic and Republic of Korea). This legislation can deal with forms of tourism close to ecotourism, like agrotourism and rural tourism (Cyprus, Uruguay, Morocco), nature tourism (Portugal) or adventure tourism (Chile). In general, governments associate ecotourism to legislations concerning the following themes: archaeology, land use planning, national Agenda 21 (Jordan, Tunisia), hunting, architecture, forest, water, natural reserves, agriculture, wetlands, cultural heritage, wildlife and coasts.

5.2. Certification systems and indicators

58. A voluntary approach to regulate ecotourism activities is through developing or encouraging the use of indicators, certification schemes and/or ecolabels. Very few countries have set up specific national ecolabels for ecotourism businesses. Four have reported such fact to WTO: Kenya, Ecuador, Sweden and Thailand. Regarding ecological or quality labels and awards for general tourism, the list is a little longer: Morocco (on rural tourism), Colombia, Costa Rica, Estonia, Peru, Austria, Malta, Spain and Maldives. Other countries mentioned that some regional labels exist on their territory and that some efforts are being made to encourage the adoption of international ecolabels already existing (e.g. Blue Flag, Green Globe).

59. Existing certification schemes concern mainly catering facilities and accommodation. They focus principally on environmental issues (energy and water saving techniques, noise and air quality and the use of eco-friendly products and materials), but also on social ones (local community awareness) and services quality. It is to be noticed that around half of the countries that do not have any certification schemes so far intend to develop such mechanisms in the future. This reveals a strong awareness among tourism

national authorities regarding the high potential of voluntary schemes for the regulation of ecotourism activities.

60. Other countries, like Lebanon and Samoa, have developed a national system for sustainable tourism indicators that is applied for monitoring ecotourism activities as well.

6. Cooperation

61. Many countries collaborated in the preparation of or participated in international seminars on ecotourism before and during 2002, notably with WTO. Besides, some governments have enforced the link with international organisations or with other national governments in ecotourism programmes.

62. One out of three countries that informed on their IYE activities stated they collaborated with international organisations or programmes for ecotourism development purposes. Besides the World Tourism Organization, other organisations mentioned are the following: UNESCO (MAB Programme), UNDP, UNEP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), The World Conservation Union (IUCN), WWF, United Nation's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), European programmes (INTERREG), Convention on Biological Diversity, International Bird Watching Association, Conservation Tropical RARE, Adventure Travel Society, Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), The New Partnership For Africa's Development (NEPAD), Emigration International, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation) and International Mountaineering Organisation.

63. Similarly, one out of three countries have established an international collaboration agreement related to ecotourism with other national governments (including between national parks authorities) for research, training programmes, ecotourism regulation, etc. This collaboration is mainly in the case of border countries, which often share protected areas, like Lesotho and South Africa, or Ecuador, Peru and Colombia. Nevertheless, it can also be the result of a technical co-operation between non border states (like between Costa Rica and Chile or Ecuador for example, for the adaptation to ecotourism of the tourism certification scheme). Co-operation can be included within a cross-boundary general development plan: for example, the Amazonian Strategic Plan or Euro-regions Development Plans, like the project for the Carpathian Mountains, which involves 7 countries. This form of co-operation arises from the need to alleviate the negative consequences, for tourism development among others, of states and nations being separated by frontiers, and to counteract the tendency for these areas distant from their capital cities to be neglected.

64. Many countries also benefit from the technical or financial assistance of national co-operation and development agencies: AECI (Spain), GTZ (Germany), Belgian, Irish, USAID, Canada Green Fund, New Zealand or international funding agencies or

organisations: Inter-American Bank, World Bank, European Union, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, GEF, etc.

Assessment of WTO activities

65. As a final question of the survey, governments were asked to evaluate the activities undertaken by the World Tourism Organization in the framework of the IYE.

66. More than half of reporting countries (48) indicated that these activities were interesting for the international ecotourism industry, especially in developing countries where tourism, and ecotourism, often represents a substantial part of their economic activities. They specified that the events, the publications and the final recommendations helped to raise awareness worldwide. Besides, international cooperation (exchange of good practices, collaboration with international organizations and intergovernmental cooperation) was largely facilitated.

67. Around half of the countries (42) stated that the activities carried out by WTO in preparation for and during the IYE were of high

IV. Follow up and recommendations

WTO's follow up activities

- **Based on the results of the above survey, a detailed publication on exemplary government practices will be prepared, containing documents and further analysis of the main IYE results in ecotourism policy, planning, stakeholder participation and support, marketing, regulation, etc.**
- **The collection and dissemination of good practices is being continued after the IYE: A compilation of good practices in small ecotourism businesses has been published in April 2003**
- **Support for small and medium size ecotourism companies will be provided for the application of the IYE recommendations, through the above-mentioned good practice compilation, seminars and other dissemination tools, as well as through taking an active role in the preparations for the UN-designated International Year of Micro credit (2005).**

- A series of ecotourism seminars for protected area managers will be organized, starting with two sub-regional events in Africa.
- WTO is continuing its work in the field of certification systems for sustainable tourism. It supports the process of creating the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council, a global accreditation programme. The Organization recently prepared a set of recommendations for governments for supporting or creating national certification systems. Besides the general procedure and the criteria recommendations, that are fully applicable to ecotourism operations as well, specific criteria have been included for ecotourism and suggestions have been made to facilitate the participation of small tourism businesses in certification programmes. Based on these recommendations, a series of regional seminars will be organized in the course of 2003 and 2004.
- A series of national seminars on Local Agenda 21 programmes has been initiated in 2003. The Seminars involve principally municipal governments and tourism officials and promote the application of integrated tourism management systems.
- The work on sustainable tourism indicators is also continued, with a new international study expected to be published by early 2004. The resource book and manual will include specific sections on the application of indicators at natural sites and ecotourism attractions.
- A comprehensive Destination Management Network is currently being developed, which will specify the main types of tourism destinations, including natural and ecotourism destinations.

UNEP's follow up activities

As a follow-up to the International Year of Ecotourism, UNEP will:

- Develop guidelines and recommendations for successful eco- and sustainable tourism policies and strategies. The guidelines will be based on the results of 6 regional multi-stakeholder workshops in 2003 and 2004. In 2004, UNEP will publish a handbook for governments based on this consultative process, including an action plan for next steps in setting global standards, and a proposed financial structure for implementation of the action plan.
- Develop tools to support the implementation of the guidelines, such as:
 - a report on the links between eco- and sustainable tourism development, conservation of biodiversity and poverty alleviation called "Mapping Tourism Footprints" (with Conservation International and the International Institute for Environment and Development), with a series of GIS-referenced maps overlapping tourism investments, conservation hotspots and social variables such as the UNDP's Human Development Index.
 - guides for small- and medium tourism enterprises and local authorities in developing countries, on renewable energy, waste management and Local Agenda 21 processes.
- Continue implementing demonstration projects such as the UNESCO/UNEP "Linking Tourism and Biodiversity Conservation in Six World Heritage sites" (El Vizcaino and Sian Ka'an sites in Mexico, Tikal in Guatemala, Rio Platano in Honduras, and Komodo and Ujung Kulon in Indonesia). In 2003, the project will

focus on training participants in public use of parks, ecotourism and nature interpretation, consolidating and disseminating lessons learned through publications, and fostering public-private partnerships. The Indonesian sites will begin activities this year.

Madrid, June 2003

Annex: List of responding countries

AFGHANISTAN		HAITI	2	OMAN	
ARGENTINA	1	HOLY SEE		PANAMA	
AUSTRALIA	1-2	HONG KONG		PERU	2
AUSTRIA	2	INDIA	1-2	PHILIPPINES	1-2
AZERBAIJAN	2	INDONESIA	1-2	POLAND	
BAHRAIN		IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF	1-2	PORTUGAL	1-2
BANGLADESH	1	IRELAND		PUERTO RICO	2
BELGIUM		ISRAEL	1-2	REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	2
BOLIVIA	1	JAMAICA	1	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	
BOTSWANA	1-2	JAPAN		RWANDA	1-2
BULGARIA	2	JORDAN	1-2	SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES	
CAMBODIA	2	KAZAKHSTAN	2	SAMOA	2
CHILE	1-2	KENYA	1	SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE	
COLOMBIA	2	KOREA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC		SAUDI ARABIA	
COSTA RICA	1-2	KOREA, REPUBLIC OF	2	SENEGAL	1-2
CURAÇAO	2	LEBANON	1	SEYCHELLES	1-2
CYPRUS	2	LESOTHO	1	SLOVAKIA	2
CZECH REPUBLIC		LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA	2	SLOVENIA	2
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	1	LIECHTENSTEIN		SPAIN	
DUBAI		LITHUANIA	2	SRI LANKA	1-2
ECUADOR	1	MACAU		SWEDEN	
EGYPT	1	MADAGASCAR	1	SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	1
EL SALVADOR	1-2	MALAYSIA	1-2	THAILAND	1-2
ERITREA	1	MALDIVES	1	TOGO	
ESTONIA	1	MALI	2	TUNISIA	1
GEORGIA		MALTA	1	TURKEY	2
GERMANY		MEXICO	1-2	UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	1-2
GHANA		MOROCCO		URUGUAY	1-2
GREECE	1-2	NAMIBIA	2	YEMEN	2
GUATEMALA	1-2	NEPAL	1-2	YUGOSLAVIA	
GUINEA	1	NIGER		ZIMBABWE	

Legend:

1: Responding countries where national or local tourism authorities established committees for ecotourism activities. WTO was informed that the following countries have also such committees: Brazil, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Fiji.

2: Responding countries which defined, or are currently defining, a national strategy/plan for ecotourism development in their territories (either separately or included within a more general development strategy). WTO was informed that Angola and Venezuela have also defined such strategy.

