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Policy issues: tourism and the environment

**Background papers for the ministerial-level consultations on energy
and environment for development, chemicals management as well as
tourism and the environment**

Discussion papers presented by the Executive Director

Addendum

Background paper on tourism and the environment

Summary

The present document is a background paper intended to stimulate discussion and highlight issues of concern to Governments to be addressed by ministers and heads of delegation during their ministerial consultations on tourism and the environment at the ninth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

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I. Tourism impacts and opportunities

A. Tourism as a force for environmental change

1. 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. In 2004 there were 760 million international tourists. Forecasts by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) point to a doubling of this figure by 2020 (see the annex to the present paper). These figures relate only to international travel – in most countries the volume of domestic tourism is significantly greater than international arrivals. Tourism is currently reckoned to support 215 million jobs (8.1 per cent of the world total).

2. Recent trends and forecasts point to a spreading of tourism to new destinations. Proportionately, tourism will grow faster in less developed countries than in developed economies over the next ten years, and there is a growing market interest in rural and activity tourism compared with staying in traditional resorts. Although this may bring opportunities for economic development and poverty alleviation, it will also introduce the environmental impacts of tourism to areas which may hitherto have been unaffected by tourism development.

3. In addition to its dynamic growth, a further reason to pay particular attention to tourism within the context of environmental policy is the special two-way relationship between the tourism industry and the environment. Unlike most other economic activities, the well-being of the tourism industry is itself very dependent on the quality of the environment. 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. As a high quality environment is a key part of the tourist product, tourism can be an ally, and a supportive economic and political force, for conservation.

B. Key impacts of tourism

4. Negative impacts of tourism on the environment include:

(a) Emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, contributing to global warming and climate change and affecting local air quality. This is mainly caused by the use of air and road transport for tourism purposes. It is estimated that tourism may contribute up to 5.3 per cent of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, with transport accounting for 90 per cent of this total¹;

(b) Development of tourism facilities in sensitive environments, leading to physical degradation of land, damage to habitats and loss of biodiversity and destruction of natural landscapes. Damage may occur through the construction process, as well as from changes in land use. Loss of natural coastal environments is one of the most serious consequences of tourism development;

(c) The operation of tourism facilities leading to the use of non-renewable or precious resources such as freshwater and fossil fuels and the generation of pollutants and waste. The latter includes the discharge of sewage and the generation of solid waste.

5. Tourism can also bring negative social impacts that have important consequences for environmental resource management. In many communities, scarcity of fresh water is a major concern which can be greatly exacerbated by tourism development. In some locations, per capita daily use of water can be 10–15 times greater by tourists than by residents. Traffic congestion caused by tourism can have a serious impact on local quality of life, requiring effective management solutions. The same applies to loss of or damage to physical amenities for local people.

6. There are also a number of ways in which tourism can contribute positively to the environment, largely as a result of social and economic influences. These include:

(a) Providing a direct source of income for conservation. In many countries, national parks and wildlife reserves do not receive nearly enough financial support from the State, and many rely on visitor income, through admission charges and other spending, to support their conservation work. Donations from visitors and sponsorship from the industry can also play their part;

(b) Supplying a source of income for local communities from tourism activities, such as catering, accommodation, guiding and handicraft sales, that are less environmentally destructive than other sources of livelihood, such as slash-and-burn agriculture or extractive or polluting industries;

¹ Gossling, S. (2002). Global environmental consequences of tourism. *Global Environmental Change* 12, 283–302

(c) Raising awareness of environmental quality, and its social, cultural and economic value, among visitors and host communities, leading to increased interest and support.

7. Tourism is, however, a biodiversity dependent industry and it is itself also affected by climate variability and environmental change. Heat waves (such as that experienced in the European summer of 2003), changes in tropical storm intensity (such as Hurricane Katrina), degradation of key tourism resources such as coral reefs (through, for example, bleaching events, as occurred in 1998), lack of snowfall, forest fires (such as those experienced in Portugal in 2005), and water use restrictions are all examples of the impact which environmental change and, in particular, climate variability can have on tourist destinations and holiday experiences. Tourism is dependent on an intact ecosystem and hence environmental disaster preparedness and management are particularly relevant in the view of the vulnerability of many tourist destinations to natural disasters (tsunamis, etc.).

C. Policy aims for making tourism more sustainable

8. The above environmental impacts of tourism need to be addressed by international agencies (information on the activities of the United Nations Environment Programme in the area of tourism may be found in document UNEP/GCSS.IX/INF/12), Governments, non-governmental organizations, local communities and private sector tourism enterprises, working together.

9. It is increasingly recognized that tourism and environmental impacts should be addressed not in isolation, but within the wider context of sustainable development, paying equal attention to environmental, social and economic sustainability.

10. The concepts of economic, social and environmental sustainability can be translated into 12 specific aims, which can then provide the basis for formulating a policy on tourism development and management. Those specific aims are:

(a) *Economic viability*: To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises so that they are able to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term;

(b) *Local prosperity*: To maximize the contribution of tourism to the prosperity of host communities, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally;

(c) *Employment quality*: To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination on grounds of gender, race, disability or other such criteria;

(d) *Social equity*: To promote the widespread distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout host communities, including improvement of opportunities, income and services available to the poor;

(e) *Visitor fulfilment*: To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination on account of gender, race, disability or other such criteria;

(f) *Local control*: To engage and empower host communities in planning and decision-making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders;

(g) *Community well-being*: To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in host communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation;

(h) *Cultural richness*: To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities;

(i) *Physical integrity*: To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid physical and visual degradation of the environment;

(j) *Biological diversity*: To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimize damage to them;

(k) *Resource efficiency*: To minimize the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services;

(l) *Environmental purity*: To minimize the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors.

D. Main actors and barriers to be overcome

11. When considering the main barriers that must be overcome in the integration of sustainability principles and approaches into the development and management of tourism, it is helpful to consider the position of three main types of player or stakeholder: tourists; private sector tourism enterprises; and Governments.

12. Tourism cannot truly become more sustainable unless consumers (tourists) consistently favour more sustainable destinations and activities in their purchasing decisions. This is because, generally, the industry is driven by market opportunity. There are some encouraging signs in terms of market response, with a majority of tourists being concerned about the quality of the environment in destinations where this may affect their own enjoyment, and an increasing awareness among tourists of the impacts of tourism on local environments and communities. Some surveys have even found that half of the tourists questioned would be prepared to pay more in order to benefit the environments and communities in the places that they visit. It is likely to be more difficult, however, to instil a more global (as distinct from self-interested or locally tangible) environmental responsibility in the travelling public, for example in relation to the total impact of travelling on greenhouse gas emissions. Challenges to address include turning concern into reality with respect to holiday choices and behaviour, through effective promotions, information and price signals, and also making sure that the industry is alert to new motivations such as cultural heritage and ecotourism, rather than assuming that most tourists are uninterested in issues of environmental quality and impact.

13. An important challenge is the fact that economic considerations, rather than social and environmental considerations, constitute the dominant force directing tourism development, policies and promotion, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The environmental impact of tourism is heavily influenced by the decisions taken by private sector investors and operators of tourism enterprises. As in most industries, the concept of corporate social responsibility is increasingly recognized in the tourism sector and is being promoted by sectoral industry bodies, at the international as well as national levels. A formal response, however, including measures such as triple bottom line reporting and environmental management systems, appears to be prevalent only within a selection of larger-scale firms. A particular challenge is to engage medium-size, small and micro-enterprises, which make up the vast majority of tourism businesses, in addressing environmental issues. The proportion of such enterprises that have been clearly recognized as complying with predetermined criteria of environmental good practice, such as participation in ecolabels programmes, is very low.

14. Achieving more sustainability in tourism requires the support of government. Barriers include a lack of understanding of and commitment to sustainability among the various sectors and levels of government that relate to tourism. The impact on tourism of peace and stability versus military conflict and terrorism are considerable, with the former promoting and the latter inhibiting the development of the sector. Challenges include gaining more political support, increasing transparency and expanding knowledge. There is a need to integrate tourism into national development plans and to strengthen both the tools available to Governments to influence action on the ground and the skills and resources needed to apply them effectively.

E. Role of Governments

15. Looking more specifically at the role that Governments need to play in making tourism more sustainable, responsibilities include:

(a) Providing leadership and coordination: This is essential, owing to the extensive fragmentation of the private sector into many thousands of enterprises; the fact that many aspects of a country and local destinations affect visitors' experience; and the implications of tourism for society and the environment;

(b) Setting the strategy for sustainable tourism: Governments should work with other stakeholders to map out a clear way forward for tourism based around sustainability principles and the aims presented earlier;

(c) Developing and managing infrastructure and resources in the public domain: In many countries, the infrastructure upon which tourism depends (e.g., roads, public transport, water supply, waste treatment, energy provision, etc.) is the responsibility of the Government. This may also include natural areas and cultural heritage sites. Their provision and management have a profound effect on the sustainability of tourism;

- (d) Providing a regulatory framework: Many of the tools that can be used to influence the sustainability of tourism such as planning controls, licensing and labour regulations, require government intervention, from legislation through to implementation and enforcement;
 - (e) Promoting and facilitating other ways of influencing enterprises and visitors: Various economic, voluntary and supportive instruments can be used to make tourism more sustainable. While Governments may not need to be the delivery agency for all such tools, their support is often critical for success;
 - (f) Extending knowledge: Often Governments are well placed to initiate or support research into tourism impacts and sustainability and to disseminate good practices.
16. Governments need to play their role at both the national and local levels.

II. Solutions: structures and tools

17. An effective and sound integration of sustainability in tourism policies must be based on the development of specific actions and the deployment of tools that address:
- (a) The overall scale and shape of tourism, including issues of scale, capacity, distribution in space and time and types of product and target market;
 - (b) The development of tourism facilities and activities, including issues of location, design and associated infrastructure;
 - (c) The operation of tourism enterprises and the provision of services, including issues such as the delivery of quality, environmental management, human resource development, supply chain management and integration with other activities;
 - (d) The behaviour of tourists, including holiday choice, selection of transport and other facilities and awareness of conservation and community issues in destinations visited.
18. With regard to coordination with other sectors, policies addressing the sustainability of tourism can be underpinned by aligning tourism strategies closely to other, higher-level, national strategies such as those addressing sustainable development as a whole, poverty reduction or overall environmental management. In developing countries and countries with economies in transition, poverty reduction strategies increasingly dominate government action on the development of different sectors and also the funding priorities of international development assistance agencies. New attempts are being made to introduce tourism more positively as a tool in these poverty strategies, and there is also an opportunity to take into account the environmental dimension of tourism in these efforts.
19. Government response to the sustainability of tourism is often stronger at a regional or local level than at a national level. It is increasingly recognized that integrated planning of tourism development, linked to environmental management, can be most effective within clearly identified local destinations. Many countries have pursued the concept of destination management organizations, which are taking a lead in tourism and which involve the local authorities working in partnership with other local stakeholders.
20. The effectiveness of policies will be enhanced by setting up structures that would allow coordination between all stakeholders and the adoption of a balanced mix of tools.

A. Structures for coordination between stakeholders

21. Experience from countries around the world has shown that sustainability concerns are much more likely to be taken into account if stakeholders representing relevant economic, social and environmental interests are brought together to develop and implement tourism policy. Establishing structures to enable this ensures that different stakeholders have their say in how tourism is developed and managed and, in turn, are encouraged to reflect agreed priorities for tourism in their own work. It is thus a two-way process.
22. The first requirement is that there should be excellent communication between all Government ministries whose areas of responsibility affect or are affected by tourism. These include, in particular, ministries of tourism, the environment, economic development and transport, but also those responsible for culture, internal security, agriculture, trade, etc. There should be a formal process and structure for inter-ministerial cooperation on tourism.

23. Secondly, a permanent forum for tourism could be established, comprising stakeholders representing diverse interests, including relevant government departments and agencies, regional and local authorities, varied segments of the tourism industry, the international travel industry, the transport sector, environmental and community-based non-governmental organizations, cultural heritage bodies, national parks and other protected areas, tourism and recreation user groups, civil society, universities and other bodies involved with tourism education and training, labour unions, etc.

24. Multi-stakeholder structures should also exist at the local level. It is important to ensure that destination management organizations include representatives of local environmental and community interests. In some countries and locations, it is particularly important to pursue processes that engage individual communities in tourism planning and that take account of traditional social structures, notably those of indigenous groups.

25. A primary purpose of such structures is to formulate agreed tourism strategies that embrace sustainability aims and principles, and to oversee their implementation. These strategies should be based on a situation analysis of all aspects of tourism impact, and close consultation with implicated stakeholders.

B. Array of tools

26. The implementation of sustainable tourism policies rests on the adoption and implementation of a mix of instruments that can be grouped as follows:

- (a) *Measurement instruments*: Allowing the identification of levels of the impact of tourism impact and to keep abreast of change:
 - (i) *Sustainability indicators and monitoring*: Indicators can be used to set targets for policies and to measure success in achieving them. They can cover levels of tourism (e.g., visitor volumes and dispersal), impacts (e.g., energy and water use), management effort (e.g., funding levels for specific initiatives) and results (e.g., percentage of tourists using public transport). Monitoring can be implemented mainly through measurements of the state of the environment and society and regular surveys of visitors, tourism enterprises and local communities. Some destinations will only remain well conserved, if the local communities are deriving a fair share of the tourist spending. This should also be monitored;
 - (ii) *Identifying tourism limits*: Concepts and models of carrying capacity or limits of acceptable change can be very useful tools for determining policies on the amount, nature and distribution of tourism in a destination, and in securing widespread acceptance of this;
- (b) *Command and control instruments*: Enabling Governments to exert strict formal control over certain aspects of tourism development and operation:
 - (i) *Legislation, regulation and licensing*: Some of the more fundamental aspects of tourism sustainability, such as employees' rights, visitor safety, and hazardous discharges, have to be controlled by legislation. Additional regulations may also be applied to certain activities in specific locations. Dedicated tourism laws can help by drawing attention to, and enabling, the promotion of sustainability in the sector, but of equal importance is the harmonization and communication of other laws that affect tourism, such as labour and environment laws. Licensing processes can help to identify enterprises that comply with legislation and to deter others;
 - (ii) *Land use planning and development control*: These combined instruments are critical in enhancing the sustainability of new tourism development. Tourism planning needs to reflect recent moves towards more integrated and consultative spatial and community planning, including processes like integrated coastal zone management. The development control process, to ensure compliance with plans, can be made more effective through the use of specific instruments such as the issuing of planning briefs for particular sites and clear requirements for environmental impact assessment;

- (c) *Economic instruments*: Influencing behaviour and impact through financial means and sending signals via the market:
- (i) *Taxes and charges*: These can be used to change the behaviour of tourists and enterprises, for example through increasing prices, and also for raising revenue from them for use in conservation or social projects. Taxes and charges can be applied generally on the sector, such as through a bed tax or entry and exit taxes, on specific commodities such as fuel, on outputs such as discharges, or on use of amenities such as admission to national parks;
 - (ii) *Financial incentives and agreements*: Enterprises can be given an incentive to adopt sounder practices by attaching specific conditions to the offering of loans and grants, the granting of concessions to operate or the creation of public-private partnerships. Financial assistance can also be directly offered for specific investments, such as for insulation or cleaner technology;
- (d) *Voluntary instruments*: providing frameworks or processes that encourage voluntary adherence of stakeholders to sustainable approaches and practices:
- (i) *Guidelines and codes of conduct*: Statements of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour can provide a simple and low cost method of influencing tourists and enterprises;
 - (ii) *Reporting and auditing*: Action to improve sustainability can be stimulated by a commitment by private sector enterprises and by Governments to report regularly on what they are doing and results achieved. This may be assisted by systematic auditing. Governments can encourage this process by showing a lead themselves and recommending an agenda for reporting and auditing within the tourism sector;
 - (iii) *Voluntary certification*: This involves the objective inspection of tourism enterprises against agreed criteria and recognition of those complying through a label. Schemes can include environmental and social sustainability criteria alongside more traditional quality standards, and may be initiated, run or just supported by Governments;
 - (iv) *Voluntary contributions*: This is about encouraging tourism enterprises and visitors to support conservation and social projects through voluntary financial donations or other help in kind;
- (e) *Supporting instruments*: Through which Governments can support enterprises and tourists in making their operations and activities more sustainable:
- (i) *Infrastructure provision and management*: The level and nature of investment by Governments in infrastructure and services essential for tourism can have a direct effect on the sustainability of the sector. This includes: transport infrastructure, such as roads; public transport services; public utilities such as water and waste treatment; and security and emergency services;
 - (ii) *Capacity-building*: Sustainability issues can be fully covered in the delivery of tourism training and advisory services to enterprises and communities. Governments can either deliver such services directly or lend support to them. This can be strengthened by encouraging enterprises to work together in networks, and through various techniques such as the dissemination of good practice guides and websites;
 - (iii) *Marketing and information services*: These activities, often traditionally a role of Governments in partnership with the private sector, can be used directly to promote forms of tourism or specific enterprises that are more sustainable, as well as encouraging and facilitating visitors in making appropriate choices.

27. These instruments are not mutually exclusive and results can often be more successful if a number are applied together.

C. Implementing sustainability in tourism through multilateral environmental agreements

28. The implementation of sustainability in tourism can also be supported through the effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, which aim to tackle environmental issues, and activities that could have transboundary environmental effects. Multilateral environmental agreements cover many issues that are relevant to, and affected by, tourism, including global issues such as conservation of biodiversity and prevention of climate change, as well as impacts on transboundary resources such as migratory species, and water quality.

29. The existing multilateral environmental agreements, although they are not specifically concerned with tourism,² provide a framework through which tourism issues can be addressed in relation to environmental protection and conservation. The coordination between multilateral environmental agreements that address similar or overlapping issues – for example, between multilateral environmental agreements focused on conservation of species, and those dealing with conservation in general at an ecosystem level – also provides a mechanism for coordination of work between multilateral environmental agreements on tourism. National reports prepared in accordance with the requirements of the separate multilateral environmental agreements, provide Parties with opportunities to report on relevant tourism issues,³ and could therefore provide a means for monitoring the need for addressing further tourism issues.

30. More specifically, there are three main ways in which multilateral environmental agreements can address tourism issues:

- (a) Through those of their general provisions that are applicable to tourism, particularly provisions on implementation of planning systems and requirements for environmental impact assessment;
- (b) By developing complementary instruments, such as guidelines, that specifically addresses tourism, or tourism-related activities;
- (c) Through satellite activities, such as specific projects designed to take practical steps for implementation of some aspects of a multilateral environmental agreement in relation to tourism, or tourism-related activities.

1. General provisions that are applicable to tourism in multilateral environmental agreements

31. The provisions of multilateral environmental agreements include obligations for conservation and environmental protection, prevention and control of pollution, and sound management of natural resources. Many such agreements, and particularly the regional seas conventions require Parties to use planning measures, including environmental impact assessments, to address adverse environmental impacts, and to use their planning systems to promote the objectives of the multilateral environmental agreements to which they are Parties. These general provisions, and any associated guidelines, apply as much to tourism as to other economic sectors, and their application to tourism can be strengthened through development of additional tourism-specific guidance.

2. Adoption of guidelines on tourism

32. A number of multilateral environmental agreements have adopted guidelines that focus on tourism, in order to support their implementation where tourism is an important factor.

33. The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted international guidelines on biological diversity and tourism in 2004. These guidelines were developed through an international process involving balanced regional representation and consultations. Although the guidelines were developed for protected areas and vulnerable ecosystems, they have general applicability to tourism in

² The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification does however include a reference to tourism in its annex IV (Regional implementation annex for the northern Mediterranean), article 2 (g). Objective 4 of the North-West Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) also refers to tourism specifically, and tourism is also mentioned in decisions, recommendations and plans adopted by the Parties to various other multilateral environmental agreements.

³ The reporting requirements of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Waterbirds (AEWA) established under the Convention on Migratory Species, and of the Helsinki Convention, include specific requirements to report on relevant tourism issues.

any ecosystem, and to tourism in relation to conservation of particular species. The guidelines set out a management framework that includes impact assessment and impact management, and the need for a planned approach to tourism that balances the goals and requirements of conservation with the demand for tourism, for example through zoning and other measures. The management framework is applied to decide if, where and how tourism may be developed at any site, and therefore standards for tourism and impact management measures are developed through the process of applying the management framework. The guidelines also stress the importance of a participatory approach to planning for tourism and conservation that involves local and indigenous communities, the tourism sector and conservation managers and organisations.

34. The Convention on Biological Diversity has 156 signatories and the political support for the guidelines gives it the potential to play an important and effective role as a multilateral environmental agreement in regulating tourism, along with the General Agreement on Trade and Services of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is important to further such support with practical projects at the national level to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity guidelines.

35. The Parties to the Helsinki Convention adopted guidelines for sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism in the coastal zones of the Baltic Sea Area in 2000. These guidelines, which are compatible with those adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity, set out general principles for Parties to apply to the process of tourism development, including planning and assessment, and the need for management of tourism.

36. The Convention on Migratory Species and its associated agreements, and the Marine Mammal Action Plan (MMAP) have developed guidelines on whale watching and aquaria (which deal with marine mammals held in captivity), both of which are important features of tourism in some areas. Whale watching in particular has become a major tourism attraction, and source of income, for certain communities, many of which are in remote and disadvantaged locations. The popularity of whale watching (and watching of other cetaceans) can help raise awareness of the need for conservation of these species, but also, if it is not properly managed, can bring the risk that these species may be adversely affected due to excessive disturbance.

37. The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities which is a non-binding agreement concluded by the 108 countries and the European Union addresses tourism within the framework of its Physical Alteration and Destruction of Habitats (PADH) programme. The programme recognizes that uncontrolled and ill-planned tourism significantly degrades the coastal environment. Moreover, most severe impacts of tourism stem from the infrastructure and construction activity that it entails rather than the recreational activities themselves.

38. Taking into account the dynamic nature of the industry, the severity of the consequences of incompatible development and the potential for environmental and social benefits from planned development, the Coordination Office of the Global Plan of Action, following a series of consultations with various stakeholders, has developed a set of key principles with checklists. These principles aim to help Governments, the tourism industry and all stakeholders to assume proactive roles and implement a mix of management strategies to shape and guide the industry in an environmentally sustainable manner. One of the fundamental premises of the key principles is that, in guiding tourism development, self-regulation is likely to be more effective than statutory regulation because the industry is more likely to take the responsibility and ownership for self-regulatory approaches. The key principles were developed to raise awareness and provide practical guidance to key stakeholders to promote sustainable tourism planning. The key principles are endorsed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – an important actor in the field of tourism development – and are currently being used to develop sustainable coastal tourism in Africa.

3. Coordination of implementation projects and activities

39. The secretariats of some multilateral environmental agreements are also involved in establishment and coordination of specific implementation projects and activities. This is particularly the case for those agreements, such as some of the regional seas conventions, that are implemented through regional coordination units or regional activity centres that act as secretariats for several multilateral environmental agreements within a particular region, and which also have responsibilities for a range of other activities to promote environmental protection and conservation. This enables the regional coordination units and activity centres to adopt an integrated approach to specific regional problems such as pollution from tourism and the effects of tourism on biodiversity through practical projects.

40. To enhance the potential for effective implementation of sustainability in tourism through multilateral environmental agreements, Governments could consider:

- (a) Reviewing in more detail the specific ways in which multilateral environmental agreements are implemented in relation to tourism and identifying ways in which this could be strengthened;
- (b) Promoting the implementation of existing guidelines on tourism through all multilateral environmental agreements to which they are relevant, and developing additional guidance where there are any gaps that may be identified;
- (c) Assessing needs for capacity-building in relation to tourism, environmental protection and conservation;
- (d) Setting up the equivalent of a coordinating unit or activity centre on tourism to help support implementation of the various multilateral environmental agreements in relation to tourism, perhaps learning lessons from the regional seas approach, where it is possible to develop programmes that integrate the goals of several multilateral environmental agreements.

III. Addressing key challenges

A. Tourism and climate change

41. Greenhouse gas emissions from tourism originate from transport, energy and building sectors (as well as contributions from food and land-use change). Any policies designed to restrict the associated growth in greenhouse gas emissions would need to be targeted at all of these areas. Such policies include:

- (a) Development of Kyoto mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change affecting tourism: emission trading – e.g., for aviation from 2013 onwards; clean development mechanism, joint implementation;
- (b) Taxation (on emissions or aviation fuel use);
- (c) Introduction of carbon trading for air transport on the global multi-sector market;
- (d) Demand-side management to reduce consumer use through efficiency measures, conservation or structural changes;
- (e) Encouragement and financial support of development of renewable energy technologies and carbon neutral transport systems;
- (f) Government procurement policies.

42. In recent years there has been a proliferation of carbon offsetting schemes, specifically designed for individual travellers or for package tours. These schemes indicate that they will off-set the greenhouse gas load generated by travel though the investment in tree-planting projects, or support of local initiatives for introducing energy efficient or renewable energy schemes. As yet, however, these are small in scale and localized and it is unlikely that such schemes will have a major impact on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

43. Adaptation to climate variability will be the only way forward in many destinations that are currently prime holiday spots. There is therefore need for the development of risk assessment tools to identify vulnerabilities due to climate change (e.g., increasing flood risk, sea level rise, coral bleaching, tropical storm intensification, increased vulnerability to fire) and for the implementation of monitoring systems to keep account of changes that are occurring as a result of climate variability, - e.g., changes to the environment and climate of a destination, changes in resource availability, increasing frequency of problematic weather events, and so on. Adaptation measures will include protection and remediation measures that would ensure the future viability of the destination.

B. Tourism and biodiversity conservation

44. Land use planning and tourism development control is crucial to preventing the loss of biodiversity. The Convention on Biological Diversity Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in 2003 point to a systematic approach for the evaluation of tourism developments in sensitive areas. These guidelines should be

followed in assessing and proposing mitigation measures for any tourism development in areas of high biodiversity, within or outside protected areas.

45. Policies to influence tourists' behaviour could focus on improving visitors' management measures (site-specific), education activities, and the development of codes of conduct and regulations when appropriate.

46. Governments could also influence how tourism contributes to the conservation mission of all type of protected areas by:

- (a) Defining national guidelines for the development of tourism in protected areas;
- (b) Integrating local communities, in particular those settled within the boundaries of the protected areas, in decisions on tourism development;
- (c) Ensuring that tourism revenues are used for the conservation of the protected areas;
- (d) Developing legal instruments for sharing the management of tourism facilities, such as concessions and licenses;
- (e) Creating networks of protected areas that could benefit from tourism and from a common brand.

47. Furthermore, the level to which tourism contributes to the conservation of protected areas also depends on the ability of protected areas managers' to set up fruitful relationships with the private sector. These relationships could include the incorporation of the protected area in the excursions and holiday package, measures to raise the awareness of the tourists before their arrival in the area and direct financial contributions. The tourism business, however, expects a certain level of quality and reliability in the services available in the protected areas. Government policies could then focus on training protected areas managers in such areas a how to develop tourism facilities that marry quality and environmental considerations, interpretation programmes, congestion management strategies and tools, setting up effective entrance fee systems etc.

48. In view of the forecasted tourism growth and consequent need for new facilities, it is crucial that their siting, design and construction take into account and minimize the potential negative impacts on the effective functioning of ecosystems and the potential loss of fauna and flora.

49. To respond to this emerging issue, nine of the world's leading hotel companies have come together, through the International Business Leaders Forum, to work with Conservation International to consider the issue of sustainable hotel siting, design and construction. These companies actively supported the development of guiding principles for sustainable hotel siting, design and construction, covering all levels of hotel development, from inception to commissioning. The guidelines have been produced as a practical resource for planners, investors, hotel owners and developers who are involved in the process of planning or developing hotels, and draw on the knowledge and expertise of international experts from the hotel industry and specialists in sustainable building design.

50. The private sector should be stimulated:

- (a) To include protected areas in tourist itineraries and to give customers information about the natural and cultural features of visited sites and their roles in the conservation of local ecosystems;
- (b) Voluntarily to limit the size of tourist groups, or to divide large groups into smaller ones when visiting protected areas or areas that are generally sensitive in terms of their biodiversity;
- (c) To inform protected area managers of visits ahead of time and to discuss ways to reduce visitor impacts;
- (d) To integrate sustainability principles into the selection criteria and service agreements of their suppliers, and to choose locally owned and operated suppliers;
- (e) To make financial contributions to conservation and development projects;
- (f) To provide customers with opportunities to support protected areas and conservation projects in a proactive way;
- (g) To provide customers with guidelines on how to avoid negative impacts while visiting sensitive areas, for example by maintaining an appropriate distance from wildlife, staying on trails to avoid trampling plants or causing erosion, and keeping water and energy use down to avoid related impacts on the environment.

C. Private sector engagement

51. An important role in engaging tourism businesses is being played by tourism industry associations. Examples include the International Hotel and Restaurant Association, the Pacific Asia Travel Association, the International Federation of Tour Operators, and the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (part of the Caribbean Hotel Association). In addition, informal networks such as the Tour Operators' Initiative are also starting to play an important role in building common responses to many sustainability issues and sector tools.

52. In addition to Governments' role in land use planning and natural resources use, and the provision of public utilities, essential to complementing any private sector initiative in the areas of waste management, use of natural resources (energy and water) and pollution prevention, Governments can also play an instrumental role in building capacity of the private sector. This is particularly relevant in areas where micro and small medium enterprises are predominant. Capacity-building efforts could then build synergies between more traditional areas such as business development with sustainability issues. Direct advice, running specific training courses or developing advisory manuals are some of the tools that can be used to build the capacity of private enterprises to address sustainability in their daily operations.

53. The development of guidelines and codes of conduct would set clear expectations and performance indicators for the industry. Promoting the regular and transparent reporting of sustainability performance can also create a conducive atmosphere for continuous improvement. Reporting can be also performed by entire destinations, under the leadership of the local authorities and based on a defined set of destination's sustainability indicators.

54. Among the voluntary instruments that can be used for this purpose, certification is the most widespread in tourism. Certification is a mechanism for ensuring that an activity (or product) meets predetermined standards that may have been set by the Government, the private sector or both acting jointly. The advantages of certification include its potential clearly to distinguish those companies that have achieved high levels of performance (as defined by the standards). Despite the proliferation of certification schemes, however, very little ground has been covered in terms of creating a critical mass of companies that have been certified. The companies that have been certified though have been generally very positive about the outcomes (both from the environmental as well as business perspectives). Networks of certification systems have been set up to create economies of scale in delivering training to the individual applicants and for marketing purposes (based on the harmonization of the certification processes and criteria).

55. At the international level, there have been intense discussions for the creation of an accreditation system, the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council that would accredit the various international, regional, national and sub-national schemes. Governments can benefit from developing certification as a tool for mobilizing further private sector initiatives, as it offers potentially lower regulatory costs and potential positive returns to the country as a whole in terms of an enhanced image. The Government's role in certification is crucial: this could extend from partial financial assistance to an endorsement and, most important, the provision of complementary tools that would generate more incentives for companies to join the scheme (for example, tax rebates, subsidies for the adoption of specific measures, and marketing advantages through the national tourism board).

D. Sustainable consumption and tourism

56. The mobilization of the demand side of the sustainable tourism equation is crucial. In fact, tourism is a highly demand-driven industry, and it is characterized by high vulnerability to external factors such as natural risks, threats to health and security and simply fashion. Demand for sustainability in tourism services is being advocated as the missing link in persuading industrial players to take action towards sustainability in a more credible, consistent and effective way. Sustainable consumption in tourism integrates sustainability issues in the selection of destinations and service providers and in the tourists' behaviour during their stay at the destination. Building a demand for sustainable tourism would then rest on actions aimed at raising the awareness of the tourists about their own impact when in the destinations, and in promoting responsible purchasing choices.

57. Most of the efforts made by consumers' associations, non-governmental organizations and national and local public authorities have focused on guiding the behaviour of the tourists while on holiday, from specific information on illegal souvenir trade, to general information included as part of the official government travel advisory, to non-governmental organization-supported codes of conduct.

58. Tourism enterprises are also well placed to influence tourists in espousing environmentally and socially responsible behaviour during their holidays (even more crucial when the environmental and social contexts of the destinations are very different from those of the country of origin). Governments share also this responsibility. In developing communication campaigns, Governments should build upon the knowledge and dissemination potential of the tourism sector, in particular in order to reach individual tourists. Joint campaigns on illegal souvenir trading, wildlife watching codes of conduct, and other issues including those of a purely social nature, could draw their strength from their partnership between the public and private sector.

59. Much less effort has been concentrated on steering consumers' choice towards sustainable tourism products. In this area, Governments' policies could play an important role in developing marketing strategies to support businesses that have proven records of sustainability. These measures will influence sustainability as they will offer a business incentive for companies to adopt sustainable practices (and then gain access to the marketing advantages offered), and as they will influence consumers' behaviour by giving higher visibility to these products. Marketing tools can also be used to ensure economic sustainability, by guaranteeing market access to micro and community-based enterprises having limited or no marketing resources.

60. Effective marketing channels include destination management organizations and tourism boards, tour operators, guidebooks, media, certification schemes, travel fairs, such as the so-called "business-to-business (B2B) and "business-to-consumers" (B2C) fairs, internet retailers and consumers' organizations. Government policies can encourage tourism distribution channels to give preference to sustainable tourism products by providing training to destination management organizations and tourism boards, developing industry-driven standards and supply-chain management approaches, educating the public on certification schemes and promoting travel fairs that focus on sustainable products.

IV. Conclusions

61. Reaching sustainability requires striking a balance between the social, economic and environmental aspirations of current and future generations. Tourism thrives on a pristine environment, and it therefore provides fertile ground for testing innovative policies.

62. Only through a goal-oriented partnership between the private and public sector can the sustainability of tourism be achieved. The many aspects of sustainability of tourism and the complexity of the industry require a strong joint front to define and implement tools aimed at guaranteeing the long-term economic viability of the sector, supported by an unspoiled environment and a healthy social context.

63. Strategies and policies for sustainable tourism should be developed taking into account the aspirations of all players. Strategic choices should be based on a sound assessment of the conditions, problems and opportunities. These can be based on the use of sustainability indicators, as well as surveys of the industry and of tourist preferences.

64. Strategic objectives should then be developed in full consultation with all stakeholders, taking into account the varied aspects of sustainability (for example, the 12 aims presented in the present paper). Strategic choices will include decisions related to the type of tourism and target numbers. Governments should then develop policies that would support the set objectives and that would equally influence the development of a sound approach to the operations of tourism providers and the activities visitors.

V. Questions for the ministerial consultations

65. Ministers and heads of delegations may wish to consider the following questions:

1. What role should Governments play in meeting the challenges described above (with particular reference to governance structure and policy implementation tools)?
2. Protected areas are increasingly valuable tourism products: what forms of additional protection within and outside protected areas would be needed to prevent tourism from generating additional impacts?
3. What strategies, tools and actors should be involved in promoting sustainable consumption in tourism?

4. What role should be played by economic instruments in modifying production and consumption behaviour and raising revenue for conservation?
5. How can sustainable production and consumption in the tourism sector be promoted by Governments?
6. What is the role of certification in promoting sustainability in tourism?
7. How can UNEP activities in the area of sustainable tourism be strengthened?

Annex

Summary of tourism growth statistics⁴

1. With 760 million international arrivals recorded in 2004, accounting for almost \$622 billion of receipts, tourism is a major global activity that has grown by 25 per cent in the past 10 years.
2. Predicted growth rates remain high and, although global and regional patterns have fluctuated from year to year (most recently owing to fears over terrorism, health crises (e.g. SARs) and natural disasters), tourism has shown a strong and rapid ability to recover. More and more people have the desire and means to travel and the World Tourism Organization is predicting over 1,500 million international arrivals by 2020, more than double the current level. Forecasts to the year 2020 predict growth in tourism in all regions of the world, with the strongest relative growth occurring in parts of the developing world. Although Europe, the Americas, and East Asia and the Pacific will account for 80 per cent of total arrivals, and thus continue to dominate in terms of volume, international tourist arrivals to Africa are forecast to grow, on average, by 5.5 per cent per year during this period and those to South Asia by more than 6 per cent, compared with a world average of just over 4 per cent.
3. International travel is only one aspect of tourism. In many countries, domestic tourism outweighs international arrivals in terms of volume and income generated. This is also predicted to grow strongly.
4. Tourism is also a major source of employment, supporting 74 million jobs directly according to a World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimate, and 215 million (8.1 per cent of the world total) if all the indirect economic effects of the sector are taken into account. It represents \$4,218 billion of GDP (10.4 per cent of the world total), with travel and tourism making a particularly significant contribution to international trade, at over 12 per cent of total exports.

⁴ *Source:* UNEP and WTO (2005). Making tourism more sustainable: a guide for policy makers. Paris, United Nations Environment Programme.