

## **Armenia: Tourism and Environment**

The development of tourism and its influence on the process of sustainable development is one of the most important task for the Republic of Armenia.

We consider that the economic development and environmental protection issues of the country are interconnected as the damage caused as a result of economic growth will do damage to economy, ecosystems and population.

In the sustainable tourism policy development we attach importance to the role of Convention on Biodiversity Conservation serving as a base for us to develop the provisions of the policy which contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of landscape and biodiversity species. It is worth mentioning that equal importance is attached other Conventions referring to the issues on biodiversity and development of sustainable tourism: Convention on Wetlands, Convention on International Trade of Wild Species of Migratory Flora and Fauna, Convention on Global Heritage, as well as to UNEP papers.

The quality of the environment is a very important precondition for the development of tourism and we have clearly defined the following principals- *regulate all the actions that can cause damage to the environment.*

The Republic of Armenia is standing out for its landscape and biodiversity and it is of vital importance for us the conservation of that bio and vital wealth. We are concerned with all the risks that are connected with the development of tourism in the habitant and however, we consider that the biodiversity can be conserved thanks to tourism in the conditions of sustainable development.

During last twenty years the ecotourism has greatly developed becoming one of the most dynamic sectors of the tourism industry and in this way making great influence on the countries' social life, economy and environment.

The industry of tourism is ride with the development level of nature resources use, industry, agriculture, transportation, communication, trade and culture and at the same time it creates conditions for the future development and specialization of that branches, regulates their intra-branch relations and often introduces radical changes in that relations.

We attach importance to the development of ecotourism and to overcoming its weak points, as well as to the necessity to research its successful steps and new perspectives. We consider a very important the principle that development of tourism should correspond to the ecological and social potential of our country, and we must ensure that the tourism contributes to the development and socioeconomic progress of our country.

Organization of tourism in the National parks and reserves is a new opportunity for the environmental protection and economic growth of the country. In this connection the special protected areas, bearers of natural, cultural and historical heritage, have a great scientific potential, and good basis for sustainable tourism development.

Organization of tourism in the special protected areas is a new trend for us and we have already taken the first steps in “Sevan” and “Dilijan ” National Parks.

Protection of special protected areas and development of tourism there are not countervail, and promote the development strategy which is based on the rich biodiversity and natural heritage.

Because the nature-oriented sector of tourism makes great profit, so in the special protected areas real opportunities appear for the sustainable use of biodiversity as well for appropriate investments in that process.

Underlining the importance of tourism, as an important user of biodiversity we are guided by the following principles in our projects and initiatives:

1. To demonstrate integrated approach for the use of the special protected areas with a view of tourism, taking into consideration several components of the action: zoning, assessment of ecological impact, definition of ecostandards, definition of permissible charge.
2. Create consistently opportunities for awareness rising and information dissemination to all stakeholders regarding the issues connected with the special protected areas and biodiversity, which will contribute to the biodiversity conservation.
3. Develop jointly with the all stakeholders plans based on the ecosystem approach, which are aimed at the economic, social and ecological problems of the country: to ensure optimal opportunities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.
4. Fulfill long-term monitoring of the impact of tourism on biodiversity, as a result of which projects will be formed aimed at the further improvement of tourist activities.
5. Create preconditions for local development in the territories with special protected areas .
6. Contribute to the tourism quality improvement which is considered as an obligatory condition for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.
7. Carry out researches of recreation resources of the Republic of Armenia taking into account the vulnerability of flora and fauna.
8. Develop long term and short term projects on ecotourism promotion in the special protected areas