

**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

UNEP/GCSS.IX/CRP.6
8 February 2006

English only

**Ninth special session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum
Dubai, 7-9 February 2006
Agenda item xx**

**Statement of the seventh Global Civil Society Forum on tourism
and the environment**

1. The annex to the present note contains the statement of the seventh Global Civil Society Forum on the ministerial consultations on tourism and the environment. The present note and its annex are being submitted to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at its ninth special session, as requested by the Global Civil Society Forum.
2. The report of the seventh Global Civil Society Forum will be published under separate cover later during the first quarter of 2006.

NGOs Major Group Statement on Tourism and the Environment
February 8, 2006

The NGOs major group is very pleased that the issue of tourism is being addressed in this forum. After extensive deliberations at the Global Civil Society Forum, we would like to emphasize strongly the following issues related to sustainable tourism. Tourism is becoming increasingly important to national economies, and it must not be underestimated as a means of increasing intercultural understanding and promoting peace in our troubled world.

It is vitally important that sustainable tourism principles are applied to all aspects of the industry. Biodiversity, cultural diversity and sustainable tourism development are crucially inter-linked. The local community should retain ownership over tourism development, and be directly involved in participatory planning and implementation processes in the short and long term.

Labelling for sustainable tourism products is an effective way of identifying tourism products and services that are truly committed to the principles of sustainable tourism. We request that UNEP join the steering committee of the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council, a global body to accredit and harmonize existing certification programs on a voluntary basis. We look forward to the day when "destination labelling" will further assist consumers in making sustainable tourism choices.

We call on governments to work vigorously with the International Civil Aviation Organization to lessen the impacts of air travel on environment, especially because international aviation emissions are not included under Kyoto protocol targets. One way of compensating for the environmental impacts of air travel emissions is to offset the carbon released by investing in renewable energy products. We call for UNEP to set an example for the rest of us by offsetting all employee travel in this manner.

Environmental education is also a key component to sustainable tourism. Through awareness-raising, formal education and training opportunities, we can educate local populations and tourists alike. To this end, we urgently support the Decade for Education on Sustainable Development and would like to see this initiative supported by governments and by UNEP.

Tourism is integral to the International Year for Deserts and Desertification. We request that governments include, within the provisional agenda of the sixty-first session of the UN General Assembly, discussion of ecotourism issues in the sub-item entitled, "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind." We have begun a productive dialogue on tourism and the environment and heard many admirable statements here today. Let it not end without concrete resolutions on how best to harness the positive potential of this growing industry. We ask that tourism, as a cross-cutting issue, be given a special focus both in multilateral environmental agreements (MEA's) and within the UNEP program of work. Will sustainable tourism be operationalized and sufficiently funded at the national level? We hope so.