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Tourism and sustainable development

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Addendum

Tourism and social development*

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I. Social aspects of tourism

1. Tourism has important social impacts on countries. Its positive impacts upon the social development and modernization of host societies arise from its contributions, *inter alia*, to employment creation, worker training and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Moreover, the increasing participation of local communities in tourism development has encouraged modern structures of public administration as well as the sharing of joint responsibilities between public institutions and the private sector. However, there are a number of negative social impacts that can accompany tourism development both in the developed and in the developing world. As a result, the social policy challenges for national Governments are to address a wide range of concerns, such as those related to safeguarding local cultures; encouraging community participation in tourism; seeking more equitable distribution of tourism benefits; preventing exploitation of women and children in tourism; and improving conditions of employment.

2. The rapid development of tourism will inevitably cause changes in the host communities and economies, especially where the numbers of tourist arrivals have increased strongly, for example, in Bali and Indonesia, or where the ratio of tourist arrivals to local population is high, for example, in Barbados. Other factors, such as the degree of urbanization in the host community, and the strength of local cultural and social norms, also influence the impact of tourism on an area. Tourism activity increases the participation of women in the workforce, and enlarges access by the local population to improved services that have been provided as part of tourism development. The opportunity to demonstrate host culture to visitors is often a source of considerable pride for a community.

3. Many of the current social problems related to tourism, for example, drug abuse and prostitution, are not new or specific to any one country. What is relatively new is the growing international realization that without appropriate action, these problems will intensify and further damage the image of tourism as a beneficial force in development. Social impacts that are perceived to be negative require a management strategy to contain and mitigate them.

A. The social dimension of tourism

4. The intensity of the social impacts arising from tourism development depends on a range of factors, for example, the type and rate of tourism growth, the ratio of visitors to members of the resident community, seasonal trends and the

sociocultural resilience of the host community. A further difficulty in analysing tourism's social impact concerns the differing characteristics of visitors. Similarly, host communities have differing expectations of visitors and behavioural patterns which are rooted in indigenous culture. The potential for tension is obvious; international tourists do not so much *integrate with* as *confront* local communities. The social dimensions of tourism will differ between countries. Among the most common and prevalent social impacts of tourism that have caused concern involve the image of the destination, the exploitation of vulnerable persons, capacity considerations, localized benefits and costs, and health.

5. Marketing, which is at the heart of tourism development, seeks to present the most favourable and attractive image of a destination. It is usually an activity that is budget-constrained, thereby limiting what most national tourism administrations (NTA) can do without assistance from foreign partners, often represented by the travel trade in the tourist-generating countries. At another level, private sector partners develop their own international links including publicity for their own services and facilities. International cooperation provides both an opportunity and a danger. The opportunity is to share costs and allow a wider market penetration and coverage as a consequence of a partnership arrangement. The danger is that, without careful monitoring by the government or NTA (or both), tourism publicity may develop an undesirable image for a country. At the simplest level, advertising a country as a "cheap" destination has not only financial but also social implications. One role of government is to provide such policy guidelines to both the NTA and the private sector as ensure that a misleading and undesirable image is not projected.

6. The potential conflict between the image a government (and the host tourism sector) may want to project and the one that the foreign tour operators believe they can market can be negotiated and resolved; commercial motivation should never be the excuse for projecting a socially damaging and unacceptable image. If this type of publicity is not controlled, it can lead to the attraction of undesirable tourists, for example, sex tourists.

7. The fact that many international tourists travel from the wealthy countries of the world to its less wealthy ones has the effect of exposing the host countries to different cultures, lifestyles and income levels; these reflect living standards that are usually well above those of the host countries. This *demonstration effect* can cause economic, social and political impacts, not least of all a sense of envy of the apparent advantages of the foreigners' perceived lifestyle. Often the gap between income levels is such that local peoples feel

exploited owing to the relative cheapness of the services that they offer.

8. The apparent affluence of tourists attracts the providers of undesirable services, particularly drug suppliers and prostitutes. Once these services become prevalent and common, a destination acquires an image or reputation that will attract undesired categories of tourists. As these types of business increase, so does the sense of exploitation in the host community, particularly among those not engaged in such services. The exploitation of the most vulnerable in society increases antagonism towards tourists and tourism and may well undermine the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector in a place.

9. Without adequate community participation in tourism development, particularly where tourism development is rapid and large-scale, a sense of exploitation can exacerbate social tensions and alienate the host community.

10. The growth of tourism has also put pressure on existing resources. Tourism is avaricious in consuming natural resources, including water and land. Where priority is given to meeting the needs of the tourism sector, this may often be at the expense of local people. It is sometimes difficult for local people to understand why tourists (and tourism) should be given facilities and services that they themselves do not enjoy — for example, access to clean water, an electricity supply, and support services perhaps including personal security. Where tourism development is based on an *enclave* model, and where there is limited contact between visitor and hosts, the feeling of estrangement and of being underprivileged is intensified. Recent demonstrations targeted at arriving tourists at airports in Kerala, India, reflected the disenchantment of local villagers about reduced water supplies which is an alleged consequence of overbuilding in the hotel sector.

11. As overcrowding occurs, the host community may find itself under greater pressure from visitors, a pressure which may change the rhythm of a community's lifestyle. Access to shops and transport may be more difficult; prices may rise to take advantage of the tourists' presence, causing a knock-on effect for local residents. Frustration with tourists may cause an *irridex effect*, whereby residents question the overall advantages of tourism because of the inconveniences caused by it.

12. Although tourism does provide economic benefits to a country at large, for example, foreign exchange earnings and government revenues, the dislocative effects of tourism — the overcrowding, the pressure on resources, the challenges to established culture and the related demands that tourism makes on communities — are borne locally. Unless some if

not all of the economic and financial benefits from local tourism activity remain in the community, the costs of hosting tourists may be disproportionate to the benefits received. Where this situation obtains, it will inevitably give rise to resentment and possible hostility towards tourists.

13. As international tourism increases, there are growing concerns about the transmission of diseases and the availability of appropriate levels of health care. Appropriate institutions in most developed tourism-generating countries can offer services and medical advice to prospective travellers. Facilities are also available to deal with most medical conditions. In developing countries, medical services and facilities will usually be less available, but they are sometimes specifically provided for tourists. For example, hotels may provide in-house medical services.

B. The cultural dimension of tourism

14. As far as the cultural well-being of the destinations are concerned, tourism can have both negative dimensions, such as cultural deterioration and conflict due to cultural differences, and positive ones, such as cultural exchange, and the revival of traditional crafts and ceremonies.

15. The major negative dimension is the deterioration of valuable cultural assets. As with most social changes, cultural deterioration does not take place overnight but rather over a protracted period. Change may occur through a social demonstration effect — that is to say, imitating what foreign visitors do, wear and eat — but may also be induced by economic factors. For example, the employment of women in tourism is generally seen as a liberating factor; it may however, be viewed alternatively as a means of undermining traditional family structures and values. Similarly, employment in tourism that requires shift work can disrupt traditional family life and religious observance.

16. Perhaps a more serious form of cultural deterioration is to be found where historic sites and buildings are not protected and where the traditional environment has been replaced or has virtually disappeared. Cultural awareness is a necessary input into tourism development. There is a significant role for the local community in protecting a culture — in deciding what it is prepared to offer, how its cultural patrimony is to be presented and which, if any, aspects of the culture are to be off-limits to visitors. In Switzerland, for example, part of the annual Maidens' Festival is closed to visitors in order to protect its cultural significance and status.

17. On the other hand, it is now common for destinations to offer “cultural evenings” — for example, “Scottish”, “Thai” and “Indian” evenings — where presentations of traditional dance, music and folklore are made, usually accompanied by a meal featuring indigenous cuisine.

18. However, cross-cultural contacts are also a potential cause of social discontent — particularly where language barriers frustrate close contacts and cultural exploration. Where host communities are faced with large numbers of visitors, these problems will be intensified particularly where the local culture is fragile. The concept of carrying capacity must be sufficiently comprehensive to evaluate the ability of a local community to absorb tourists without submerging the local culture.

19. A common problem is that many visitors have little or no appreciation of local culture. This situation is often reflected in cases where local communities may also have little or no understanding of foreign visitors’ cultures. These problems are exacerbated where there is a language barrier between the two parties. To some extent, these problems can be mitigated by introduction of tourism community awareness campaigns. This measure is now generally being advocated in tourism development planning. However, without some of the benefits from tourism accruing to local communities through the creation of jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities and social benefits, these campaigns may be ineffective.

20. Many tourists are travelling in part to experience different cultures. The growth of long-haul tourism from Europe to Asia is an example of this trend. The cultural exchange can benefit both parties and, of course, generates economic and financial advantages to the host community. There is some evidence to suggest that, at least from Europe, there is a trend towards long-haul culture-based holidays.¹ If such a trend continues, then this will require that some education in cultural differentiation awareness be offered to both tourists and the host community. To some extent, this has already been initiated in countries like Sri Lanka and Western Samoa where on disembarkation at the airport visitors are given a welcome leaflet which includes examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. On long-haul flights, airlines have opportunities through in-flight video to inform passengers about the expectations and sensitivities of host communities and countries. For example, Iran Air informs female passengers of the expected mode of dress in the country.

21. Tourism has contributed significantly to the revival of traditional crafts and ceremonies. The traditional handicraft industries retain much of the product value-added within communities and provide employment opportunities for

women. In countries where tourism is mainly based on wildlife and ecotourism, rural community development has benefited.

II. Social policy challenges for the tourism industry

22. One of the major social challenges for the private sector is to overcome narrow sectional interests in the interest of furthering tourism development and increasing levels of benefits. In South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, various organizations within the tourism sector have combined to form umbrella organizations (for example, the Zimbabwe Tourism Council) so as to provide a representative voice for tourism and a conduit for government liaison. These organizations also provide a forum in which to discuss general issues important to the sector.

23. The tourism sector has been characterized as offering generally poor conditions of work — low wages, irregular working hours, and part-time and seasonal work. These characteristics are reflected in high rates of labour turnover, low skills and poor service standards. Worldwide, tourism employs many women, young people and, often, immigrant workers; all three groups can be seriously disadvantaged in employment terms. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has, in its tripartite composition (Governments, and employers’ and workers’ organizations), adopted international conventions and recommendations to protect workers’ rights.² The ILO Convention concerning the hospitality sector (Convention No. 172 concerning Working Conditions in Hotels, Restaurants and Similar Establishments (1991)) calls for policies to improve the working conditions in hotels, restaurants and similar establishments. In particular, the Convention provides for the regulation of working hours and compensation of overtime; daily and weekly rest periods; paid annual leave; regularly paid basic remuneration; and the prohibition of sale and purchase of employment.³

24. New technologies in the hotel, catering and tourism sector have been a prominent subject of discussion in ILO in 1997.⁴ As technology continues to facilitate the development and operation of tourism, it should be monitored to evaluate impacts on jobs and conditions of work. Equitable distribution of productivity benefits; new management styles; changes in skill requirements; training and retraining needs; high turnover rates; promotion of the development of small enterprises; and labour-management relations in view of the changes taking place, are all areas of concern.

25. Government alone cannot secure needed social improvements in the tourism sector, although it can legislate on matters relating to health and safety at work, health insurance and pensions, minimum wages, and employment of women and young people. To be effective, legislation has to be implemented; tripartite social dialogue can facilitate such implementation. With Governments being encouraged by the international agencies to withdraw from direct operating roles in the tourism sector⁵ so as to create an “enabling environment” to facilitate private sector development, it is desirable that future discussion on conditions of work in the tourism sector should feature a strengthened dialogue between employers and employee representatives. In the same way that there is growing support for community participation in tourism development, there is a likely greater role for open communication, consultation and negotiation among the social partners in all enterprises, regardless of their size.⁶

26. Collective agreements may be necessary to cover flexible working arrangements and other issues such as the repercussions of the introduction of new technologies on employment, skills, wages, job security and workers’ rights. Such agreements may be of assistance, in particular to SMEs with respect to improving their competitiveness through the heightened skills and performance of their workers. In many of the small companies, training of employees and conditions of work are not yet high priorities, although quality of services and a properly motivated labour force should be important considerations. The financing of training activities is therefore recognized to be an important challenge for the tripartite dialogue among Governments and workers’ and employers’ organizations.

III. Social policy challenges for national Governments

27. Much more can be done to optimize the benefits from tourism and to limit negative impacts. Such actions will require a coordinated approach of Governments, the private sector, workers’ and employers’ organizations, non-governmental organizations and international agencies. Government can initiate policy interventions in areas such as the sustainability of tourism development, indigenization of the tourism sector, promotion of entrepreneurial initiative, community participation in tourism development planning and community tourism awareness campaigns, safeguarding of local cultures, human resource development, participation of women and children, and a legal framework for tourism.

28. The sustainability of tourism has an important social dimension. Tourism can and does generate income to improve the social, cultural and natural environment which can be shared with the local communities. It is now common practice even in developed countries to charge entrance fees to museums and recreational amenities to contribute to their upkeep.

29. A common long-term social development objective is the indigenization of tourism operations and the benefits resulting from tourism through the promoting of national funding, management and ownership in the tourism sector. One way to encourage indigenization is to “reserve” some areas of tourism development for local investors. For example, in areas of tourism where SMEs operate, such as the areas of small and medium-sized hotels, and car hire, foreign investors might be excluded; or if they were allowed to enter, they might not be offered any investment incentives. In Zambia, for example, privatization of game lodges and hunting concessions has been carried out on an international competitive bid basis; but certain leases and hunting concessions have been reserved for domestic bidders so as to encourage both indigenous investors and, particularly, indigenous entrepreneurs. On the other hand, lifting restrictions on foreign investments and allowing them in where, until recently, they were banned correspond to general trends of economic globalization. Honduras, for example, has opened its attractive coastline to foreign landownership in order to attract investments in the development of tourism.

30. If more indigenous business ownership could be developed, the perception of tourism as a foreign-dominated sector would be reduced. This objective is already receiving attention from international agencies and from some Governments. More needs to be done, particularly as related to the provision of education, training and encouragement for prospective indigenous entrepreneurs.

31. In many developing countries, tourism is often regarded as an industry provided for and managed by foreigners. Although this is something of an exaggeration, it does have a certain validity. In many developing countries, tourists enjoy a standard of amenity and services that is not available to the majority of local people. This can lead to antagonism towards tourists, political dissatisfaction and a strengthening of feelings of deprivation. Community tourism awareness campaigns try to inform communities about why tourism is being developed, the potential benefits that can be realized and the opportunities for participation in the sector. Informing the community should be a continuing process and should be a responsibility of the national tourism administration, private sector associations and community representatives.

32. Much more needs to be done to strengthen community participation. Communities should be allowed to comment on development proposals and perhaps be involved in the implementation of the proposals. Perhaps progress on this issue can be best achieved through the funding agencies, which could insist on such a requirement's being put into project proposals.

33. Community participation has to be linked to community benefits. An example of such an initiative comes from one of the world's major civil engineering projects, the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Through this project, water is pumped from Lesotho to South Africa. A World Bank-supported project has incorporated a small export tax on every gallon of water exported. This now large and growing fund is used to compensate displaced farmers and to stimulate small-scale business, for example, pony-trekking, handicrafts and related tourism facilities. The economic and financial spin-offs from this project are a model for countries. The Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) project in Zimbabwe and the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas (ADMAGE) project in Zambia are two other examples where community involvement in tourism — in this case, in anti-poaching activities — financially benefits the participating communities.

34. It is for national Governments to decide what type and scale of tourism development are appropriate in particular locations. They have to be sensitive to cultural norms and traditions and to intervene when necessary and where appropriate to prevent cultural deterioration. To stimulate cultural awareness, they should work closely with communities and the private sector to ensure that available funding is used effectively and efficiently.

35. Some of the major pressures on cultures derive from a too rapid growth in visitor arrivals and unrestricted access to culturally fragile areas. National Governments can intervene to ensure that developments in tourism have been of an appropriate scale and in a location to meet the social carrying capacity of a community. In Vanuatu, the Government decided to permit tourism development on only three designated islands so as to protect more remote locations from tourism incursions. In Seychelles, the Government has implemented strict control over the expansion of tourist accommodations and over where any new development may take place. This has not only protected the culture of Seychelles from overexposure, but also limited environmental impacts, thereby allowing Seychelles to market itself as a pristine tourism environment at a commensurately high price. Bhutan has used visa control to limit the number of tourists so as to preserve its cultural identity. Bermuda has used licensing to

limit the number of cruise ships allowed to call each day. This overall control on numbers together with the development of specific facilities for day cruise visitors took pressure off its resident population. In Tanalot, Bali, the State Governor intervened to prevent the building of a hotel that would have impeded access to, and views of, a traditional temple.

36. Although tourism is an international industry, business must do more to provide opportunities for nationals. One of the social problems related to tourism in the developing countries is the lack of indigenous senior managers. This lack adds to the perception that tourism is a foreigners' industry. It is a perception that has to change if tourism is to attract quality staff to meet increasingly globalized service standards. There is a major role for government in achieving this objective. However, as is the case for so many other aspects of the tourism sector, policies will have to be formulated in consultation with the private sector, and with the continuing support of the specialist international agencies.

37. Although it may be argued that women have been exploited and abused by tourism, one can counter that tourism has also provided many opportunities for their productive participation in the sector. In many countries, women have been very active as entrepreneurs and have created for themselves new economic and social opportunities. Every effort should be made to encourage this trend through affirmative action programmes, training and education, and appropriate support measures. Much has been achieved in this area over the last decade but more can be done. There is already in existence a wide range of organizations at national and international levels that pursue specific agendas for women. Stakeholders in the tourism sector should recognize the contribution that women have made to tourism and can continue to make in the future.

38. Another vulnerable group of workers in the tourism sector comprises young people and children. Child labour in the tourism sector encompasses far more than the sexual abuse of children by tourists, which is what Governments, non-governmental organizations and international agencies have so far been focusing on. Working children are found as helpers in all tourism activities, but mainly in hidden places such as kitchens. Being present in places of accommodation and entertainment, they easily become victims of sexual abuse as well. It is the link between children's doing "normal work" and their being led to provide sexual services that is so particularly characteristic of child labour in tourism.⁷ However, child labour, as defined by ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973),⁸ is by itself forbidden in most countries.

39. Governments should ensure that there is an appropriate legal framework available to manage and control the tourism sector. Such a framework is needed to prevent exploitation of resources and people, and to stop sex tourism and the abuse of children. Legislation itself is not sufficient, however: it will require commitment by Governments to implement the legislation and to secure international collaboration to trace and prosecute offenders.

IV. Social policy challenges for the international community

40. Within the last four years, three major international meetings have discussed issues concerning workers' rights and employment worldwide, including in developing countries. The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, adopted the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development⁹ proclaiming, *inter alia*, the recognition of rights of "basic workers". The World Summit declared its specific commitments to, *inter alia*, the prohibition of forced labour and of child labour; freedom of association; the right to organize and bargain collectively; equal remuneration for work of equal value; and the elimination of discrimination in employment. The World Trade Organization's First Ministerial Conference, held in Singapore in 1996, saw the States concerned reaffirm their commitment to the Copenhagen agreements. In 1998, the International Labour Conference of ILO adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in Geneva. The Declaration takes up fundamental rights that are the subject of ILO conventions, namely: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (c) the effective abolition of child labour; and (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The Conference declared that all members of ILO, even if they had not ratified the conventions in question, had an obligation to respect, to promote and to realize, the principles concerning the fundamental rights that were the subject of those conventions.²

41. The link between tourism and sexual exploitation of children received particular international attention when, in 1996, the Government of Sweden, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT), and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child organized in Stockholm, the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. As a follow-up, the World Tourism Organization

convened a Tourism and Child Prostitution Watch Task Force which aims to mobilize international opinion to persuade Governments to take actions to prevent such sexual exploitation. A subsequent World Tourism Organization World Leaders' Conference on Social Impacts of Tourism, held in Manila in 1997, produced the Manila Declaration,¹⁰ signed by representatives of 77 countries and territories who pledged to eradicate sex tourism. Recent actions against paedophiles by authorities in the Philippines, Thailand and other countries, including tourism-sending countries, are indicative of efforts being made to eradicate this practice.

Notes

¹ P. Aderhold, *The European Holiday Market for Developing Countries* (Copenhagen, Dr. Peter Aderhold Institute of Tourism Research Planning, 1995).

² See ILO, *ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up adopted by the International Labour Conference at its Eighty-sixth Session; Geneva; 18 June 1998* (Geneva, 1998).

³ See ILO, *International Labour Conventions and Recommendations, 1977-1995*, vol. III, part I, Conventions (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1996).

⁴ ILO, *New Technologies and Working Conditions in the Hotel, Catering and Tourism Sector* (Geneva, 1997).

⁵ C. L. Jenkins, "Tourism in developing countries — the privatisation issue", in *Tourism: the State of the Art*, A. V. Seaton, ed. (Chichester, United Kingdom, John Wiley & Sons, 1994).

⁶ ILO, *Note on the Proceedings: Tripartite Meeting on the Effects of New Technologies on Employment and Working Conditions in the Hotel, Catering and Tourism Sector* (Geneva, 1997).

⁷ M. Black, *In the Twilight Zone: Child Workers in the Hotel, Tourism and Catering Industry* (Geneva, ILO, 1995).

⁸ See ILO, *International Labour Conventions and Recommendations, 1952-1976*, vol. II, part I, Conventions (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1996).

⁹ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I., resolution 1, annex II.

¹⁰ WTO, *Manila Declaration on the Social Impacts of Tourism* (Madrid, 1997).