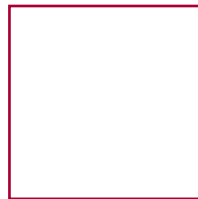


**Biological Diversity
and Tourism:
Development
of Guidelines for
Sustainable Tourism in
Vulnerable Ecosystems**





Foreword

The rapid and often uncontrolled growth of tourism, while contributing to economic growth, also has a major impact on the environment and traditional cultures. In order to promote sustainable tourism, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2000 accepted an invitation to participate, with regard to biological diversity, in the international work programme on sustainable tourism development under the Commission on Sustainable Development process. The primary mandate in the invitation was to contribute to the development of a set of international guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development in vulnerable ecosystems. To assist in the development of such guidelines, the Secretariat was requested, inter alia, to convene an international workshop.

The Workshop on Biological Diversity and Tourism was subsequently held in Santo Domingo in June 2001. The Workshop resulted in the "Draft International Guidelines for Activities Related to Sustainable Tourism Development in Vulnerable Terrestrial, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems and Habitats of Major Importance for Biological Diversity and Protected Areas, including Fragile Riparian and Mountain Ecosystems". Although the primary focus of the guidelines is vulnerable ecosystems and habitats, they are also appropriate for tourism and biological diversity in all geographical locations and tourist destinations. The draft Guidelines (the full text is available on the Convention website at <http://www.biodiv.org>), were submitted to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) at its seventh meeting and, in accordance with SBSTTA recommendations, have been forwarded to the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to the World Ecotourism Summit and its preparatory meetings.

The guidelines are an evolving tool and their development and further refinement an ongoing process; they should and could be adapted to different realities and ecosystems. This brochure is an attempt to retain and diffuse the core set of principles and elements proposed by the draft international guidelines. It was conceived as a practical tool providing technical guidance to policy makers and managers with responsibilities covering tourism and/or biodiversity, whether in national or local government, the private sector, indigenous and local communities, non-governmental organizations and other organizations, on ways of working together with key stakeholders involved in tourism and biodiversity.

Finally, in order to reflect the true richness of local biological and natural resources, as perceived, described and interpreted by indigenous and local communities, the brochure is illustrated with images of biological diversity as portrayed in native art. We hope that, in this way, the reader will gain an image of tourist destinations and the value and beauty of their biological diversity that is different from that conventionally conveyed in tourism-related materials.

Hamdallah Zedan
Executive Secretary, CBD



Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries, but while bringing pleasure and incomes to millions, tourism is also putting more and more stress on fragile ecosystems. Its social, economic and environmental effects are immense and complex, not least because tourism often involves visits to sites of natural and cultural importance. Tourism is also a fiercely competitive global market, with incentives for putting short-term earnings before long-term environmental health.

Sustainable tourism can generate jobs and revenues, thus providing an incentive for preserving natural areas. It can also raise public awareness of the many products and services provided by natural ecosystems and biological resources and respect for traditional knowledge and practices. Sustainable tourism clearly has the potential to reconcile economic and environmental concerns and give a practical meaning to sustainable development.

The CBD guidelines focus on making tourism and biodiversity more mutually supportive, engaging the private sector and local and indigenous communities, and promoting infrastructure and land-use planning based on the principles of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. They set out what the proponent of a new tourism investment or activity should do to seek approval, how the authorities should manage the approval process, and how to sustain the transition to sustainable tourism through education and capacity building.



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The ecology of the site and its surroundings and the plants, animals, and ecosystems that could be affected should be analyzed.

Sustainable tourism proposals

Government agencies, private firms and other proponents of tourism projects and activities should be required to submit proposals through a formal notification process. They should provide full and timely advance notice to relevant authorities and all interested stakeholders – including indigenous and local communities – in order to receive "prior informed approval".

The required information could include the project's geographical location and a description, proximity to human settlements, and the applicable laws and regulations. The proposed activities and how they may affect social and economic conditions of local communities should be analyzed. The ecology of the site and its surroundings and the plants, animals, and ecosystems that could be affected should be analyzed, as should any possible transboundary implications.

All of this information should be made available to the public for comment. After reviewing the proponent's notification, the authorities may ask for additional information or ask other agencies to conduct further research. The final step will be to approve the project, with or without conditions, or reject it.

The government's role

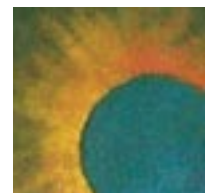
Governments need to establish a management process for tourism activities that engages all stakeholders, including the private sector, indigenous and local communities, and non-governmental organizations. This process will normally be at the national level, but can also be

undertaken at the local or community level. A consultative process should be established to ensure effective dialogue and information sharing amongst all stakeholders and partners.

The CBD guidelines set out a 10-step management process:

1) Gather baseline information. This information is essential for taking decisions and assessing their consequences. It should include local and national data on current socio-economic and environmental conditions, including trends within the tourism industry and how these are affecting local communities. Information is also needed on biodiversity destruction and resources, including sites of particular cultural or environmental importance, and national, subnational and local action plans and reports on biodiversity and sustainable development. Both scientific information and traditional knowledge should be gathered.

This information should be collected from the full range of stakeholders and compiled on the basis of the ecosystem approach (under which species and landscapes are viewed primarily as an integral part of their encompassing ecosystem). The government needs to assign a multi-disciplinary team of experts to collate and synthesize the information and consult with stakeholders. The team can draw on such international resources as the Convention's clearing-house mechanism and on networks such as the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage sites and the Ramsar wetlands sites.





6 Once a project is approved, any damage to biodiversity must be avoided or minimized.



The vision can be expressed as a set of economic, social, and environmental goals.

- 2) Develop an overall vision.** Based on the review of baseline information and on the country's sustainable development plans, a long-term vision for sustainable development should be elaborated. The vision can be expressed as a set of economic, social, and environmental goals. Depending on the country's priorities, these goals could set targets or standards in such areas as land-use zoning, ecosystem functioning, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, poverty alleviation, and the participation of indigenous and local communities.
- 3) Set specific objectives.** To help realize this vision, the government will need to set shorter term objectives. These may include clear targets and timetables in order to ensure that any tourism development has acceptable environmental impacts while meeting real market demand. Examples may include adopting legal and other measures needed for establishing and supporting conservation areas, setting aside a certain amount of land to meet the requirements of the biosphere reserve concept, strengthening protected area networks, employing economic policy tools and encouraging the private sector to actively support conservation efforts. Targets may be either performance based or process based.
- 4) Review legislation and controls.** Measures for land-use planning, environmental assessment, building regulations and tourism standards may have to be developed or updated. This review could explore approval and licensing procedures for tourism development and activities, incentives for sustainable tourism, the application of economic instruments for the management of tourism and biodiversity, and the planning and siting of tourism facilities. It could also address what is needed to increase land-management and ownership by indigenous and local communities and to improve decision-making on issues related to tourism development.
- 5) Assess the potential impacts of new projects.** Before a proposed tourism development or activity proceeds, the environmental, social, cultural, and economic effects – both positive and negative – should be comprehensively assessed. Options for managing potential effects should also be explored. Experts can evaluate the adequacy of impact assessments submitted by project proponents. If the information or assessment is not up to standard, then further studies may need to be undertaken. Indigenous and local communities should be fully involved in impact assessments, which should also take advantage of traditional knowledge.

Negative environmental impacts can involve land-use change, consumption or destruction of local natural resources, damages and alterations to habitats and ecosystems, contamination and pollution, production of waste and the introduction of alien invasive species and pathogens. Socio-economic and cultural impacts should also be considered, including social degradation of local communities and changes in traditional practices and lifestyles and in incomes and jobs. Positive impacts can include the generation of revenues for maintaining natural areas, financing needed infrastructure and services, creating jobs and wealth, and diversifying the economy.
- 6) Manage the environmental impacts.** Once a project is approved, any damage to biodiversity must be avoided or minimized. To be sustainable, tourism should be managed within the carrying capacity and limits of each ecosystem and site. Critical issues can include siting, traffic flow, behavior controls, safeguards for the most ecologically sensitive areas, and limitations on numbers of visitors and their impacts.

Pollution and waste can be prevented and minimized. Facilities, services and technologies can be designed according to the principles of eco-efficiency and cleaner production. Measures can be



8 Management must be adaptive, accept the need for some "learning-by-doing", and monitor and respond to ongoing feedback.



Affected local and indigenous communities and other stakeholders must be consulted and involved.



taken to ensure the conservation of landscapes and natural and cultural heritages. Contingency plans can be prepared for environmental emergencies. Best practices and lessons learned can be shared, education and public awareness promoted, local communities involved, appropriate behaviors encouraged.

- 7) Ensure decision-making is transparent and accountable.** Affected local and indigenous communities and other stakeholders must be consulted and involved, and approached for prior informed consent. Formal legal mechanisms are needed for approving tourism development proposals, notifying the public about the decision, and monitoring compliance with the agreed conditions.
- 8) Implement the decision.** The project developer or operator will be responsible for complying with all the conditions set and must notify the designated authority of any failure to do so. Any revisions or changes to an approved project, including additions or variations of activities, must be approved by the designated authorities. Local stakeholders should be given an ongoing opportunity to express their wishes and concerns to those managing tourism facilities and activities, based on clear, adequate and accessible information. For their part, governments or designated authorities will need to monitor compliance. Communities and other interested stakeholders may also monitor compliance and report their findings to the designated government authorities.
- 9) Monitor impacts and compliance.** Developers and operators of tourism facilities and activities should be required to report periodically. A monitoring and reporting system should be put in place prior to the start-up. Indicators to cover all aspects of biodiversity management and sustainable tourism,

including socio-economic and cultural aspects, should be identified and monitored both nationally and for individual sites.

Monitoring should cover efforts to protect endangered species, keep out alien invasive species, comply with national and international rules on access to genetic resources, and prevent the unauthorized removal of genetic resources. Also vital are general environmental and biodiversity conditions and trends and tourism trends and impacts. Management measures may need to be adjusted, as appropriate, where adverse impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems are detected.

- 10) Pursue adaptive management.** The complex and dynamic nature of ecosystems and our lack of complete knowledge or understanding of their functioning means that decisions cannot simply be taken and forgotten. Non-linear processes, time lags between cause and effect, and general uncertainty cloud the picture. Management must be adaptive, accept the need for some "learning-by-doing", and monitor and respond to ongoing feedback.

Adaptive management should take the precautionary principle fully into account. There is also a need for flexibility in policy-making and implementation. Long-term, inflexible decisions are likely to be inadequate or even destructive. Ecosystem management should be envisaged as a long-term experiment that builds on its results as it progresses.

Implementing adaptive management in relation to tourism and biodiversity will require the active cooperation and close interaction of tourism managers and biodiversity managers. Adaptive management can also be undertaken by all those who have management control over any specific site, including local government, indigenous and local communities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other organizations.



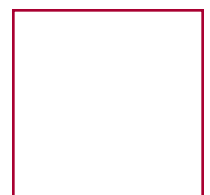
10 Sustainable tourism also needs to be supported by capacity-building activities.



Ensuring a permanent transition

To work effectively over time, the procedures outlined above need to be supported by long-term **public education and awareness raising campaigns**. These campaigns should inform both professionals and the general public about the impacts of tourism on biological diversity and about good practices in this area. They should be tailored for various audiences, including tourists, tourism developers and operators, and policy-makers and government officials. The private sector could play an active role in promoting awareness.

Sustainable tourism also needs to be supported by **capacity-building activities**. Such activities should aim to strengthen the capacities of governments and all stakeholders for implementing the CBD guidelines on sustainable tourism. They can be carried out at the local, national, regional and international levels. Building capacity can include strengthening human resources and institutional capacities, transferring know-how, developing appropriate facilities, and training on biodiversity, sustainable tourism, impact assessment and impact-management. Tourism and environmental professionals need a wide range of skills, and local communities need decision-making abilities, skills and knowledge in advance of future tourist in-flows. Information exchange and collaboration regarding sustainable tourism implementation through networking and partnerships between all stakeholders affected by, or involved in tourism, including the private sector, should be encouraged.



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