



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

Distr.: General
8 December 2005

English only



Ninth special session of the Governing Council/

Global Ministerial Environment Forum

Dubai, 7–9 February 2006

Item 5 (c) of the provisional agenda*

Policy issues: Tourism and the environment

**Activities of UNEP in the area of tourism: UNEP tourism
strategy**

Note by the Executive Director

Summary

The annex to the present note provides information on the activities of UNEP in the area of tourism, as referred to in document UNEP/GCSS.IX/9/Add.3.

The annex is being circulated without formal editing.

* UNEP/GCSS.IX/1.

Annex

Activities of UNEP in the area of tourism – UNEP tourism strategy

1. UNEP's mandate in tourism

UNEP's activities in the field of tourism are based on:

- UNEP's Governing Council at its 20th Session (UNEP/GC20/1.4/Rev.1) and of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD E/CN.17/1999/L.6), requesting UNEP to develop the Principles for the Implementation of Sustainable Tourism.
- The Governing Council Decision 22/6 on 'Promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns' and 22/7 'Engaging business and industry'; and
- The Convention on Biological Diversity's COP VII Decision VII/14 to provide among others technical and financial assistance in the implementation of the Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development adopted by COP VII.

1.1 UNEP's strategic goals and objectives

Taking into account the mandate and programmes of work of other UN organisations in the field of environmental sustainability of tourism, UNEP's strategic framework and expertise and its achievements in the area of sustainable tourism, UNEP:

1. Support the integration of sustainability in tourism policies in developing, emerging and post conflicts' countries by demonstrating the benefits of a vertical and horizontal integration of sustainability in tourism policies providing the enabling environment for a sustainable tourism industry.
2. Promote Sustainable Production and Consumption patterns in tourism by developing innovative tools to support the integration of environmental considerations into the tourism business directly and indirectly by promoting demand for sustainable tourism services.

1.2 Lines of intervention

UNEP work on tourism aims at addressing a number of key barriers that limit the integration of sustainability in the decision making process of the private sector, public policy makers and consumers. In particular those that will be addressed by DTIE Programme are:

Tourism industry:

- Long and complex supply chain
- Low technical expertise and financial opportunities to invest of many of the SMEs
- Public authorities (national and local):
- Fragmented responsibilities
- Decentralisation of tourism development related policies
- Consumers:
- Sustainability not considered by consumers as an aspect of the tourism service's quality or tourists' right
- Concept of sustainability not clear to consumers

1.3 Programmatic Areas

The implementation of the Strategy will rest on two interconnected work programmes:

1. A Sustainable policy support programme aiming at providing information and technical expertise to national authorities on the integration of sustainability in national and local tourism policies;
2. A programme to support the integration of sustainable production and consumption in the tourism industry, aiming at providing incentives and expertise to the tourism industry for a more effective integration of sustainable practices in their business operations.

1.4 Building synergies with the World Tourism Organization

The World Tourism Organization is the UN specialised agency for tourism¹. Ministries/Secretaries of Tourism are the core constituency but WTO/OMT (in 2003 141 countries), also has ‘affiliated’ membership (350 in 2003) of businesses (Business Council), and academia (Educational Council). Its mission is to promote “the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, with the aim of contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

One of main areas of WTO’s activities in ‘sustainable’ tourism is becoming the poverty alleviation goal. Through the creation of the Programme “Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty” (STEP) WTO is aiming at creating a funding mechanism for local projects that would aim at linking tourism development to poverty alleviation (in co-operation with UNCTAD).

WTO/OMT has collaborated with UNEP on many projects: in particular in the Tour Operators’ Initiative, the development of the Handbook on “Making Tourism More Sustainable”. The main benefits for a co-operation with WTO/OMT on specific projects is the opportunity of targeting different constituencies that have complementary mandates (environment and tourism) at the national and local levels in developing and implementing sustainable tourism policies.

Co-operation with WTO/OMT should focus on the following areas:

- Linking the Tour Operators’ Initiative to local authorities and in particular destination management organizations
- Developing a Sustainability Programme for the WTO’s Business Council
- Supporting the integration of sustainability in national and local public policies

1.5 Levels of intervention

The complexity of tourism industry, the segmentation, and decentralization of the supply chain, require interventions at different (and often simultaneous) levels. Therefore UNEP has taken action at international, regional, national, and local level depending on the area of intervention. Particular effort is placed on ensuring that the appropriate linkages between local governments and national authorities are established. With regards to the selection of specific destinations for demonstration projects, priority is given to biodiversity hotspots where tourism also represents an important social and economic threat and development opportunity.

2. Activities

The Programme is implemented through a portfolio of activities – targeting the tourism industry, the public sector, and the consumers, in line with the identified Areas of Intervention for the mitigation of the barriers limiting the integration of sustainable production and consumption strategies in tourism.

2.1 Developing new tools

Tools’ development follows a three-step process:

- Tools conception/adaptation: in this first step tools is developed or adapted to the specific target (private sector, public sector or consumers). The goal of this step is to provide the basis for further demonstration and dissemination activities.
- Demonstration: at this stage the tools’ effectiveness is tested and demonstrated through field projects, bilateral partnerships with companies. The lessons learned in this phase are then built in the original tool.
- Dissemination: the focus of the activities undertaken in this phase is disseminated directly and through networks the tools that have been developed/adapted and of which effectiveness has been demonstrated.

¹ United Nations General Assembly at the fifty-eighth session unanimously adopted Resolution *A/RES/58/232* on the 23th of December, with which the World Tourism Organization (WTO) became a fully-fledged specialized agency of the United Nations.

2.2 Building networks and partnerships

Networks of businesses and other institutions, and ad hoc partnerships are formed to support the implementation of Programmes, and in particular the conception and adaptation of tools, their demonstration and dissemination. These will be particularly valuable to disseminate the tools, as end users are generally small and micro enterprises, public responsibility is fragmented through many departments as well as different institutional levels, and consumers are difficult to reach.
