Progress report on the implementation of the programme of work for 2010-2011

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Item 5b of the Provisional Agenda

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General submits to the Joint Meeting of the two Commissions activities that have been undertaken by the Organization since the 49th CAP Meeting and the 53rd CSA Meeting (which took place within the framework of UNWTO’s 19th General Assembly in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, in October 2011) until the end of April 2012.
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Improving tourism competitiveness and promoting sustainable tourism development have been UNWTO’s priorities since the 18th General Assembly of October 2009 in Kazakhstan. Since 2010, mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda has been added to UNWTO’s top priorities. The Organization’s focus in the region (as well as in other regional programmes within UNWTO) has thus centred mainly on activities which advocate and promote these priorities.

2. This document covers the major activities UNWTO has undertaken in the Asia-Pacific region since UNWTO’s 19th General Assembly in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, in October 2011. These activities are organized under the umbrella of the three UNWTO priorities listed above. Activities which cannot be categorized according to the priorities are listed under “other activities”. Some important activities to be carried out from May 2012 onwards are also included in the document in the section of “upcoming activities in 2012”.

MAINSTREAMING TOURISM IN THE GLOBAL AGENDA

Global Leaders for Tourism Campaign

3. Despite tourism’s proven role in stimulating the global economy, enhancing employment, creating jobs, alleviating poverty and supporting development, the sector still lacks economic and political recognition and is not sufficiently accounted for in global decision-making.

4. Against this background, and in partnership with WTTC, UNWTO has been mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda through the Global Leaders for Tourism Campaign. Since February 2011, UNWTO and WTTC have been jointly presenting an Open Letter to Heads of State and governments around the world, calling on them to acknowledge tourism’s key role in delivering more sustained and balanced growth and to prioritize the sector higher in national policies in order to maximize its potential. The Open Letter outlines Travel & Tourism’s value as one of the world’s largest generators of jobs, a powerful driver of socio-economic growth & development, and a key player in the transformation to the Green Economy.

5. To date, 26 Heads of State and Government have received the Open Letter from UNWTO and WTTC, of which seven are from the Asia Pacific Region: Indonesia, China, Korea, Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines and Vietnam. Australia, Mongolia, Myanmar and Thailand will be the next countries to receive the Open letter. Several other countries in the region have expressed interest in joining the campaign over the coming months.

6. The Open letter, together with the testimonials of Heads of State and Government joining the campaign, will be compiled in the Global Leaders for Tourism Book. The first edition of the so-called Golden book will be officially presented to President Calderón of Mexico, the first Head of State to join the initiative, on the occasion of the T.20 Summit, the meeting of the tourism ministers of the G.20 countries (14-15 May, 2012) and the WTTC Americas Summit (17-18 May 2012).

2012 ASEAN Tourism Forum (January, Manado, Indonesia)

7. Besides the Global Leaders for Tourism Campaign UNWTO is leading, UNWTO is also making endeavours to mainstream tourism in the global agenda through the participation of other important
global and regional activities organized by other international or regional organizations such as ASEAN and WTTC.

8. The ASEAN Tourism Forum (AFT) is a cooperative regional effort to promote the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations as one tourist destination. The forum is an annual event started in 1981 and AFT 2012 which was held in Manado, Indonesia from 8 – 15 January 2012, marks the 31st anniversary of this event.

9. UNWTO was represented by the Secretary-General in this Forum to consolidate and strengthen our collaboration with ASEAN and its Secretariat in line with the MOU signed between us in 2008. The Secretary-General delivered a key note presentation at the ASEAN Tourism Conference on the subject of “Going Green”.

WTTC Global Summit (17 – 19 April 2012, Tokyo and Sendai)

10. The Summit was held under the theme “Leading a Dynamic Industry through Turbulent Times”. It was held a year after the Japan earthquake and tsunami. Discussions were centered on subjects like: the recovery of Japan, how Travel & Tourism can serve as a driver of global economic recovery, consumer needs, the role of airlines in the global Travel & Tourism industry, and where tourism is heading for tomorrow etc.

11. UNWTO joined the discussion on the world trends on tourism and again shared its advocacy on mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda due to tourism’s contribution to the general social and economic development, especially its capacity to create jobs and to lead development towards the green economy.

IMPROVING TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

5th UNWTO/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook (26 -28 October 2011, Guilin, China)

12. Innovation and diversification have been essential to product development to match new and emerging markets and to the winning of competitive advantage for tourism at demanding times. Facilitated with technology, innovation and diversification could serve as effective strategies for destinations to recover from crises and to lead new growth.

13. Against the above wavelength of thinking and in collaboration with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the Guilin Municipal Government, UNWTO organized the 5th Edition of the Forum which was held under the theme of innovation and diversification.

14. The Forum attracted over 180 participants from twenty countries or regions, as well as local audiences. Participants include officials from national tourism administrations or tourism authorities of UNWTO member States, representatives from tourism industries, the academia, research associates, consultants, media, as well as local tourism authorities.

15. The Forum provided a platform for participants to share their perspectives, research findings, and practices on innovation and diversification in tourism. Topically, the discussion was developed around three tracks on 1) tourism trends and emerging markets, 2) technology in tourism, and 3) new tourism product development.
3rd TSA Workshop and Seminar (5-9 March 2012, Bangkok, Thailand)

16. This Workshop was the final one within the framework of Statistical Capacity Building Programme (SCBP) in the Asia and Pacific Region. The first Workshop was held in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2010, the second was held in Manila, Philippines in July 2011.

17. Thirteen countries participated in the final workshop. Countries gave presentations on what they had implemented in terms of country tourism statistics and TSA since the previous workshops. Prior to the workshop, countries also completed a series of questionnaires/forms from UNWTO, which provided a detailed ‘stocktaking’ of their available statistics, how these compared with the international standards, and what are their development plans for the future.

18. Together with the final Workshop, a two-day Regional Seminar was held with the aim to maximize the sharing of the experience and knowledge gained by the Workshop participants during the SCBP to other countries in the region.

Background of the workshops:


20. The workshops were designed to promote and promulgate the International Recommendations on IRTS 2008 standards and the related TSA to a number of selected UNWTO member countries. It was also designed to assist those countries in understanding these new standards and in implementing them in their national Systems of Tourism Statistics (STS).

21. The workshops involved intensive and continuous technical training of officials from National Tourism Administrations (NTA), National Statistical Offices (NSO), Central Banks (CB), and Migration Authorities (MA).

22. As Australia and New Zealand are the most developed countries in the compilation of tourism statistics and the development of tourism satellite account (TSA) within the region, they were invited by UNWTO to provide technical support in the workshops.

UNWTO Seminar in Sri Lanka (30 March 2012, Colombo, Sri Lanka)

23. The UNWTO seminar on Chinese Outbound Tourism was held on 30 March 2012 on the subject of the emerging markets with specific attention to China. The seminar was initiated under the request from Sri Lanka Government to UNWTO for technical assistance on the subject of emerging tourism markets during the 23rd CSA-CAP Joint Commission Meeting in Colombo in March 2011.

24. Western Europe is the main source of tourism to Sri Lanka accounting for 39.2 percent of the share, while Asia is the second and accounted for 37.3 per cent share in 2010. The emerging markets such as India, China, Russia and Korea reveal more and more potential to increase the number of tourists to Sri Lanka. The aim of the seminar was to help Sri Lanka to develop insights on emerging markets through analyzing the emerging markets’ tourism trends and tourist behavior with special attention to China.
UNWTO Volunteers Programme (2011 to 2012, ongoing)

25. The Volunteer Programme is organized by the Andorra based UNWTO Themis Foundation. The Foundation is an operational instrument of the Organization in the field of Education and Training which aims at improving and supporting tourism development of the UNWTO member countries.

26. Bhutan has been benefitting from this volunteers initiative since January 2011. The objective of the Programme in Bhutan is to strengthen the positioning and visibility of Bhutan in the national and international tourism arena by developing appropriate marketing tools. The programme is being implemented by the Tourism Council of Bhutan in collaboration with UNWTO and the UNWTO Themis Foundation. The programme is currently in its second phase which started in March 2012.

MICE Project

27. The research project “MICE Industry: Global Trends and Development Strategy for Hangzhou” is conducted jointly by UNWTO and the Hangzhou Tourism Commission within the overall collaboration framework between Hangzhou Municipal Government and UNWTO. The objectives of this project are to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the key issues, concepts and trends of the global and regional MICE Industry, and to produce guidelines for the development of Hangzhou as a MICE destination.

28. The project was officially launched in June 2011 in Hangzhou. A team of experienced experts including two international experts and two Chinese experts was formed to conduct the project. The team was fielded in Hangzhou in June and July, 2011. During the field mission, the experts collected data of MICE industry-related sectors such as hotels, exhibition centres, and incentive destinations. Based on the field mission and research, the final report of the project was produced in March 2012.

29. Resulting from the project, a special report on “MICE Industry: An Asia-Pacific Perspective” has also been produced.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Bhutan New Tourism Strategy and Development Plans

30. UNWTO Technical Assistance to Bhutan on the formulation of an action plan over the next 5 years has been accomplished and the final report on Tourism Strategy and Development Plans 2013-2018 was produced at the beginning of 2012.

31. Within the framework of the tourism planning exercise in Bhutan, a workshop was organized by the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) from 5 to 16 December 2011. This workshop aimed to refine the strategic objectives for tourism development in Bhutan.

32. Based on the technical findings of the workshop and the field mission, the Tourism Strategy and Development Plans were developed. The Plans set out a mission statement, a product development plan, a marketing and communication plan and an institutional development plan. It also includes a range of recommendations for the building of linkages and synergy between tourism and Gross National Happiness (GNH) agenda.
High-level Meeting on “Happiness & Wellbeing: Defining a new economic paradigm” at the United Nations headquarters (2 April 2012, New York)

33. This UN meeting was initiated by the Government of Bhutan aiming at a new global wellbeing and sustainability-based economic paradigm in lieu of the present system of limitless growth.

34. With the invitation of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, UNWTO played an active role in collaboration with the Bhutanese delegation and achieved the following:

- Promotion of responsible tourism within the UN system
- Showcasing the tourism contributions to the new development paradigm to Bhutan and to UN missions as well as other State Leaders who attended the meeting

35. Mr Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General, Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly and other 600 participants from around the world attended the meeting. The total group was made up of representatives from governments, NGOs, academia, civil society and religious groups.

36. Outcomes of the meeting will be carried forward by the Bhutanese government with assistance from the UN at this year’s Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Following Rio+20, the objective is to spend the next 12 months further defining the shape and direction of the new economic paradigm and to have in place a revised Bretton Woods agreement that can be discussed during next year’s (2013) UN General Assembly session and, if all proceeds well, formally adopted in 2014 at a global gathering of world leaders in Bhutan in 2014.

Consolidation of UNWTO Observatories

37. UNWTO has been promoting the use of sustainable tourism indicators since the early 1990s, as essential instruments for policy-making, planning and management process at destinations.

38. In this regard, UNWTO launched the concept of the Global Observatory of Sustainable Tourism (GOST) based on the UNWTO methodology for sustainable tourism indicators. GOST intends to facilitate the establishment of a network of observatories at all levels, through the use of a systematic application of monitoring, evaluation (sustainable tourism indicators) and information management techniques, as key tools for the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism policies, strategies, plans and management processes.

39. Three observatories have been established to date: Yangshuo Observatory (2004), Huangshan Observatory (2008) and Zhang Jiajie Observatory (2011) – all three of them are located in China. The Monitoring Centre for Sustainable Tourism Observatories was established on the basis of the agreement signed in September 2010 between UNWTO and Sun Yat-sen University of China, and started to be functioning in 2011. The centre is in charge of the management of the existing observatories.

40. Currently, UNWTO is working with the Monitoring Centre to finalise the Application Procedures of UNWTO Sustainable Tourism Observatories, and on the establishment of the Advisory Committee. In terms of the expansion of the Observatory initiative, besides Chengdu, three more Chinese
candidates are in the pipeline – Kanas (Xinjiang province), Baiyangdian (Hebei province) and Tianjin.

41. Meanwhile, discussions are on-going with Bhutan for the establishment of the first non-Chinese observatory, considering Bhutan being an excellent example of a potential carbon neutralized destination in response to the worldwide call for the cut of CO2 emission, and its endeavor to link the impact of tourism with Gross National Happiness.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Support to Regional Tourism Fairs

CITM 2011 (October 2011, Kunming, China)

Bangladesh International Tourism EXPO (December 2011)

SATTE 2012 (February 2012, New Delhi, India)
UNWTO made a presentation on Tourism 2030.

Sri Lanka EXPO 2012 (March 2012, Colombo)
UNWTO took part in the EXPO on Trade, Investment and Tourism.

Agreements

42. A Letter of Intent was signed between UNWTO and Shanghai on 13 March 2012 on the occasion of the visit of the Deputy Secretary-General of the General Office of the Municipal Government of Shanghai to the UNWTO Headquarters in Madrid. This letter of intent is a pre-engagement for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNWTO and Shanghai in the second half of 2012. Two important clauses which will involve the participation of UNWTO members in the region are:

- the organization of the International Conference on the theme of “Mega-events and Tourism”
- starting from 2012, Shanghai will support UNWTO by providing one/two full scholarships for one/two years program to the tourism officials from Asia-Pacific countries

43. The Agreement between UNWTO and Hangzhou Tourism Commission will be signed on the joint organization of the UNWTO/HTC High-level Asia-Pacific Symposium on MICE Tourism. The objective for the collaboration is to promote south–south cooperation by generating exchanges between Hangzhou and countries in Asia and the Pacific on MICE tourism through sharing best practices, trends and strategies in order to brainstorm optimized strategies for the MICE development in the region.

UNWTO’S Asia Website Facelift

44. The UNWTO RPAP website has received a facelift in recent months, thanks to the support and hard work of interns from China, Korea and Australia. A continuously developing and increasingly easy-
to-use web site now boasts regular news headlines and updates about events and activities in the region, as well as quick links to UNWTO publications and regional newsletters.

45. Today’s technologically-driven world offers a myriad of new opportunities to share information. In this vein, upgrades to the UNWTO RPAP website aim to increase awareness of UNWTO’s activities in the region, as well as highlighting key events and activities held in or in conjunction with member States in Asia and the Pacific region.

46. Member States are encouraged to send promotional information on their activities to UNWTO.

**Annual Briefing for Asia and the Pacific Ambassadors**

47. The annual gathering for Ambassadors from the Asia-Pacific region in Spain was held at UNWTO’s headquarters on 21 March 2012.

48. The meeting, held since 2000, has become a tradition for UNWTO. It aims to apprise Ambassadors, many of whom have been designated by their respective governments as Permanent Representatives to the World Tourism Organization, of current trends and the activities of the Organization over the past year. It is also a platform to discuss factors that contributed to the outcome of global tourism in 2011, the tourism performance within the Asia-Pacific region, and what the Organization has been doing to mainstream tourism in the global agenda. In addition to this, it is the occasion to introduce the UNWTO programme of work planned for the region for the year.

49. This year, thirteen countries in the Asia Pacific Region attended the meeting which was opened by Secretary-General Dr. Taleb Rifai, who outlined the three main focus areas for UNWTO in the immediate future: consumer protection, travel facilitation (visas) and airport departure taxes.

**Visits of Member countries to the Secretariat**

50. On the occasion of Exceltur’s 6th Tourism Leadership Forum held in Madrid on 17 January 2012, Mr. Andrew McEnvoy, Managing Director, **Tourism Australia (TA)** paid an official visit to the UNWTO Headquarters and met with several UNWTO officials including the Secretary-General. As a result of the visit, a UNWTO/TA joint study on Southeast Asia as source market is under way.

51. The **Shanghai Institute of Tourism (SIT)** delegation headed by its President - Mr. Yang Weiwu visited UNWTO on 20th March 2012. SIT is China’s first UNWTO Affiliate Member and the cooperation between the two organizations has existed since the university institute first joined UNWTO over 17 years ago.

52. The visit of SIT follows the signing of a Letter of Intent between UNWTO and Shanghai Municipal Government. SIT will be supporting UNWTO and Shanghai for the international conference on tourism and mega events which is expected to be held in Shanghai in the second half of 2012.

53. A seven-member delegation of law professors from **Indonesia’s Udayana University** in Bali visited UNWTO Headquarters on 8 March 2012 to discuss the development of a new postgraduate tourism law curriculum and ascension into UNWTO’s Affiliate Members Programme.

54. The delegation visited UNWTO Headquarters to learn about existing tourism legislation and the latest developments in tourism and law-related issues. The delegation also discussed membership of UNWTO’s Knowledge Network, the possibility of internationalizing its new programme and the possibility of UNWTO recommending expert lecturers for its courses.
55. The Tianjin delegation headed by its Vice Mayor Mr. Ren Xuefeng visited UNWTO Madrid Headquarters and held discussions with Secretary-General Taleb Rifai about the future of tourism in Tianjin and the city’s ongoing collaboration with UNWTO.

56. Mr. She Qing-wen, Director-General of Tianjin Tourism Administration and high level representatives from the tourism, banking and investment sectors, joined the meeting. Tianjin was the host city for the UNWTO Asia-Pacific Training Programme on tourism marketing in 2011. Through the visit, the Mayor committed to hosting and sponsoring the Asia-Pacific Training Programme for another five years and to increase its involvement in the activities of UNWTO by joining the UNWTO Observatory initiative.

57. Prof. Kaye Chon, Dean of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU) visited UNWTO on 23 March 2012. His discussions with UNWTO centred on the long term collaboration between HKPU including the technical support to UNWTO through different programmes and the collaboration on the 2012 China Tourism Forum which is organized by the University.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES IN 2012

6th UNWTO Asia Pacific Executive Training Programme (25-28 June 2012, Bhutan)

58. The UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme has been developed as a high-level training programme for tourism officials in Asia and the Pacific since 2006. This programme is financed by the Government of the Republic of Korea, with the aim to provide a platform for high level policy makers to get together to exchange ideas on contemporary tourism issues. All participants invited are of at least senior director level from the national tourism administrations.

59. Based on the success of the previous programmes, UNWTO will hold the 6th UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme in Bhutan focusing on strategic tourism planning in Asia and the Pacific. UNWTO will co-organize this significant event jointly with the Tourism Council of Bhutan with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea.

6th UNWTO/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook (October 2012, Guilin, China)

60. The 6th version of the Forum will be held in Guilin from 11-13 October (TBC). The suggested topics for the Forum this year are:

• Review of European research methodology as compared with Asia

• Review of MICE industry in Asia and the Pacific - on the basis of a study conducted by UNWTO in 2011

• The Middle East outbound travel market - on the basis of a study by UNWTO and ETC
There are some other important events and activities UNWTO plans to carry out in the second half of 2012 and they are listed as follows:

- World Tourism Conference (26-28 November, Melaka, Malaysia)
- World Eco Tourism Conference (September 2012, Republic of Korea)
- 2012 Global Travel Mart and UNWTO Sustainable Tourism Workshop (New Delhi, India)
- Tourism Capacity Building Workshop (Pyongyang, DPRK)
- UNWTO National Workshop on Tourism (July 2012, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia)
- High-Level Asia-Pacific Symposium on MICE Tourism (Hangzhou, China)
- International Conference on Tourism and Mega-events (Shanghai, China)
- Workshop on Evaluation of Tourism Promotion Effectiveness (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
- Workshop on Hotel Energy Solutions (Malaysia)
- Technical assistance to the Maldives on Homestay programme
- Support and participation to Regional Fairs – CITM, JATA, KOTFA, ITA Asia