



## UNWTO Commission for the Americas

54th meeting

Quito, Ecuador, 11 September 2012

Provisional agenda item 6.2

CAM/54/6.2

Madrid, 17 July 2012

Original: Spanish

### Implementation of the General Programme of Work 2012-2013

#### Regional activities

1. Improving competitiveness and sustainable tourism development have been the priorities of the UNWTO since the 18th General Assembly (Kazakhstan, October 2009). Since 2010 the mainstreaming of tourism in the global agenda has become part of this list of priorities.
2. With the objective of including tourism as a priority on the global agenda, the campaign "Global Leaders for Tourism" ("Golden Book") made considerable advances during 2011 and 2012. The campaign, which is a joint initiative of the UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), includes the presentation of an Open Letter to Heads of State and Government from around the world, aimed at achieving recognition of tourism's relevance for meeting current global challenges.

During the period from February 2011 to June 2012, 25 leaders joined the campaign, the first being President Felipe Calderón of Mexico. Other leaders of the Americas region that have joined the campaign were the Presidents of Colombia and Peru and the Prime Minister of Jamaica.

3. The Government of Mexico hosted in the city of Mérida (14-15 May 2012) a new edition of the T20 Ministers' Meeting, whose main theme was the facilitation of visa procedures as an essential factor to stimulate tourism growth and job creation.
4. On that occasion a preliminary study commissioned by the UNWTO and the WTTC was presented, whose purpose is to estimate the potential gains the G20 economies might experience if visa facilitation initiatives are implemented in the period 2013-2015. Three possible scenarios were presented and the highest-impact projection estimated an increase of 112 million tourists in 2015, representing 206 billion dollars in receipts and the creation of 3.1 million additional direct jobs in the sector. Referring in particular to the dire unemployment situation, UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb

Rifai urged the G20 governments to seek ways to promote the facilitation of the issuance of visas in order to boost job creation.

5. The Ministers' Meeting issued a declaration that was presented to President Calderón, who obtained the agreement of the G20 meeting in Los Cabos to include in its declaration for the first time the following paragraph:

“We recognize the role of travel and tourism as a vehicle for job creation, economic growth and development, and, while recognizing the sovereign right of States to control the entry of foreign nationals, we will work towards developing travel facilitation initiatives in support of job creation, quality work, poverty reduction and global growth.”

6. The first Regional Summit of the World Travel and Tourism Council in which the UNWTO participated was held in the Riviera Maya, Mexico, on 17 and 18 May 2012 with the theme: “Travel and Tourism: Generating Jobs Now and in the Future”, and the agenda items covered the open skies policy, the role of governments in creating jobs and digital technology, among others.
7. In the field of improving competitiveness, the UNWTO organized the “Caribbean Tourism Summit & Outlook Seminar 2012”, jointly with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and the Ministry of Tourism of Jamaica, an event that gathered together the public and private sectors of the Caribbean.

The seminar attracted over 200 participants, including officials of national tourism administrations of UNWTO Member States, representatives of the tourism private sector such as airlines, hotels and international organizations such as ICAO.

Topics covered in this seminar included: aviation and facilitation policies and their impact on the Caribbean, the revision of air interconnection policies in the Caribbean and the short-term outlook, and the competitiveness of destinations in the region, to name a few.

8. Seminar on "The role of municipalities in tourism development in the Americas" and Seminar on "Tourism Security in the Americas", Lima, 18-20 June 2012.

The two seminars were inaugurated with the presence of the President of the Republic of Peru, the Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism of Peru, the Secretary-General of the UNWTO and the CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council followed by the presentation the “Open Letter” to President Humala Tasso.

Over five hundred people attended the opening ceremony, with attendees of the highest level. The first seminar was attended by mayors from all regions of Peru and from other Latin American countries and analysed major issues related to tourism activity such as territorial planning for tourism uses, local tourism management, experiences at the municipal level, and individual success stories such as the tourism management of World Heritage cities like Quito, in Ecuador or Cartagena de Indias, in Colombia.

Important Latin American and European experts gathered to also discuss the issue of tourism safety and security in the region where the presentations covered a wide spectrum: ranging from the crisis communication strategy in the case of Chile (earthquake, mining accident) to the private sector's role in visitor safety and security, which was discussed by a tourism security expert of the OAS.

## 9. UNWTO Capacity Building Programme & Volunteers Programme in the Americas

The Volunteers Programme is organized by the UNWTO-Themis Foundation. The Foundation is the executing arm of the Organization in the field of education and training and its main objective is to improve and support the development of tourism in the Member States of UNWTO.

### Capacity Building Programme

Two major courses are held every year in the Americas: one in Mexico and the other one in Argentina.

Last year, The UNWTO Course Tourism Competitiveness: Tourism planning and product development was held in the State of Yucatán, Mexico, from 28 November to 2 December, 2011.

This UNWTO.Capacity initiative, wishing to strengthen the participant's skills and practical experience in identifying the tourism vocation of a destination, tourism development initiatives, planning and design of innovative tourism products according to supply and demand characteristics, was attended by more than 40 officials from national, regional and / or local governments as well as from the private and third sectors from Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

This year, UNWTO International Course *Excellence in Tourism Management: Management of Public Use in Protected Areas* was held in Puerto Madryn, Argentina from 9 to 15 June 2012.

This 8th edition of the UNWTO courses in Argentina aimed at familiarizing participants with technical criteria for planning, designing and implementing Tourism programmes and activities in protected areas, as well as providing practical tools to enhance their knowledge and technical criteria with concepts of sustainability, quality and marketing, based on the principles of sustainable development.

### Volunteers

An exploratory mission has been conducted in Cozumel-Mexico for the deployment of 1 volunteer during the year 2012.

## 10. Project for the harmonization of tourism statistics in the MERCOSUR countries plus Chile.

Following up on the workshops held in Montevideo and Foz do Iguacu, the UNWTO has ratified support for this project as a case of good practice that should be known in other regions.

Together with the IDB, the UNWTO is working on creating a regional database for the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR plus Chile) which is to serve as instrumental support for a future Regional Statistical Observatory, while also planned are joint activities for the coming years in order to disseminate and inform the countries and all major stakeholders of the main actions to be undertaken.

The responsibility for the continuity of this project lies with the Regional Program for the Americas headed by Mr. Carlos Vogeler, Regional Director.

11. With regard to support for sustainable tourism development, the UNWTO has supported from the beginning the initiative of the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador on the concept of “Conscious Tourism”.

The concept was coined in the area of Pululahua Volcano, near the city of Quito and is based on the principles of sustainability and ethics, and promotes the values of peace, friendship, respect and love of life as the essence of the practice of tourism.

This meeting was attended by a number of national and international specialists with the backing of the UNWTO and its main premise was to contribute to the construction of public policies in terms of the conscious tourism dimension.

The concept of Conscious Tourism has been presented at various international forums such as the First International Conference on Ethics and Tourism (Madrid), the 19th Inter-American Tourism Congress of the OAS (San Salvador), the 12th Central America and the Caribbean Forum on Tourism Integration (Guatemala), the 11th Latin American Conference of Tourism Ministers (Asunción), the Second Meeting of Sub-Working Group on Tourism of the Latin America-East Asia Cooperation Forum (Buenos Aires) and at the 19th General Assembly of the UNWTO.

Conscious Tourism will be the main axis of the Second International Congress on Ethics and Tourism and the 20th Inter-American Congress of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the OAS that will be hosted by Ecuador.

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

12. Institutional Presence in Tourism Trade Fairs and Regional Events

- Tianguis Turístico de México, Puerto Vallarta, 25-28 March 2012
- 16th Annual Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Investment Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 24-26 April 2012
- FIT Cuba, Cayo Santa María, Cuba, 8-12 May 2012
- Caribbean Tourism Summit, Montego Bay, Jamaica, 15-16 June 2012

In all cases, the Regional Director made an institutional presentation on tourism trends in 2012 and out to 2030, and also acted as moderator in Montego Bay and Lima.

13. On the occasion of the International Tourism Fair of Spain (FITUR 2012), the UNWTO signed a memorandum of understanding with the Argentine government made up of two parts: the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship with the aim of identifying and implementing actions for South-South and Triangular Cooperation with third countries in the region and beyond.

This Agreement is aimed at joining efforts and sharing experiences and best practices between the parties, promoting joint technical assistance in the field of tourism with third countries, through mechanisms that each has, as part of their structures of technical cooperation.

14. The annual meeting of the UNWTO and the Central American delegation was held at the Headquarters of the Organization on 20 January 2012 and was attended by delegations from the following countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti (special guest), Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, in addition to the participation of representatives of AECI, CATA, SITCA, the Chamber of Tourism of Nicaragua and the National Network of Small Hotels of Costa Rica.

This traditional meeting which has been held over the past several years on the occasion of the celebration of FITUR makes it possible to discuss and analyse together with the delegations the situation of tourism in the area, and to inform them in detail about the trends and outlook for the current year.

This time, after the opening remarks of the Secretary-General, the meeting opened with an agenda that included sustainable tourism together with the statement issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2012, as well as climate change and tourism safety and security. The participants studied the possibilities of conducting a seminar on the occasion of the next edition of the CATM on the subject of best practices in crisis communications.

15. On an exceptional basis, a group of Central American countries visited the Headquarters of the UNWTO to hold meetings with the Regional Program for the Americas. Officials of the national tourism administrations of Guatemala and Honduras, accompanied by representatives of SITCA and CATA presented to the UNWTO the action plan for 2012.

#### 16. Visits by Member States to the UNWTO Secretariat

A large delegation from Mexico visited the headquarters of the UNWTO to discuss subjects such as the holding of Mundo Maya, the T20 meeting held in Mérida in May, and the forthcoming Executive Council session in Campeche in October 2012.

A framework agreement was also signed for cooperation between the UNWTO, the UNWTO-Themis Foundations and the Secretariat of Tourism of the Government of the United Mexican States, through CESTUR (Centro de Estudios Superiores de Turismo), whose objective is to establish general formulas of cooperation that result in operational methods to harness human and material resources on common, related or complementary issues of mutual interest, as well as improve their collective services through the coordination of educational, training, research and/or complementary activities in the field of tourism.

On 19 April 2012 the Minister of Tourism of Uruguay, Hector Lezcano, accompanied by officials from the Embassy of Uruguay in Spain visited the Headquarters where he met with the Regional Director for the Americas to discuss issues on the bilateral agenda.

17. The Regional Programme for the Americas has commissioned a report on the U.S. outbound market to the Americas which is available on our web page within the UNWTO website.

We have also included the publication "Toolbox on Crisis Communications in Tourism" whose English version was presented on the occasion of the 19th General Assembly in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea. This is a handbook that compiles different communication models for different crises (natural disasters, social conflicts, among others).

The Spanish and English versions of this important tool are available on our web page within the UNWTO website.

The Regional Program has requested the production of a report whose results will be available for the next CAM meeting (May 2013) on outbound tourism from Latin America with special attention to Europe-bound flows.

18. Among the activities planned for 2012, the following can be mentioned:

- 40 Years of the World Heritage Convention, Queretaro, Mexico, 17-20 July 2012.

- Encuentro Maya 2012, the Torch of Peace, virtual message by the Secretary-General – San Salvador, El Salvador, 18 August 2012.
- Presentation of Argentina's International Marketing Plan 2012-2015 and accession ceremony to the "Global Leaders for Tourism" campaign with President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner - Buenos Aires, Argentina, 28-30 August 2012.
- International Tourism Fair of Venezuela, FITVEN and Workshop on Media and Tourism: "Tourism as News", Caracas, Venezuela, 6-9 September 2012.
- 54th meeting of the Regional Commission for the Americas and 2nd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism, Quito, Ecuador, 11-13 September 2012.
- Central American Parliament: 13th Forum on Tourism Development and Integration of Central America and the Dominican Republic: "Tourism, Priority for Integration and Sustainable Development" - Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 20-21 September 2012.
- RDO3 - Resort Development Organisation, London, United Kingdom, 23-25 September 2012.
- THEMIS course on Tourism Management – Oaxaca, Mexico, 1-5 October 2012.
- Central American Travel Market (CATM) – San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 4-6 October 2012
- TBC: Seminar on Crisis Management and Communication
- Conference of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), St. Kitts & Nevis, 12-14 October 2012.
- Congress on Tourism Research, Campeche, Mexico - 23 October 2012.
- Meeting of the Knowledge Network of Mexico, Campeche, Mexico - 24 October 2012.
- 94th session of the Executive Council, Campeche, Mexico, 24-26 October 2012.
- Official visit to the Dominican Republic, Santo Domingo, 29-30 October 2012.
- Official visit to Haiti and accession ceremony to the "Global Leaders for Tourism" campaign with President Michel Joseph Martelly, 30-31 October 2012.
- Ministerial Summit in the context of the World Travel Market (WTM), London, United Kingdom, 6 November 2012.
- Forum on Climate Change and Tourism in Central America - La Ceiba, Honduras, 15-16 November 2012.
- Celebration of the Year of the Maya, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 21 December 2012.
- Official visit to Honduras, Tegucigalpa, (TBC) December 2012.