Seventeenth session
Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 23-29 November 2007
Provisional agenda item 12

THE WORLD COMMITTEE ON TOURISM ETHICS

(a) Report of the Committee

Note by the Secretary-General

In this document, the Secretary-General presents to the General Assembly the Report of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics on the activities it has undertaken throughout its four-year term (2003-2007); a message of the Committee to the General Assembly, entitled "The Madeira Message", is annexed to this document.
THE WORLD COMMITTEE ON TOURISM ETHICS

(a) Report of the Committee

I. Introduction

1. In reaching the end of its four-year term (October 2003 to November 2007), the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) submits to the General Assembly a general overview on its activities for this period.

II. Background and main features of the Committee

2. At the thirteenth session of the General Assembly of the UNWTO held in Santiago de Chile in 1999, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism was approved by consensus (resolution A/RES/406(XIII)). Article 10 of the Code called for the creation of an impartial body (the World Committee on Tourism Ethics) that would promote and monitor the implementation of the Code and act as a conciliatory body for the settlement of disputes arising from the application or the interpretation of the principles contained in it. The General Assembly of the United Nations gave official recognition to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism at its session in 2001 (resolution A/RES/56/212 of 21 December 2001) and called on governments and the tourism sector to cooperate with its implementation.

3. The World Committee on Tourism Ethics constitutes an independent and impartial body made up of eminent personalities of high moral character and recognized competence. The statutes dictates that the members of the Committee be elected in their personal capacities and not as officials of governments or representatives of their countries. As a subsidiary organ of the UNWTO General Assembly, the Committee reports directly to the Assembly.

4. The Committee was established in conformity with the conditions governing the appointment and the terms of reference stipulated in the Protocol of Implementation (Part 1) of the Code, adopted by the 2001 General Assembly resolution A/RES/438(XIV). The tasks which have been assigned to the Committee are threefold:

   (a) Promotion and dissemination of the Global Code of Ethics;
   (b) Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the Code of Ethics; and
   (c) Conciliation for the settlement of differences concerning the application or interpretation of the Code.

1 The term of office of the current Members of the Committee (2003-2007) began upon the confirmation of their appointment by the 2003 General Assembly and will end in November 2007 upon renewal of the membership of the Committee for the period 2007-2011 by the seventeenth session of the General Assembly in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.
III. Brief overview of the period 2003-2007

5. The Committee held five meetings, the first in Rome, Italy (February 2004); followed by Madrid, Spain (October 2004); Tunis, Tunisia (May 2005); Bangalore, India (June 2006) and, finally, in Madeira, Portugal (June 2007).

6. The first World Committee for Ethics had to begin by drawing up internal rules of procedure and develop an agenda that could serve as a framework for its term of office. In this initial phase, the Committee also had to establish rules and procedures for the submission of disputes on the implementation of the Code to replace the draft conciliation mechanism that was originally proposed at the General Assembly in 2001 as Part II of the Protocol of Implementation. On that occasion, the General Assembly had decided to refer to the Committee the consideration and adjustment of Part II of the Protocol of Implementation in order for the latter to develop and submit a more broadly acceptable conciliation mechanism.

A. Assessment of the implementation of the Code

7. In order to assess the current degree of implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and to establish an inventory of the measures taken to promote and disseminate this instrument, an extensive survey was carried out in 2004-2005 among UNWTO Members from both the public and the private sectors. The results of this survey were reported in 2005 to the UNWTO General Assembly (document A/16/20 Add.1), as well as to the General Assembly of the United Nations (document A/60/167) and are available on the Ethics in Tourism website accessible through the UNWTO homepage.

8. The survey was followed by an implementation update with complementary information received from national tourism administrations and the tourism industry throughout 2006 and the beginning of 2007, including all the relevant actions and measures reported by government delegates participating in the First UNWTO Regional Seminar on Ethics in Tourism, held in Quito, Ecuador, on 29-30 June 2006.

9. The content and scope of a new implementation survey was discussed by the Committee at its last meeting in Madeira. More detailed survey questionnaires for the different UNWTO constituencies are presently under preparation, and will be launched in 2008 under the new World Committee on Tourism Ethics (2007-2011).

B. Tools for the promotion of the Code

10. During its term of office the Committee approved and supported several initiatives aimed at promoting awareness and more dedicated commitment to the implementation of the Code among all stakeholders in the tourism industry as well as the general public. The following initiatives should be noted:
The Responsible Tourist and Traveller

11. To improve the promotion of the Code of Ethics and encourage its implementation by various stakeholders, the Committee has issued a simplified version of the Code addressed to the travelling public, entitled "The Responsible Tourist and Traveller". This version was disseminated at the beginning of 2006 to all UNWTO Members and addressees of the Organization's News Bulletin, and is currently distributed at tourism fairs and international conferences and meetings. The Responsible Tourist and Traveller is available – both in leaflet format or as a one-pager- at the Secretariat upon request, or can be downloaded as a pdf file from the "Ethics in Tourism" website.

12. The Committee would like to invite UNWTO Member States to coordinate their efforts with the private sector in order to widely disseminate this guide to tourists and travellers with the help of tour operators, travel agencies, accommodation establishments, airlines and other transportation companies, as well as airport and port authorities.\(^2\)

Tourism and Human Rights (THR) Initiative

13. The Committee supports the THR initiative launched jointly by the UNWTO and the International Business Leadership Forum (IBLF) in March 2006. The purpose of this project is to provide the tourism industry with a framework to assist them in addressing ethical and human rights issues within their own business operations, while recognising the Code of Ethics for Tourism as the overarching standard to guide their global activities. This specific set of principles, featuring different appendices for individual sectors, is being prepared in consultation with a number of major tourism companies and other relevant tourism stakeholders, including the UN Global Compact.

14. The first set of human rights principles for the hotel industry has already been formulated and is presently on trial basis with the hospitality sector. Ten major hotel companies (Marriott, InterContinent, Hilton, Taj, Four Seasons, Carlson, Rezidor, Jumeirah, Scandic, Starwood) are integrating the principles into their management and business operations in order to test their viability. By the end of 2007, the set of human rights principles and its hotel-sector appendix should be finalized and ready for dissemination to a wider group of hoteliers and human rights organisations. Airlines and tour operators/travel agencies will be the following sectors to be addressed.

\(^2\) As a model of good practice for circulating the message of the Code, mention is made to the example set by one of the leading companies of the hospitality industry, Marriott International, which is disseminating The Responsible Tourist and Traveller by including it in its pre-arrival e-mail messages sent to registered guest at the company's hotels worldwide (nearly 20 million of these pre-arrival messages are sent out each year).
Junior World Traveller Tips

15. The Committee further supports the innovative project addressed to juniors in which the UNWTO Communications Department is collaborating with the US non-profit organization World Peace Passport (WPP) with the purpose of cultivating understanding and teaching future generations how to be responsible travellers through culture exchange and mutual tolerance.

16. The “Junior World Traveller Tips” is a youthful programme that reflects the Global Code of Ethics in simple terms for children to learn and to remember. As part of a cultural understanding curriculum that teaches Kindergarten and Grades 1-8 students such principles as understanding culture, breaking stereotypes, respecting cultural differences and celebrating diversity, the initiative helps young people to choose the most positive cross-cultural attitude to take with them on their journeys.

Web-based social network YouTourist.com

17. The Committee also welcomes the establishment of YouTourist.com, a web-based network newly created by UNWTO and aimed at encouraging tourists to get more deeply involved in social aspects of tourism. It is meant to serve as a platform to promote responsible and sustainable tourism based on the Global Code of Ethics, by making use of the latest digital identification and security techniques.

C. Child protection in tourism

18. A Task Force for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation through Tourism was established in 1997 by UNWTO in partnership with the non-governmental organisation ECPAT International and with the support of various actors in the travel and tourism trade, as well as governments, NGOs, academic institutions and law enforcement agencies such as Interpol. The aim of this open-ended forum was to mobilise the tourism sector in the prevention of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children which may occur in tourism networks or establishments.

19. The Task Force approached the World Committee with the request that, in view of its longstanding contribution to the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics - especially with regard to Article 2.3 – the executive board of the Task Force should be recognised as an Advisory Committee of the World Committee. The request was approved and the executive board of the Task Force was granted the status of an advisory committee, on the condition that it accepted to broaden its mandate to include all forms of child abuse in tourism (not only sexual abuse). The Task Force accepted this condition and has restructured its executive board to include experts in fields such as the prevention of trafficking in children, child labour and other related issues, without reducing its central focus on the problem of the sexual abuse of children in tourism, or through the tourism sector.
D. Consultation and conciliation

20. The Procedures for consultation and conciliation for the settlement of disputes concerning the application of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism were adopted by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics in October 2004. In May 2005, the Committee complemented them further with the adoption of the Guidelines for the consideration of disputes. Both instruments have been endorsed by the UNWTO General Assembly in December 2005 (Resolution A/RES/506(XVI)).

21. Since the approval of the Procedures and the corresponding Guidelines, five applications have been submitted to the Committee for consideration. None of the five complied with the basic condition that all parties involved in a dispute must agree to jointly submit the case to the Committee for the process of conciliation (not arbitration) to commence.

22. It should nevertheless be noted that paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned Guidelines for the consideration of disputes also stipulates that "matters concerning the general application of ethical principles in tourism may be submitted unilaterally to the Committee and may include references to specific disputes insofar as they illustrate the principles in question, and provided that the submitter of the matter is not involved in the disputes cited."

23. In conformity with this provision, the Committee decided to consider one of these disputes since it concerned an issue of general interest and was submitted by an organization not involved in the dispute. The matter of disagreement concerned the distribution of service charges to employees of luxury hotels in an Asian country. All interested Parties were given an opportunity to air their views on the subject before the Committee adopted a recommendation on the matter.\(^3\)

24. With regard to two of the other applications, the Committee considered the ethical principles involved of such general interest for the global tourism community that it decided to examine each of the two issues with a view of producing guidelines intended for all tourism stakeholders.\(^4\) The ethical issues involved were:

- i. ethical dilemmas facing journalists on press trips paid by governments, and
- ii. consumer protection aspects related to overbooking.

25. In spite of the relatively short period that had elapsed since the adoption of the dispute settlement mechanism and the consultation component related to it, the Committee, at its last meeting in Madeira (June 2007), expressed its concern at the very limited number of practical cases that had been submitted to it so far. For this reason, it calls upon all tourism stakeholders to make greater use of this conciliation mechanism which represents a discreet and credible tool for the settlement of disputes in the field of tourism.

---

\(^3\) Recommendation available upon request.

\(^4\) Guidelines available upon request.
IV. Message of the Committee

26. The Committee reflected on the huge challenges the world and the tourism industry are facing today. Sustainable development is under threat and problems such as climate change, poverty, religious radicalism, instability, migration and many other issues are cause for serious concern about the future. In view of the ethical dilemmas that these, and other matters, pose to the tourism sector, the Committee adopted a declaration that calls on all the actors in the tourism industry to let ethical principles motivate their goals and drive their activities. The message is addressed to all the members of the General Assembly to whom the Committee is responsible — and, through the General Assembly, to the tourism industry.

27. By means of this declaration, called “The Madeira Message”, the Committee wishes to call on the international community, through the UNWTO Member States and Affiliate Members, to take up the challenges and to commit themselves to work for a better world on the basis of the fundamental values enshrined in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (The Madeira Message is annexed to this document).

28. The Committee therefore recommends to the General Assembly:

(a) to endorse The Madeira Message;
(b) to make a renewed commitment to implement the ethical guidelines of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism as a fundamental response to the challenges the tourism sector has to address; and, finally,
(c) to transmit The Madeira Message to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

It is furthermore recommended that the resolution of the General Assembly of UNWTO be widely disseminated among all the stakeholders in tourism. The Committee also believes that the communication of the Message to the General Assembly of the United Nations would convey a strong signal from the tourism sector about the crucial need that all development projects be based on fundamental moral and ethical values, so as to enrich humanity as a whole and to contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.
ANNEX

THE MADEIRA MESSAGE
(on the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism)

The Members of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, meeting in Madeira, came to a unanimous conclusion that the application of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is of fundamental importance for the development and success of the tourism industry, and that it can make a valuable contribution to the sustainable growth of societies.

- The world community is going through a period of rapid and widespread change and, at the same time, is facing enormous challenges. The present is characterized by political instability in many countries as well as challenges to safety and security. This situation has fuelled a sense of uncertainty. There are clear signals that our present lifestyles and consumption patterns are causing harm to the fragile ecosystems that support life on Earth. The consequences are evident in global warming, loss of biodiversity, desertification and the increasingly difficult struggle for sustainability. And, overriding it all, the vast and worsening divide between haves and have-nots, with all its problems of disease, crime and social collapse, constitutes a real threat to long term peace, stability and freedom.

- It was against this background that the heads of State and Government of the United Nations unanimously agreed to the Millennium Declaration in 2000. In the Declaration they accepted collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity. They confirmed that certain fundamental values are essential to a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. These include: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. The Millennium Declaration represented the international community's response to the development and security challenges of a rapidly changing global environment. They recognised that, even as the World has accumulated great wealth, many people still suffer in poverty and deprivation.

- The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism provides a framework for international cooperation to use the strength of tourism more effectively in dealing with these issues. The values to which the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is anchored are in essence the same values on which the Millennium Declaration is based. It is, thus, the conviction of the World Committee that the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is the cornerstone of sustainable tourism development and the guiding principle to safeguard its future.
• The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism links up with the Millennium Declaration and Goals. Tourism has grown into a major global business and a core sector of the world economy. The wide ranging impact of tourism on society has turned it into a significant international player. A few points illustrate the magnitude and power of the industry:

- Tourism has been the fastest growing economic activity over a period of more than half a century;
- It is expected to double in size over the next 12 to 14 years;
- It has become the biggest export industry;
- It is highly labour intensive and one of the biggest employers – especially for women and young people;
- It consists of more small-, micro- and medium-sized businesses than any other economic sector;
- It impacts strongly on local farming, fishing, trading (to include handicrafts), and services and the construction industry;
- It is a key strategy towards poverty-reduction;
- It plays a critical role in conservation and sustainable development; and
- It builds bridges of mutual understanding and tolerance between peoples and nations and promote world peace.

• The impact of tourism goes well beyond its economic value. It is therefore critical that we vigorously promote those values that form the foundation of sound, responsible and sustainable tourism and that we avoid the damage that opportunistic and unguided forms of tourism could inflict on the environment, society and the economy.